

5

The Integral Revolution

Everything that from eternity has happened in heaven and earth, the life of God and all the deeds of time simply are the struggles for Spirit to know itself, to find itself... and finally unite itself to itself; it is alienated and divided, but only so as to be able thus to find itself and return to itself.

—GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL

With science we touch the True, the “It” of Spirit. With morals we touch the Good, the “We” of Spirit. What, then, would an integral approach have to say about the Beautiful, the “I” of Spirit itself? What is the Beauty that is in the eye of the Beholder? When we are in the eye of Spirit, the I of Spirit, what do we finally see?

—KEN WILBER, *THE EYE OF SPIRIT*

To make progress in addressing the crises imperiling humanity and Earth, we must find ways to effect radical transformations in our understanding and knowing. I will describe a way of understanding and knowing—often referred to as the *integral* approach—that I have found

extremely valuable in my own trajectory of learning. My experience has shown me that this approach educates and enlarges our cognitive capacities for addressing many kinds of challenges—and for making fuller use (theoretical and practical) of the holistic, spiritual, scientific, and evolutionary perspectives.

Over the last two decades, one of the most significant trends in contemporary culture, and one of the most needed, has been the emergence of an *integral impulse*—an instinct to see through confused categories and myriad specialties to apprehend what’s really happening as a whole. Our language, habits, and minds tend to draw lines dividing up reality in ways that are real only to our minds. Our specialized knowledge domains create fragmented perspectives on our world—which is incredibly complex and fast-moving, but in fact undivided and whole. Reality is an undivided whole in which we can discern a dance of whole systems that are themselves composed of smaller wholes, and so on, “all the way down” to our very cells, molecules, atoms, and quarks. One term for such an understanding of wholeness-in-diversity is the word “integral.”

While we can call anyone who understands and practices wholeness an “integral” thinker and practitioner, or “integralist” (since integration is truly central to their work), there are also movements, communities, institutions, and individuals that explicitly understand what they are doing in terms of such greater integration, and some of them call themselves “integral.” This is important, challenging, and paradoxical work, because wholeness is profoundly elusive, especially when our world is complexifying and fragmenting so rapidly. Once we seriously commit to and intentionally orient ourselves toward wholeness, we can embody a *deliberately* more inclusive and coherent approach to every aspect of our lives.

From 2004 to 2007 I participated in an extraordinary experiment in integral culture. In late 2003, integral philosopher Ken Wilber and his nascent organization, the Integral Institute (I-I), announced its first public seminar for early the following year. It felt like a historic moment. I had never spent so much money on a seminar before, but there was no question: I had to be there. And I was not disappointed; the seminar was

astonishingly intelligent, open-hearted, multidimensional, and alive, and I found the people who gathered there entirely delightful.

Wilber's ideas had attracted thousands of intelligent and interesting people, and a community of discourse constellated around his work. I was almost immediately invited to join the core team he was assembling, and very quickly I was warmed and inspired not only by the level of depth and excellence of my colleagues and the way we engaged with our projects, but by the rich matrix of key "integral" and "evolutionary" insights, across a range of fields, that inspired so many of us. Moreover, we collaborated on a series of ambitious projects. We offered several dozen public seminars on Integral Life Practice, Integral Leadership, Integral Psychology, Integral Ecology and Sustainability, and Integral Spirituality. We developed rich integral practices and curricula for all these and many more fields of study.

Because the investigation was so alive, many of us were inspired to take the integral project into new frontiers, cooperating with scholars and practitioners in many fields, especially those working closely with the structures and stages of adult development. But the Integral Institute, after growing rapidly for a few years, never became fully sustainable. We managed many tensions and factors as well as we could, but our challenges ultimately proved too formidable. At the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007, I-I essentially went into hibernation for a decade, while many of its initiatives were advanced by a great number of new, independent enterprises.

Much of I-I's original spirit survived, though. And it has matured, diversified, and found many new expressions. Alumni of that original effort have founded graduate-level programs, international conferences, businesses, workshops, schools, online communities, podcasts, and a whole ecosystem of diverse projects. The integral movement continues to grow, interpenetrating many other leading-edge initiatives. Instead of being focused only on furthering "the integral project," it has become an integral evolutionary ecosystem—a loose-knit network of practitioners, scholars, and communities who creatively cooperate with practitioners in many areas of culture and society. That mutual dynamism is lighting

up new pixels of the next new emerging picture of human consciousness and culture. Since those early days other thinkers have brought additional rich distinctions that have added further levels of sophistication, such as Edgar Morin’s “complex thought,” Otto Laske’s “dialectical thinking,” and Steve McIntosh’s integral philosophical work, as well as the metatheoretical critiques of Roy Bashkar, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, Mark Edwards, Bonnita Roy, and others.

Wilber’s integral philosophy is widely used, even at some of the highest levels of government and business. Although it has numerous detractors, it nonetheless provides critical attitudes, approaches, and analytic frameworks that make it possible to follow an evolutionary trajectory, grounded in wholeness, into—and, hopefully, through—the crises we face. I discuss Wilber in considerable detail here because he is by far the most influential and thorough integral theorist, as well as being a close colleague and a huge influence on my thinking. But integral consciousness is widely distributed. There are now many integral thinkers, philosophers, and cultural leaders, all of whom recognize a new worldview beyond postmodernism. Many embrace the label “integral”; but many other cultural innovators aren’t self-consciously “integral,” and yet reflect and express what I recognize as a growing integral awareness. A diverse body of lively discourse continues within and beyond the integral community, and that emergent conversation is critical to how I think it will play its full and absolutely critical cultural role.

THE INTEGRAL FLAVOR

When I first encountered Wilber’s integral theory, it was hardly news to me that I live in a diverse world shaped by the interactions of contradictory perspectives. Phenomena really do appear to be different from different vantage points. But even people who know better are frequently drawn to “either/or” thinking. In that frame, one person or viewpoint is right and another is wrong. It is at these moments of impasse that integral theory illuminates new possibilities. Integral theory does not ask

“Who is right?” but “How do we make sense out of multiple apparently contradictory perspectives?” As Wilber has written, “Nobody is smart enough to be wrong 100 percent of the time,” and, especially resonantly, “Every perspective is both true and partial.”

