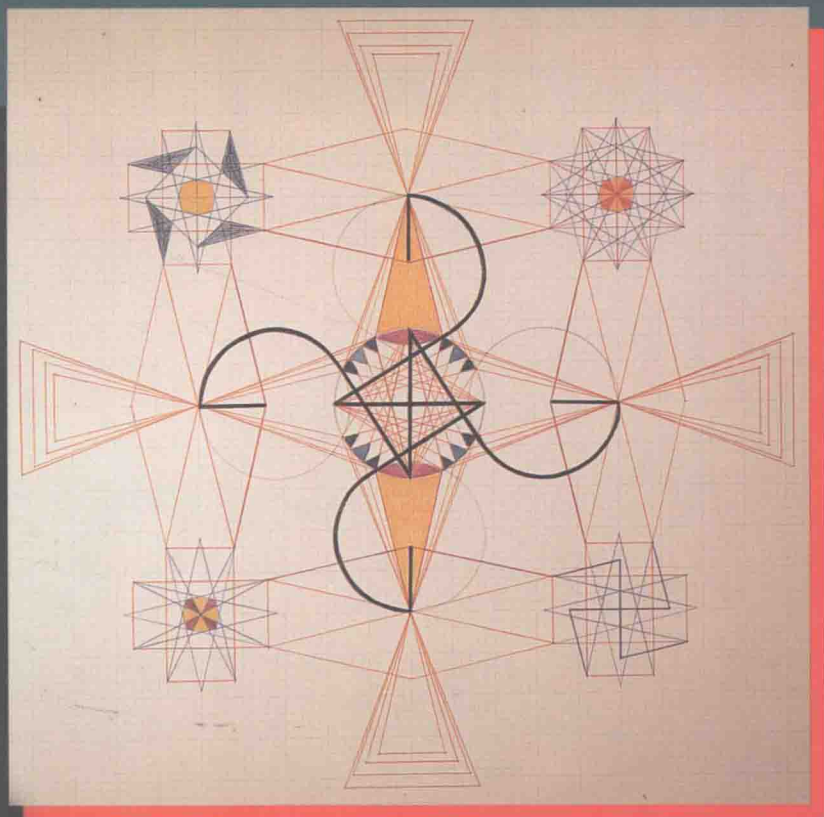


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—LARRY DOSSEY

INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

CONSCIOUSNESS, SPIRIT,
PSYCHOLOGY, THERAPY



KEN WILBER

INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

*Consciousness, Spirit,
Psychology, Therapy*

Ken Wilber



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Note to the Reader

A DAYLIGHT VIEW

THE WORD *psychology* means the study of the psyche, and the word *psyche* means mind or soul. In the *Microsoft Thesaurus*, for *psyche* we find: “self: atman, soul, spirit; subjectivity: higher self, spiritual self, spirit.” One is reminded, yet again, that the roots of psychology lie deep within the human soul and spirit.

The word *psyche* or its equivalent has ancient sources, going back at least several millennia BCE, where it almost always meant the animating force or spirit in the body or material vehicle. Sometime in sixteenth-century Germany, *psyche* was coupled with *logos*—word or study—to form *psychology*, the study of the soul or spirit as it appears in humans. Who actually first used the word *psychology* is still debated; some say Melanchthon, some say Freigius, some say Goclenius of Marburg. But by 1730 it was being used in a more modern sense by Wolff in Germany, Hartley in England, Bonnet in France—and yet even then psychology still meant, as the *New Princeton Review* of 1888 defined it, “the science of the psyche or soul.”

I once started taking notes for a history of psychology and philosophy that I was planning on writing. I had decided to do so because, in looking at most of the available history of psychology textbooks, I was struck by a strange and curious fact, that they all told the story of psychology—and the psyche—as if it abruptly came into being around 1879 in a laboratory in the University of Leipzig, headed by Wilhelm Wundt, who indeed was the father of a certain type of psychology anchored in introspection and structuralism. Still, did the psyche itself just jump into existence in 1879?