It is impossible to overemphasize the significance of this insight. If every perspective is both true and partial, then there is real truth in what we see. And there is real truth seen by those who disagree with us. *And* there is more to reality than anybody can see. This insight frees us from the traps of false certainties, into a much wider awareness. It makes “epistemic closure”—the closed-minded certainty that we are right—yield to “epistemic humility”—the embodied understanding that knowledge is a process that is always evolving, so it is best to be curious and open and to always question our certainties. Fortunately, this is not the exclusive province of integral evolutionaries. It is also reflected in popular sentiments like “The more I learn, the more I realize I don’t know.” Such an attitude enables us to listen, and to hear, so that we can find ways to bridge the divides between us that are harming us all.

When you think about it, healthy, intelligent people naturally develop skepticism about their own views and evolve in their thinking. At some point in their maturation, what I would call a distinctly integral “flavor” begins to characterize their disposition. But this is raised to another level when it is informed by spiritual insight. In the Platform Sutra, a Buddhist scripture, the Sixth Patriarch instructed his disciples, “Should someone ask you about a dharma answer him with its opposite. If you always answer with the opposite, as [opposites] depend upon each other for their existence, both will be eliminated and nothing will be left behind.” Thus, the radical wholeness of being is illuminated—form not separate from the formless, action not separate from nondoing, etc., across “the thirty-six pairs of opposites.” And this illumination is central to the integral project, which is informed not just by higher cognitive complexity but also by higher states of consciousness.

Here I describe the ideal that tends to influence and organize integral sensibilities. It is rarely if ever realized fully, as I am describing it here. But this is the spirit that informs this emerging structure of consciousness.

This integral disposition, because it is essentially holistic at heart, tends not to get involved in the timeworn disputes between left and right, progress and nature, science and spirituality. It understands and appreciates the partial truths in the attitudes of conflicting worldviews. It is both serene and engaged. It is suspicious of antimodernist (or post-modern) angst and pessimism, even while appreciating the foundational importance of a healthy biosphere. It doesn't resonate with the politics of blind anger or knee-jerk reactivity. It can be intensely proscience without falling into rigid scientific skepticism. It is rational, and yet is also emotionally connected and intuitively awake. It is spiritually awake without falling into magical thinking or naive belief. It consistently intends action without indulging reaction. It orients to possibility. And it takes the long view.

These qualities are beginning to surface in many places. Philosopher Jurgen Habermas expresses an integral flavor of consciousness without being associated with the word or with the "evolutionary" conversation. Some integral awareness has begun to color the thinking of mainstream figures from Pope Francis to Barack Obama to David Brooks. Futurists such as Stewart Brand, Kevin Kelley, Larry Page, Bill Gates, John Mackey, Nick Bostrom, and countless others imagine the trajectory of modern science and technology, occasionally veering into new, integrationist territory. Some European intellectuals, including Habermas, Peter Sloterdijk, Alain Badiou, and Bruno Latour, are bringing a more integral flavor into postmodern philosophical discourse. They are joined on this side of the Atlantic not just by explicitly integral theorists like Steve McIntosh, but also by diverse original thinkers from outside that ecosystem like Jeremy Lent (a postreductive cognitive historian) and Holmes Rolston III (a prominent philosopher of science and religion). Social entrepreneurs inspired by Muhammad Yunus, Paul Hawken, Van Jones, and Charles Eisenstein are expressing the beginnings of an integral flavor that is evolving among ecological activists and others on the American left. People with integral awareness are being attracted to political careers all around the world. There is integral and evolutionary consciousness appearing in the rising shamanic

movement, characterized by embodied feeling-knowledge, rational scientific discernment, and multidimensional awareness. These represent only a tiny sample among hundreds of equally valid examples. If we choose to lean in and engage with their insights, we can discover some tangible hope for our collective future.

INTEGRAL ATTITUDES AND ALTITUDES

Wilber's integral theory not only invites an open and engaged attitude, it also offers some key "orienting generalizations" that reveal how different perspectives relate to each other. Wilber observes the universal structure of how the world's great spiritual traditions map the process of "waking up" from the dream of separated existence into wholeness and then into high meditative states of consciousness, and he recommends meditation as a central integral practice. He distinguishes this, however, from the equally important process of "growing up" into a more conscious and complex order of mind, which we will discuss here.

Shifts in how we think occur across the human life span in a remarkable process that builds in complexity and self-reflection. New capacities for understanding experience arise when one's very patterns of thought and perception can be contemplated. As developmentalist Robert Kegan says, new levels of cognition "make what was formerly subject object," turning what had been invisibly shaping our perception (subject) into a conscious object of awareness. So, for example, while an infant is completely subsumed in and identified with his feelings and sensations, like hunger, the developing child begins to observe those sensations and make choices in relation to them—deciding, for example, to postpone lunch in order to play.

New stages of development offer us greater degrees of freedom from instinctive responses, habits of thought, or patterns of feeling. Each new level *transcends and includes* what went before, so that the new capacities develop out of older ones. It's as if we have a higher altitude, a "bird's-eye view" from which to see it all. For instance, our capacity to read and

understand abstract thought stands on the shoulders of our capacity for language—abstract thinking wouldn't be possible without language. Just as in material evolution, where atoms are the building blocks of molecules that are in turn the component parts of cells that together form organisms, human development is a holarchy²⁵ of “wholes within wholes within wholes,” something quite distinct from a hierarchy of value. Atoms are not inferior to molecules. A five-year-old is not a defective twelve-year-old. But there are distinctions between their characteristics and capacities.

Integralists connect the insights of human development with cultural evolution. As we just saw, historically significant worldviews are powerful, multigenerational, large-scale systems of agreement that dictate how we frame reality and our own identities. They take root only over time. A truly integral worldview, according to Wilber, would necessarily embrace the enduring insights that come from each of the previous waves of cultural development. We can understand this by looking at just three major structures—the *premodern* (or *traditionalist*), *modern*, and *postmodern* worldviews.