A few textbooks pushed back a little further, to the forerunners of Wundt's scientific psychology, including Sir Francis Galton, Hermann von Helmholtz, and particularly the commanding figure of Gustav Fechner. As one textbook breathlessly put it, "On the morning of October 22, 1850—an important date in the history of psychology—Fechner had an insight that the law of the connection between mind and body can be found in a statement of quantitative relation between mental sensation and material stimulus." Fechner's law, as it was soon known, is stated as $S = K \log I$ (the mental sensation varies as the logarithm of the material stimulus). Another text explained its importance: "In the early part of the century, Immanuel Kant had predicted that psychology could never become a science, because it would be impossible to experimentally measure psychological processes. Because of Fechner's work, for the first time scientists could measure the mind; by the mid-nineteenth century the methods of science were being applied to mental phenomena. Wilhelm Wundt would take these original and creative achievements and organize and integrate them into a 'founding' of psychology."

Every textbook seemed to agree that Gustav Fechner was one of the major breakthrough figures in the founding of modern psychology, and text after text sang the praises of the man who figured out a way to apply quantitative measurement to the mind, thus finally rendering psychology "scientific." Even Wilhelm Wundt was emphatic: "It will never be forgotten," he announced, "that Fechner was the first to introduce exact methods, exact principles of measurement and experimental observation for the investigation of psychic phenomena, and thereby to open the prospect of a psychological science, in the strict sense of the word. The chief merit of Fechner's method is this: that it has nothing to apprehend from the vicissitudes of philosophical systems. Modern psychology has indeed assumed a really scientific character, and may keep aloof from all metaphysical controversy."¹ This Dr. Fechner, I presumed, had saved psychology from contamination by soul or spirit, and had happily reduced the mind to measurable empirical doodads, thus ushering in the era of truly scientific psychology.

That is all I heard of Gustav Fechner, until several years later, when I was rummaging through a store filled with wonderfully old philosophy books, and there, rather shockingly, was a book with a striking title—*Life after Death*—written in 1835, and by none other than Gustav Fechner. It had the most arresting opening lines: "Man lives on earth

not once, but three times: the first stage of his life is continual sleep; the second, sleeping and waking by turns; the third, waking forever.”

And so proceeded this treatise on waking forever. “In the first stage man lives in the dark, alone; in the second, he lives associated with, yet separated from, his fellow-men, in a light reflected from the surface of things; in the third, his life, interwoven with . . . universal spirit . . . is a higher life.

“In the first stage his *body* develops itself from its germ, working out organs for the second; in the second stage his *mind* develops itself from its germ, working out organs for the third; in the third the *divine* germ develops itself, which lies hidden in every human mind.

“The act of leaving the first stage for the second we call Birth; that of leaving the second for the third, Death. Our way from the second to the third is not darker than our way from the first to the second: one way leads us forth to see the world outwardly; the other, to see it inwardly.”

From body to mind to spirit, the three stages of the growth of consciousness; and it is only as men and women die to the separate self that they awaken to the expansiveness of universal Spirit. There was Fechner’s real philosophy of life, mind, soul, and consciousness; and why did the textbooks not bother to tell us *that*? That’s when I decided I wanted to write a history of psychology, simply because “Somebody has *got* to tell.”

(Tell that the notion of the unconscious was made popular by von Hartmann’s *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, which was published in 1869—thirty years before Freud—and went into an unprecedented eight editions in ten years, and von Hartmann was expressing Schopenhauer’s philosophy, which Schopenhauer himself explicitly stated he derived mostly from Eastern mysticism, Buddhism and the Upanishads in particular: under the individual consciousness lies a cosmic consciousness, which for most people is “unconscious,” but which can be awakened and fully realized, and this making conscious of the unconscious was men and women’s greatest good. That Freud directly took the concept of the id from Georg Groddeck’s *The Book of the It*, which was based on the existence of a cosmic Tao or organic universal spirit. That . . . well, it is a long story, all of which powerfully reminds us that the roots of modern psychology lie in spiritual traditions, precisely because the psyche itself is plugged into spiritual sources. In the deepest recesses of the psyche, one finds not instincts, but Spirit—and the study of psychology ought ideally to be the study of *all* of that, body to mind to soul,

subconscious to self-conscious to superconscious, sleeping to half-awake to fully awake.)

Fechner did indeed make extraordinary contributions to empirical and measurable psychology; his *Elements of Psychophysics* is justly regarded as the first great text of psychometrics, and it fully deserves all the accolades psychologists from Wundt onward gave it. Still, the whole point of Fechner's psychophysics was that spirit and matter were inseparable, two sides of one great reality, and his attempts to measure aspects of the mind were meant to point out this inseparability, not reduce spirit or soul to material objects, and certainly not to deny spirit and soul altogether, which seems to have nonetheless been its fate in the hands of less sensitive researchers.

Fechner maintained, as one scholar summarized it, "that the whole universe is spiritual in character, the phenomenal world of physics being merely the external manifestation of this spiritual reality. Atoms are only the simplest elements in a spiritual hierarchy leading up to God. Each level of this hierarchy includes all those levels beneath it, so that God contains the totality of spirits. Consciousness is an essential feature of all that exists. . . . The evidences of soul are the systematic coherence and conformity to law exhibited in the behavior of organic wholes. Fechner regarded the earth, 'our mother,' as such an organic besouled whole."²

Fechner himself explained that "as our bodies belong to the greater and higher individual body of the earth, so our spirits belong to the greater and higher individual spirit of the earth, which comprises all the spirits of earthly creatures, very much as the earth-body comprises their bodies. At the same time the earth-spirit is not a mere assembly of all the spirits of the earth, but a higher, individually conscious union of them." And the earth-spirit—Fechner was giving a precise outline of Gaia—is itself simply part of the divine-spirit, and "the divine-spirit is one, omniscient and truly all-conscious, i.e., holding all the consciousness of the universe and thus comprising each individual consciousness . . . in a higher and the highest connection."³

But this does not mean the obliteration of individuality, only its completion and inclusion in something even larger. "Our own individuality and independence, which are naturally but of a relative character, are not impaired but conditioned by this union." And so it continues up the nested hierarchy of increasing inclusiveness: "As the earth, far from separating our bodies from the universe, connects and incorporates us with the universe, so the spirit of the earth, far from separating our

spirits from the divine spirit, forms a higher individual connection of every earthly spirit with the spirit of the universe.”⁴

Fechner’s approach to psychology was thus a type of *integral approach*: he wished to use empirical and scientific measurement, not to deny soul and spirit, but to help elucidate them. “To regard the whole material universe as inwardly alive and conscious is to take what Fechner called the *daylight view*. To regard it as inert matter, lacking in any teleological significance, is to take what he called the *night view*. Fechner ardently advocated the daylight view and hoped that it could be supported inductively by means of his psychophysical experiments.”⁵

Well, it appears that the night view has since prevailed, yes? But there was a period, roughly during the time of Fechner (1801–1887) to William James (1842–1910) to James Mark Baldwin (1861–1934), when the newly emerging science of psychology was still on speaking terms with the ancient wisdom of the ages—with the perennial philosophy, with the Great Nest of Being, with the Idealist systems, and with the simple facts of consciousness as almost every person knows them: consciousness is real, the inward observing self is real, the soul is real, however much we might debate the details; and thus these truly great founding psychologists—when their real stories are told—have much to teach us about an integral view, a view that attempts to include the truths of body, mind, soul, and spirit, and not reduce them to material displays, digital bits, empirical processes, or objective systems (as important as all of those most certainly are). These pioneering modern psychologists managed to be both fully scientific and fully spiritual, and they found not the slightest contradiction or difficulty in that generous embrace.

This is a book about just such an integral psychology. While attempting to include the best of modern scientific research on psychology, consciousness, and therapy, it also takes its inspiration from that integral period of psychology’s own genesis (marked by such as Fechner, James, and Baldwin, along with many others we will soon meet). This volume began that day in the wonderful old-book store, and the shocked recognition that Fechner’s true story had rarely been told, and my subsequent historical research. The result was a very long textbook in two volumes, which includes a discussion of around two hundred theorists, East and West, ancient and modern, all working, in their own way, toward a more integral view; and it contains charts summarizing around one hundred of these systems.⁶ For various reasons I have decided to publish it first in a very condensed and edited form—this present book—along

with most of the charts (see charts 1 through 11, beginning on page 195).

As such, what follows is merely the briefest outline of what one type of integral psychology might look like. It attempts to include and integrate some of the more enduring insights from premodern, modern, and postmodern sources, under the assumption that all of them have something incredibly important to teach us. And it attempts to do so, not as a mere eclecticism, but in a systematic embrace, with method to the madness.

But the major aim of this book is to help start a discussion, not finish it; to act as a beginning, not an end. The reason I decided to publish this book in outline form first was to share an overview without crowding it with too many of my own particular details, and thus spur others to jump into the adventure: agreeing with me, disagreeing with me; correcting any mistakes that I might make, filling in the many gaps, straightening out any inadequacies, and otherwise carrying the enterprise forward by their own good lights.