The premodern worldview is authoritarian, religious, and traditional. The modern is achievement-oriented, egalitarian, and rational. Postmodern worldviews emphasize compassionate sensitivity to self and others, challenging objectivity and expressing liberal, pluralistic ideals. These worldviews exist in a historical relationship: premodern, traditionalist cultures began about five thousand years ago, modern about five hundred years ago, and the postmodern only 150 years ago—emerging more fully in the liberation movements of the 1960s. The tensions between these worldviews are the all-too-familiar stuff of our current “culture wars.”

It is important to realize that individuals cannot be slotted into a single worldview; we usually express a unique mix of cognition, values, emotional maturity, interpersonal awareness, or any of several dozen other distinct lines of intelligence, each of which can express different levels of development. But all of us are deeply patterned by these dominant worldviews, and most often we primarily resonate with one of them.

Integral philosophy offers a potent potential synthesis that includes and transcends traditional, modern, and postmodern perspectives on

reality. It recognizes that the later historical worldviews are built on the foundation of those that came before, and yet appreciates that even the more advanced perspectives tend to be blind to certain values and realities that the other worldviews see and care about strongly, and blind also to the critical interdependence of these worldviews. Because an integral disposition is able to contain and be comfortable with apparent contradictions, when fully mature it is able to naturally, spontaneously, and comfortably include certain aspects of the dispositions of all worldviews. This book often speaks in rational modern and pluralistic postmodern terms. In that language I am endeavoring to integrate the necessary foundational virtues of traditionalist people, values, and institutions, and also to learn from indigenous and tribal people.

An integral disposition understands that we will always be living in a world in which these apparently conflicting worldviews and identities (but potentially synergistic energies) coexist. In short, an integral perspective helps us to comprehend the problems that we face and to better understand and work with other human beings in all their diversity, thus contributing to a healthy culture. Each of these other worldviews, by its nature, tends to be locked in certain zero-sum certainties about the nature of reality in which their viewpoint is viewed as right and all others are wrong. Structures that cannot open to a higher integration underpin every side of our culture wars. A mature integral worldview has the potential to skillfully rise above the fray, accept the value of all the other viewpoints, and reweave the cultural fabric.

Integral theory has a paradoxical relationship to human development—and some of the critics of integral theory fail to see the rich two-sidedness of these developmental categories. Unlike many postmodernists and traditionalists, integralists appreciate and strongly advocate for development. On the other hand, integral theory's theoretical foundations show us a legitimate basis for the idea that wisdom and right relationship to things occurs at all levels—and that the “later” levels of development must learn from the “earlier” levels, as well as the other way around. For example, there is a valid basis for an integral valorization of the wisdom and leadership of indigenous peoples.

It is true that the “higher” we develop, the more complex, conscious, and interconnected our cognitive structures become, and the more adequately they can account for the complex nuances of our world. On the other hand, at an “earlier” moment in that developmental process, one is more firmly rooted in the body and the living earth and its psyche and *anima mundi*, and is less likely to become pathologically disconnected, lost in complexity. The “bottom” is the most basic and central, and deserving of profound respect and even reverence. So every developmental scale can also sometimes appropriately be inverted to value what is most important and appreciate the foundational nature of what preceded us.

THREE COMPETING WORLDVIEWS AND FOUR QUADRANTS

Ken Wilber’s philosophical distinctions have been widely influential—in part because of the way they understand and integrate the scientific, psychological, sociological, philosophical, and spiritual understandings of all worldviews. Such a synthesis allows us to see what we are facing from different angles in a way that makes a more comprehensive response possible. Although there are important worldviews—*archaic*, *magical*, and *warrior*—that came into human existence earlier than the “traditional” worldview, and even though new “integral” worldviews are emerging that go beyond the postmodern worldview, we will focus first on clarifying further the three competing points of view that are dominant among educated people: the *premodern* (or *traditional*), *modern*, and *postmodern* worldviews.

Integral theory emphasizes two key understandings that originated in the traditional, premodern worldview and yet are only now becoming explored more deeply by great numbers of people. First, the deeper, often secret, mystical traditions of the world’s religions offer us an extraordinary map of the higher meditative states of human consciousness that shows remarkable consistency across mystical traditions. Second, the perennial philosophy, the common essence of the world’s great ancient wisdom

traditions, recognizes various levels of existence, of “being and knowing,” from Matter to Life to Mind to Soul to Spirit. This spectrum can be found in Plotinus and it permeates the great traditions, including the writings of innumerable religious scholars. This “great chain (or nest) of being” was thought to have been “given” by God, expressing an inherent divine holarchy.²⁶

The modern rational worldview is the lingua franca of the kind of serious scholarship and discourse that gave rise to integral philosophy. Wilber created his four-quadrant map of human knowledge by starting with the disciplines found in any modern university—for example, biology, physics, psychology, archaeology, literature, government, anthropology, and engineering. Wilber notes that each describes evolution moving through progressive stages or waves—but in entirely different terms.

Physics, chemistry, and biology focus on and measure different aspects of “exterior” material reality and derive understandings of the laws that govern the physiology and behavior of individual atoms, molecules, stars, galaxies, planets, and organisms. *Psychotherapy, spirituality, art, and literature* focus on the interior reality of individual human beings. *Systems sciences, including much of economics and ecology*, focus on understanding the dynamics of the collective exterior behaviors of people or of living or nonliving systems. *Ethics and many social sciences* focus on understanding the agreements that structure the interior lives of groups.

Just two fundamental distinctions—between interiors and exteriors, and between individuals and collectives—delineate these four domains. Each represents a fundamental dimension of reality, where we can see the evolution of intentions and values (interiors of individuals), of behavior (exteriors of individuals), of culture (interiors of collectives), and of systems (exteriors of collectives). Taken together, these four quadrants account for the relationship between the different dimensions of reality and areas of knowledge. This schema brings to light the unique and necessary perspective that each offers, and suggests that all four domains are needed to understand any important situation and to design adequate solutions. (See Figure 1.)

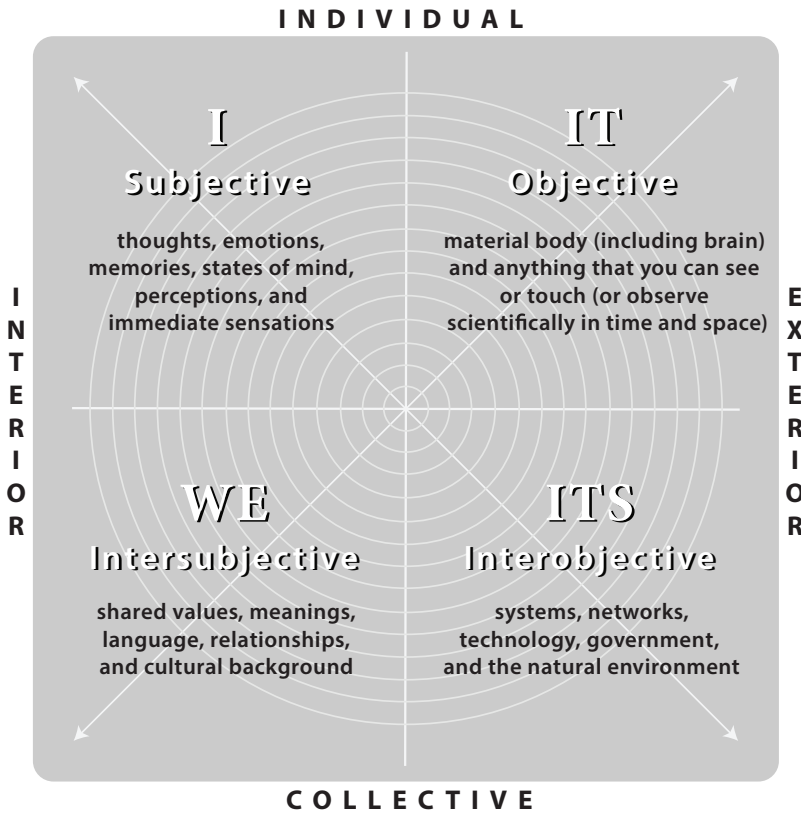


Figure 1: The Four Quadrants

Integral consciousness also values the sensitivity and awareness contained in the postmodern worldview, which appreciates the simultaneous validity of different cultures' ways of being, and of multiple perspectives in general, as well as the importance of our inner lives. By experimenting with different approaches to psychological research, psychotherapy, spiritual practice, alternative healing modalities, and psychedelics, adventurous postmoderns have explored many dimensions of human interiors, gaining knowledge central to the integral synthesis. Additionally, there is deep postmodern appreciation for the whole web of life and for ecological sustainability.

Nevertheless, as integral philosophers have pointed out, postmodernism has also—especially in academic circles—become a bastion of a “liberal” orthodoxy that has often stifled inquiry and dissent and contributed to cultural polarization. And yet integral consciousness matures out of the basic insights of postmodernism, recognizing that traditional perspectives, for example, reveal different partial truths. This complements the objective knowledge of modern rational science, permitting a holistic appreciation of the fullness of both objective and subjective dimensions of human experience, knowledge, inquiry, and progress.

Integralists understand that it is not possible to engage productively with the human predicament without accounting for these multiple dimensions of reality—all quadrants and all perspectives. And that means engaging with the hopes, needs, and desires of human beings who hold different worldviews and identities, and who speak different languages, and whose thinking emerges from different disciplines. We need to understand each perspective more fully—realizing that they each live in us. Our own unconscious desire to distance ourselves from elements of earlier worldviews creates blind spots, or shadows, that often make connection and creativity nearly impossible.

Human consciousness first emerged among people preoccupied with survival and focused on meeting very basic needs, expressing *archaic consciousness*. We matured into an ancient tribal *magical consciousness*, which was probably our first semicoherent worldview. Out of that consciousness, the power gods prevailed, and the *might-makes-right warrior consciousness* of our earliest kingdom societies emerged. These are the stages previous to the “traditional” consciousness described below. All these worldviews still hold sway over many individuals—and recently we have seen numerous examples on the world stage, where the “might makes right” position has waxed resurgent—even though, in the broader view, these forms of consciousness have waned in influence over the last five thousand years.

Now we will delve more deeply into the three major worldviews that dominate most of our world today, and explore the characteristics of individuals who most strongly hold each of these worldviews. A caveat is

in order here: In real life, very few people express any of these worldviews in an entirely pure form. Most of us express a hybrid. But because the structures we are discussing are enormously powerful, we will take the liberty of talking about them using broad generalizations, because doing so illuminates even more than it obscures.

TRADITIONALISM TODAY

Traditionalists embody many of the premodern values that have always enabled human beings to bond and cooperate with other members of their ethnic and religious groups. Early on, human beings evolved powerful neurological mechanisms that hardwire us to our families and tribes. Within the “us” of our tribe, we know where we stand. We are also hardwired to appreciate the values of authority, conformity, loyalty, and perceived purity that align us with “our” goodness and order against “their” evil and chaos. The view is binary, absolute, black-and-white. Thus, at the dawn of the world’s great religious traditions, the law was harsh, but people became able to nobly sacrifice themselves for God and country and other higher values. The capacity to subordinate one’s self-interest for the sake of duty is the glue of every civilized society. Traditionalism is the foundation of civilization, and the context of the other values below.