For teachers using this as a text, and for the serious student, I have included extensive endnotes. In fact, this is really two books: a fairly short, accessible text, and endnotes for the dedicated. As usual, I recommend skipping the notes until a second reading (or reading them by themselves after the first). The notes do two things in particular: flesh out the outline with some of my own details (especially for students of my work), and make a series of specific recommendations for further readings, by other scholars, on each of the major topics. Thus teachers, for example, might consult some of these other texts (as well as their own favorites), make photocopies and hand-outs for the class, and thus supplement the main outline with any number of more specific readings. Interested laypersons can follow the notes to further reading in any of the areas. These recommendations are not exhaustive, only representative. For the recommended books on transpersonal psychology and therapy, I took a poll of many colleagues and reported the results.

I have not included a separate bibliography; the references on the charts alone are over a hundred pages. But today it is easy enough to get on the Internet and search any of the large booksellers for the various publications (which is why I have not included publisher information either). Likewise, I have often simply listed the names of some of the more important authors, and readers can do a book search to see which of their books are available.

I personally believe that integral psychology (and integral studies in

general) will become increasingly prevalent in the coming decades, as the academic world gropes its way out of its doggedly night view of the Kosmos.

What follows, then, is one version of a daylight view. And, dear Gustav, this one is for you.

K.W.
Boulder, Colorado
Spring 1999

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PART ONE

GROUND

The Foundation

PSYCHOLOGY IS THE STUDY of human consciousness and its manifestations in behavior. The *functions* of consciousness include perceiving, desiring, willing, and acting. The *structures* of consciousness, some facets of which can be unconscious, include body, mind, soul, and spirit. The *states* of consciousness include normal (e.g., waking, dreaming, sleeping) and altered (e.g., nonordinary, meditative). The *modes* of consciousness include aesthetic, moral, and scientific. The *development* of consciousness spans an entire spectrum from prepersonal to personal to transpersonal, subconscious to self-conscious to superconscious, id to ego to Spirit. The *relational* and *behavioral* aspects of consciousness refer to its mutual interaction with the objective, exterior world and the sociocultural world of shared values and perceptions.

The great problem with psychology as it has historically unfolded is that, for the most part, different schools of psychology have often taken one of those aspects of the extraordinarily rich and multifaceted phenomenon of consciousness and announced that it is the only aspect worth studying (or even that it is the only aspect that actually exists). Behaviorism notoriously reduced consciousness to its observable, behavioral manifestations. Psychoanalysis reduced consciousness to structures of the ego and their impact by the id. Existentialism reduced consciousness to its personal structures and modes of intentionality. Many schools

of transpersonal psychology focus merely on altered states of consciousness, with no coherent theory of the development of structures of consciousness. Asian psychologies typically excel in their account of consciousness development from the personal to the transpersonal domains, but have a very poor understanding of the earlier development from prepersonal to personal. Cognitive science admirably brings a scientific empiricism to bear on the problem, but often ends up simply reducing consciousness to its objective dimensions, neuronal mechanisms, and biocomputer-like functions, thus devastating the lifeworld of consciousness itself.

What if, on the other hand, *all* of the above accounts were an important part of the story? What if they all possessed true, but partial, insights into the vast field of consciousness? At the very least, assembling their conclusions under one roof would vastly expand our ideas of what consciousness is and, more important, what it might become. The endeavor to honor and embrace every legitimate aspect of human consciousness is the goal of an *integral psychology*.

Obviously, such an endeavor, at least at the beginning, has to be carried out at a very high level of abstraction. In coordinating these numerous approaches, we are working with systems of systems of systems, and such a coordination can only proceed with “orienting generalizations.”¹ These cross-paradigmatic generalizations are meant, first and foremost, to simply get us in the right ballpark, by throwing our conceptual net as wide as possible. A logic of inclusion, networking, and wide-net casting is called for; a logic of nests within nests within nests, each attempting to legitimately include all that can be included. It is a vision-logic, a logic not merely of trees but also of forests.

Not that the trees can be ignored. Network-logic is a dialectic of whole and part. As many details as possible are checked; then a tentative big picture is assembled; it is checked against further details, and the big picture readjusted. And so on indefinitely, with ever more details constantly altering the big picture—and vice versa. For the secret of contextual thinking is that the whole discloses new meanings not available to the parts, and thus the big pictures we build will give new meaning to the details that compose it. Because human beings are condemned to meaning, they are condemned to creating big pictures. Even the “anti-big picture” postmodernists have given us a very big picture about why they don’t like big pictures, an internal contradiction that has landed them in various sorts of unpleasantness, but has simply proven, once again, that human beings are condemned to creating big pictures.