Traditionalists are often easily recognizable. Their opinions in—and influence on—the public sphere, particularly in the United States, subject them to caricature, and their influence on almost all aspects of public life is often a cause for concern among modernists and postmodernists. But, while traditionalism is evidenced in members of all races and nationalities, when viewed in its more political aspects in the United States—including the “culture war” against political progressives, environmental activists, and the international neoliberal consensus—it is much more associated with white traditionalists than with African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, or native peoples. (In fact, traditionalists among these other groups tend by and large to be fairly liberal politically, especially in areas of social justice, but also in other areas, including acceptance of

environmental science. Here ethnic identity is the strongest governing factor.) Further, in spite of our tendency to think in terms of “red states” and “blue states,” traditionalism is much more associated with rural or small-town life than with urban life. This distinction applies almost anywhere in the U.S. Small towns in inland California are generally much more conservative than large cities in the South or Midwest. Another characteristic of traditionalists—one that is true across the board—is a much stronger adherence to traditional religious faith.

Traditionalists continue to be very important players in contemporary society. Because of the virtues cultivated in traditional families, traditionalists are in many respects the finest among us. In America and all over the world, people who live in rural areas, people with a strong work ethic, people focused on the security of their family and its traditions, and people who attend church regularly are more likely to have traditional values and worldviews. The best of them are hardworking, resourceful, and resilient. In spite of their often politicized and negative views of such issues as climate science, many of these people are living with more direct contact with the living earth and nature than are many “green” city dwellers. They may get up before dawn to work, and go to bed early. Many have businesses; they are also often the soldiers, police, and firefighters, the first-responders who put their lives on the line to protect their communities and the nation. They are our cousins and neighbors, the people with whom we share this country. Ironically, traditionalists often embody the virtues that postmodernists put forth, such as care and a real sense of community. They prioritize their families and their church and neighborhood communities, and their levels of civic engagement are typically much higher than most urban nontraditionalists. Their experience of life is not as constantly mediated by mental and virtual abstractions as that of urban-dwelling knowledge workers.

In spite of their often holding rigid belief systems, in most cases beliefs do not define traditionalists as much as actions and behaviors. Traditionalists tend to be practical, direct, and focused on objective, tangible realities. So they work hard, emphasize self-responsibility, and deplore dependency. They hunt and fish and start their own businesses.

When they enter the political arena, and chant “drill, baby, drill” (and enlightened modern and postmodern minds take offense), it is often not based merely on a disregard for climate science and common sense (or whatever other factors apply). It might be, to a greater degree, because they resent the often less self-responsible lives of many postmoderns and moderns. That, combined with the righteous moral superiority and deconstructive relativism of contemporary postmodern culture, and the occasionally vindictive or suppressive excesses of those enforcing political correctness, are the factors that have made them angry, and account for the militancy of their anger—even the fortress mentality in which they pit themselves against overeducated urban “outsiders” who appear to be threatening their freedoms and traditions, forcing other lifestyles on them, and delivering their country to foreigners.

There is, of course, a big catch. The complexities of contemporary culture evolved more recently than traditional worldviews—they are the cultural extension of the mindsets of agrarian societies. Conformism doesn’t encourage curiosity. So traditionalists are “over their heads” in our postmodern world. Traditionalists tend to interpret the experience in black-and-white terms that are most strongly dictated by the attitudes of the group with whom they identify, as handed down by established authorities. This enables them to march “in lockstep,” which makes them more politically powerful.

Anciently, traditionalists knew what was true by looking to authorities—to the Bible or to Aristotle or to the edicts of the pope or king. The willingness to conform to authority was a hallmark of traditional morality. Even today, traditionalists often treat the theology, prescientific notions, and worldviews of ancient scriptures as more valid than the knowledge produced by the scientific method. In contemporary life, the leaders of traditional churches, political organizations, and partisan media serve this function, becoming enormously powerful. Their “rank and file” willingly embrace a shared social identity and easily conform to its norms. This means they are not really thinking rationally, in modern terms. They think their traditions and beliefs have proved more trustable over time than abstract scientific arguments.

Basic traditional patterns underlie the structure of every individual mind. We all can feel the powerful hardwired pull of the approval and disapproval of the communities and groups to which we belong. That is why traditionalism remains the most foundational “source code” for generating social agreements. These codes are how we most readily create strong families and sustainable communities. When sustainability is able to work *for* traditionalists, they will be powerful champions of the struggle for a human civilization that supports a healthy biosphere.

MODERN RATIONALITY

In school we learn the historical story of the Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment, the scientific revolution, the industrial revolution, and now the digital revolution. This story is usually told as the victory of reason and its miraculous powers over primitive “superstition.” The modern rational worldview champions universal values such as evidence-based scientific knowledge, individual rights, excellence and achievement, the rule of law, and meritocratic competition in a free market. It brings intelligent long-term strategic thinking, innovation, and nuanced accountability. Modernity is focused on material reality, regarding empirical scientific proof as the most important if not the only foundation for valid knowledge. (During the Enlightenment, modern thinkers called for Christians to “read the book of nature” rather than only consulting the Bible.)

Modernism ascended on the world scene about five hundred years ago, together with science and free markets, and it is still the dominant worldview in Western culture. Even though modern capitalist societies have famously disenchanting the world and devastated the biosphere, they also have radically expanded human knowledge, abolished slavery, recognized universal human rights, engendered democracy, and uplifted material conditions for the vast majority of human beings.

At its best, modernism is optimistic, industrious, intelligent, and able to achieve its goals. At its worst, it is arrogant, believing it knows *the* truth, dividing the world between “winners” and “losers,” and losing

track of larger concerns, including the deeper values of the human soul. Placing its faith in entrepreneurial capitalism and free markets, it tends to be highly competitive and driven to succeed. However, it is also capable of thinking long-term in world-centric rather than merely ethnocentric terms. Its “neoliberal consensus” has produced the technocratic regime of open markets in a global economy. This modernist project is personified by the Brussels bureaucrats leading the EU and by American coastal elites from the Ivy League to Wall Street to Silicon Valley.

Modernism is characterized by meritocratic ideals in which “the best and the brightest” are rewarded with money and prestige. A morality of proportionality (you should get what you deserve), also evident in traditionalism, takes strong hold in modernism. It also values personal effort and problem-solving for the greater good. The result is success begetting success—but the intoxication of repeated successes in one area can lead to a narrowness of vision, overconfidence, and addiction to technical fixes that may create or exacerbate destructive downstream results, or “unintended consequences.”

The modern mind’s intelligence and power come in part from the empowerment of individuality—the separation of the human individual’s subjective consciousness from the objects he observes. The transition to modernity gave birth to an individuated self who could literally “think for himself” in the way that his or her predecessors could not. From that original separation or fragmentation, many more flowed. Traditional separations of human culture from nature and of mind from body were no longer expressions of divine order but were seen as expressions of objective reality and human physiology—the reality of a fragmented world of separate entities. Reason was exalted as superior to unreliable emotion and intuition. And further separation followed. The “knowledge disciplines” differentiated ever more areas of specialization, making distinctions between psychology and philosophy, endocrinology and medicine, cytology and biology, and human-computer interface design and computer science—and hyper-specialization is continuing apace.

Differentiation, however, easily slides into dissociation, which is another reason the great dignities of modernity have been accompanied

by the disasters of the modern era. Science investigates only the observable exteriors of reality, the factors that can be sensed and measured, so it has come to dominate (or, as Habermas put it, to “colonize”) the inner lives of human individuals, collectives, and all nonhuman life. Modern culture, in fact, through its power to objectify and differentiate, principally engages in *instrumental reason*, which looks to determine the most efficient means to an end—often disregarding costs to other human beings, the natural world and the web of life, and even one’s own soul. A holistic “vision-logic” is required in order to reason beyond such shortsightedness and to advance practical wisdom, and this gap sows the seeds for a cognitive advance into postmodern structures of thought.

It is not appropriate to blame modernists for their limitations, any more than it is appropriate to blame traditionalists for theirs. It is not obvious to the modernist faculty of reason that it has itself developed or evolved. It confuses its newfound capability of reflecting on what it sees in a detached manner with literally standing apart from the world and seeing it for what it is. The illusion of objectivity can give rise to profound arrogance. Subjective psyche, soul, spirit, and life itself are then regarded as unreliable epiphenomena of material processes (which Wilber memorably describes as “frisky dirt”). Humanity’s ancient wisdom in the domains of art, morals, and spirituality is seen as merely poetic and of no value in providing information, nor in unveiling truth and reality. Scientism usurps the actual practice of science. Modern culture gradually discarded what had been learned about the growth of the soul into higher levels of consciousness. Our traditional moral developmental curriculum was regarded as quaint and obsolete. The higher transrational dimensions of the human being were conflated with prerational “superstitions” and delegitimized.

While I think it is fair to critique modernism harshly, we must honor it and engage many of its terms of discourse. It is important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. It is said, with real justification, that modernism went too far, and became emotionally dissociated, spiritually dead, and impoverished of compassion, feeling, and communitarian instincts. Modern rational discourse is, however, an enormous achievement. It is perhaps our irreplaceable common ground, the only way that

human beings can talk with one another to adjudicate our disagreements peacefully.

We live in a world populated mostly by premodern minds but whose public and official center of gravity is modern. Traditional participants in the public sphere have learned its rules of discourse, as have postmodernists. Reason is the common language through which we can conduct public dialogue about our shared interests as human beings, and through which we can bring intelligence and wisdom to our collective decision making. We have enough of a cultural consensus around evidence, science, and reason that they provide the best common language through which we can reach our political, social, and collective decisions. Therefore, modernism provides the structure of meaning-making, the common language into which we must learn to translate whatever else we might want to say. We can bring in new values, ones that are not at the core of the preexisting neoliberal capitalist consensus; but if we justify them in rational terms, we can communicate with people who do not share our worldview. Communicating across these barriers is precious, and it may be the linchpin of our survival.

A crucial cultural task for all intelligent people is to revivify and raise the level of rational discourse, and make it relevant and potent in a whole new way. We will certainly need to allow it to include important dimensions of reality that it has until now tended to exclude, and to awaken it from unexamined assumptions and habits. But our crisis demands that we find ways to engage in real, vigorous, culture-wide inquiry. And rational public discourse must be refreshed and restored, not torn down by the cynical “post-truth” zero-sum (“I win—you lose”) tactics of political and cultural factions. Our current task involves reknitting our social fabric, through principled appeals to reason and care for our common well-being.

POSTMODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

The limitations of the modern worldview could not be resolved except by evolving new awareness, which gave rise to the postmodern worldview. Postmodern consciousness notices the limitations of “objective”

knowledge, seeing that there is no such thing as radical objectivity. Where you stand dictates what you can see. The language you speak determines the questions you can ask and the answers you can hear.

Postmodern consciousness also notices the limitations of knowledge and wealth, of science and progress. It notices the structural injustices built into the “meritocratic” marketplaces of the modern world, and advocates for marginalized groups—from indigenous people to those of color, to colonized subjects, to women, and now to gender-nonconforming individuals. And it is sensitive to the sated unhappiness that so often results from our consumer culture’s “good life.” It knows that “whoever dies with the most toys” wins only a soulless game. It pays attention to feelings, relationships, communication, psychology, and spirituality.

Postmodern sensibilities see and feel the spiritual bankruptcy of mere egoic competitive success, especially when it runs roughshod over the sensitivities of the human spirit and the ecological health of the natural world. The “sensitive self” that arises in postmodernity feels its relationship to all living creatures, the entire living Earth. Some of its most profound expressions are depth psychology and ecopsychology, which are rooted in the attitude of deep ecology. The mind awakens to a re-enchanted natural world and sees nature’s *inherent* value, independent of its instrumental value to human beings.

The political thrust of postmodernism has been to deconstruct the narratives that have supported all forms of institutionalized injustice—racial, religious, gender-based, and ecological. It sees that scientific knowledge is never perfectly objective, and that it is sometimes characterized by myopia and arrogance. But it easily takes this too far. Extreme postmodern relativism deconstructs all knowledge, all truths, viewing them as nothing more than social constructions. Although this critique is very sophisticated, it has seeped into the larger culture, creating an opening that has been cynically exploited to produce our “post-truth” cultural moment. It is a distinctly *postmodern* rationale that apologists for *traditional* values have used to justify a rejection of any *modern* rational accountability. Postmodernism has inadvertently assisted in cultural regression.