Therefore, choose your big pictures with care.

When it comes to an integral psychology—a subset of integral studies in general—we have an enormous wealth of theories, research, and practices, all of which are important trees in the integral forest. In the following pages, we will be reviewing many of them, always with an eye to an integral embrace.

Elements of my own system, developed in a dozen books, are summarized in charts 1a and 1b. These include the structures, states, functions, modes, development, and behavioral aspects of consciousness. We will discuss each of those in turn. We will be drawing also on premodern, modern, and postmodern sources, with a view to a reconciliation. And we will start with the backbone of the system, the basic levels of consciousness.

1

The Basic Levels or Waves

THE GREAT NEST OF BEING

A TRULY INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY would embrace the enduring insights of premodern, modern, and postmodern sources.

To begin with the premodern or traditional sources, the easiest access to their wisdom is through what has been called the perennial philosophy, or the common core of the world's great spiritual traditions. As Huston Smith, Arthur Lovejoy, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and other scholars of these traditions have pointed out, the core of the perennial philosophy is the view that reality is composed of various *levels of existence*—levels of being and of knowing—ranging from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. Each senior dimension transcends but includes its juniors, so that this is a conception of wholes within wholes within wholes indefinitely, reaching from dirt to Divinity.

In other words, this “Great Chain of Being” is actually a “Great Nest of Being,” with each senior dimension enveloping and embracing its juniors, much like a series of concentric circles or spheres, as indicated in figure 1. (For those unfamiliar with the Great Nest, the best short introduction is still E. F. Schumacher's *A Guide for the Perplexed*. Other excellent introductions include *Forgotten Truth* by Huston Smith and *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* by Chögyam Trungpa, who demonstrates that the Great Nest was present even in the earliest shamanic cultures).¹ The Great Nest of Being is the backbone of the peren-

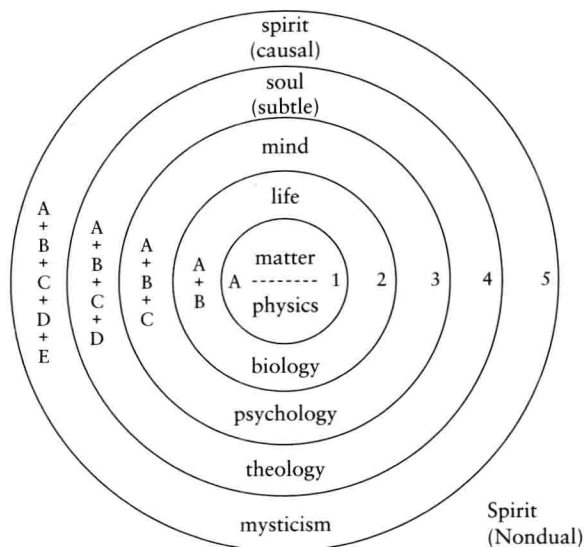


FIGURE 1. *The Great Nest of Being*. Spirit is both the highest level (causal) and the nondual Ground of all levels.

nial philosophy, and it would therefore be a crucial ingredient of any truly integral psychology.

For the last three thousand years or so, perennial philosophers have been in nearly unanimous and cross-cultural agreement as to the general levels of the Great Nest, although the number of divisions of those levels has varied considerably. Some traditions have presented only three major levels or realms (body, mind, and spirit—or gross, subtle, and causal). Others give five (matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit). Still others give seven (e.g., the seven kundalini chakras). And most of the traditions also have very sophisticated breakdowns of these levels, often giving 12, 30, even 108 subdivisions of the levels of being and knowing that can be found in this extraordinarily rich Kosmos.

But many of the perennial philosophers—Plotinus and Aurobindo, for example—have found around *a dozen levels of consciousness* to be the most useful, and that is roughly what I have presented in the charts (pp. 195–217).² My basic levels or basic structures are listed in the left column in all the charts. These are simply the basic levels in the Great Nest of Being, each transcending and including its predecessors—whether we use a simple five-level scheme (matter, body, mind, soul, spirit) or a slightly more sophisticated version (such as the one I have presented in the charts, and which I will explain as we proceed: matter,