The philosophical sophistication of the postmodern critique contrasts with the sclerotic nature of much postmodern discourse. It tends to be critically handicapped by “political correctness”—stuck in a cumbersome style of discourse characterized by enforced terminologies, reflexive acceptance of attitudes of victimization and grievance, and laborious consensus decision making. It is no wonder that postmodernism has never been able to marshal more than marginal cultural, social, and political power.

Many centers of postmodern culture have so completely lost touch with important traditional and modern virtues that they have been willing to judge and scorn vast swaths of people, asserting moral superiority. Ironically, given their concerns for the well-being and rights of others, they have not been aware of the ways in which they, as individuals, fail to embody some of the virtues of hardworking traditionalists. To traditionalists, postmoderns seem even more extreme, dissociated, and arrogant than the neoliberal elites. To traditionalists who appreciate, want, and need the stability of the values that have been the foundation of our social agreements for a long time, postmodernists seem like extreme modernists. In their most extreme expressions, they not only deny all traditional authorities, like the church and the state, but they seem bent on dynamiting them and the foundations of order in society. Postmodernists seem to want to release all the impulses, desires, and cravings that traditional religious morality has only barely managed to keep in check.

While rattling traditionalists, postmodern culture is often focused on battling modernism. (When new stages of consciousness arise in response to the limitations of the previous stage, there tends to be a hypersensitivity to those limitations.) Seeing that the modern mind has lost contact with higher states and stages of consciousness, the postmodern mind may idealize non-Western spirituality. Just as the modern mind cannot see how it has developed out of traditionalism, postmodern consciousness cannot see that it develops out of and depends on a foundation of modern rationality. It sees the modern mind as having separated itself from the great web of life so radically that it inherently tends to destroy it. In its eyes, the great “evil” is modernity—and those

who pursue its agendas. Modernity's bias toward "doing," toward masculine agency in dominating the world, is another problem, one that needs to be balanced, postmodernists feel, by a return to feminine communion with nature.

Seeing how those at the bottom are victimized by hierarchies of domination, postmodern consciousness tends to be instinctively hostile to all hierarchies. Many postmodern thinkers resist even the richly documented stages of development that Wilber regards as fundamental. Wilber has written widely about how the relativism and aversion to hierarchy that characterize postmodern consciousness have tended to interact with the narcissism of the Boomer, Gen X, and millennial generations to produce a toxic stew of worldview pathologies—self-indulgence, self-righteousness, cynicism, dystopic ecology, and New Age wishful thinking. Instead of leading cultural evolution, this postmodernist-influenced culture presents a barrier to individual and collective health and growth. By deconstructing all truths, unhealthy postmodernism often tends to obstruct rather than advance further cultural evolution. And by confusing the rigor and optimism of integral consciousness (more on this below) with the "evils" of modernism, it resists the truths described here.

However, there is an important area where postmodernity has it right, and that is in recognizing our ecological predicament as the defining issue of our time. As previously discussed, current trends are as severe as the most extreme doom-saying environmental catastrophists ever prophesized. Worldviews arise in relation to changing life conditions—and the life conditions arising now in an era of rapid climate change are most directly addressed by the postmodern worldview.

If we want to navigate a world in ecological crisis, we need many of the insights and sensitivities of the postmodern mind. The more evolved worldview, beyond postmodernism, can itself be called "integral." Like every new stage of development, the integral viewpoint has come into being in response to the limitations of the previous stage, and it is highly sensitive to its pathologies. In distinguishing itself from postmodernism, integral culture has not yet asserted sufficiently effective moral leadership in relation to the ecological predicament. To perform its crucial cultural

function it must not be locked in resistance to postmodern environmentalism and instead needs to uplift and energize the critical ecological agenda and empower the holistic transition it knows is necessary. Integral culture must be informed by the maturity inherent in integral consciousness itself, with its built-in inclusiveness and openness to each level of truth.

INTEGRAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Integral consciousness notices the fragmented world that postmodern “aperspectival madness” produces, and intuits that a deeper, unnoticed wholeness lies underneath. Spontaneously, it begins to integrate human-kind’s many valid but conflicting perspectives. It intuits the possibility of a comprehensive understanding of a reality in which everything, including consciousness and culture, is always evolving. Integral awareness appreciates that all worldviews—primitive, traditional, modern, postmodern—are each in close contact with different enduring truths. And it feels a need to emerge from the limitations of postmodern habits in order to coherently account for the full range of reality—encompassing not only divinity but dirt, all the way down to subatomic particles. Integral consciousness tries to account for and honor *every* dimension of development and evolution and experience.

This integral disposition must begin to find its way into the attitudes of those who are beginning to grow beyond the limitations of postmodernism. The integral disposition in its truest realization is able to contain contradictions. It is able to comfortably contain certain aspects of the dispositions of both rational modernism and pluralistic postmodernism, even while authentically valuing traditionalist people, values, and institutions. On the one hand it is characterized by modernist optimism, a pragmatic, “just-do-it” sense of personal agency and cultural progress, and keen interest in long-term, large-scale strategic analysis and execution. On the other hand, it is also characterized by pluralistic cultural sensitivity, ecological care for all planetary life, egalitarian concern for the whole human family, deep appreciation for feminine sensibilities,

and a warm communal impulse grounded in empathy and a sense of mutual belonging. It is spiritually alive, inspired, and informed by intelligent awakening and inner work. It is not, however, “New Agey” in its flavor, or anti-intellectual. And it is unwilling to be held hostage by any form of political correctness.

Ken Wilber’s far-reaching review of intellectual history attempts to systematically account for all humankind’s conflicting perspectives using just five powerful distinctions—quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types. Wilber presents a comprehensible and orderly “theory of everything,” “AQAL” theory (standing for All Quadrants/All Levels—or all lines/all states/all types) offers a masterful rhetoric that has helped stimulate tremendous insight and vigorous scholarship, dialogue, practice innovations, and activism.²⁷ This synthesis is exciting because it is structured in a way that can honor every possible expression of human experience in a single, multidimensional holistic embrace.

Another way of clarifying the unique characteristics of integral consciousness is by identifying the kinds of thinking associated with each worldview. *Formal operational thinking* (originally described by Jean Piaget) is most often associated with modernist consciousness, and it tends to perceive reality as presenting clear correct or incorrect alternatives, within a closed, positivistic world of objective exterior realities. *Early vision-logic*, or *relativistic* thinking, is most often associated with postmodern consciousness. It can see the validity of many perspectives, but it has difficulty seeing how they can be integrated. It is better at opposing limited views than synthesizing a clear new vision. *Middle vision-logic*, or *dialectical* thinking, perceives reality as a hyper-complex “process of processes” of changing dynamic systems and relationships that naturally tend toward growth and development. Such dialectical vision-logic naturally allows for both spiritual and material realities, both progress and ecology. It gives rise to *integral consciousness*, which naturally intuitively how conflicting worldviews and perspectives, even when in apparent conflict, actually support one another in their mutual evolution. It sees with eyes that can notice new dimensions of dynamic complexity while never losing sight of wholeness.

RADICAL INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

As we have seen, most human beings are locked in a consensus denial of the severity of our ecological crisis. Among those willing to puncture that denial we often hear a clear and simple, morally based explanation of the recent history of human violence against the natural world. This postmodern narrative holds that the arrogance of white European Christian men, powered by modern science, the free market, and the history of colonialism, has been the primary source of imbalance in our world. Its primal sin, rooted in a presumption of separation between man and nature, self and other, has given rise to the horrific predicament of having overshot Earth's carrying capacity. According to that narrative, the modern mind, science, technology, and capitalism are evil—they are the source of our “evolutionary wrong turn.”

I believe there is valid insight to be found in this true-but-partial story—quite a bit more than some integralists admit—but there is enormous distortion too. The modern stage of development is the necessary foundation for postmodern and integral consciousness. And modernists are postmodernists' irreplaceable allies if they are to restore respect for scientific evidence and rational discourse—a necessary task if human civilization is to avoid destroying itself.

A radical integral ecology is called for—in other words, an integral worldview that encompasses and fully recognizes and *radically* values the interrelatedness of the whole living planet.²⁸ It expresses mature integral consciousness, which can make common cause with postmodern environmental consciousness, because both are willing to grapple with the moral implications of modernity's destructive arrogance. At the same time, it is ready to join with modernity's pragmatic, rational, and technical prowess in the service of more adequate and comprehensive solutions. It recognizes that our ecological and climate predicament is a four-quadrant affair. It poses a great series of technical problems, but it is more fundamentally a problem of consciousness and culture. A holistic transition is clearly necessary, but it poses a huge challenge, for reasons that have to do with the dynamics of cultural evolution itself. Humble, integral cultural leadership is required.

The crises of our time are chastening us and will in time require all of us to acknowledge the inarguable foundational truths of deep ecology (notwithstanding the common tendency for these truths to be conflated with other unfortunate postmodern excesses). “Conquering” nature was indeed a deluded goal that ultimately has been critically destructive to our own life-support system. The health of the “web of life” (which some deep ecologists imbue with a retro-romantic longing for some illusory pristine and sacred state of nature) really *is* the irreducible foundation for the health of all human existence. This cannot be theorized away. Where the biosphere goes, so goes humanity. And postmodernists are not mistaken in noticing an awe-inspiring degree of dynamic synergy among living things that is suggestive of the Gaia hypothesis and much more. Our biosphere has both exteriors and interiors. The interior, “spiritual” discovery of deep ecology is that the less-articulated consciousness of animals, plants, and the interrelated living planet is far wiser and more intelligent than modernists and traditionalists have imagined or been able to feel and see.

A radical integral understanding of ecology embodies a hidden synergy between deep ecology and integral philosophy. Deep ecology invites us into a shift in perspective about our place and purpose in the cosmos. The proper understanding and conduct of human culture and behavior, deep ecologists tell us, must be rooted in the perception of our limited place within the larger biosphere whose life and health is the foundation of our own.

Integralists can fundamentally agree: the holarchic nature of existence means that more complex forms of life are dependent on the prior, simpler ones. “Higher” levels have more depth or complexity, but “lower” levels are more fundamental. In a fragmented world, it is sometimes necessary to stand the hierarchy on its head and revere the “lower” as “more important.” Truly integral consciousness values the whole spiral or spectrum of evolutionary development. Life has profound value beyond that of lifeless matter, for instance, but without matter there would be no life. This is also true for every stratum of life on Earth: each newly evolving form of life grows inextricably out of earlier life forms, with which they are interwoven. We are the sons and daughters of the trees.

Deep ecologists realize that human happiness, sanity, and fulfillment depend on a healthy natural world. They have come to recognize that there is a profound myopia in our historical anthropocentric arrogance. They spend time in nature and awaken to awe and wonder in relation to the whole family of life. Opening into communion with plants, animals, and natural places, they are relieved of an underlying stress they had not previously recognized. They realize that industrial human civilization's whole relationship to life is subtly painful, because it depends on separation, the effort to subdue and exploit nature, to stand apart and superior. This shift of perspective goes to the psychic roots of our environmental crisis, which is something we experience not just outwardly, in the form of imbalances in nature, but inwardly, as a subtle, craven, driven dissociation from our embodied relationship to the natural world. We are uplifted by recognizing and feeling that we have many relations in the larger family of life.

But deep ecology is, on its own, sorely incomplete. To fulfill its aspirations it will need to grow into integral consciousness. Both of these views recognize that human beings are part of a far larger, cosmic evolutionary process that gives our lives greater context and purpose, so both are inspired to commune with and care for the entire web of life. However, integral consciousness also recognizes that consciousness evolves, and that interior evolution is just as miraculous as biological evolution. Even while recognizing the immaturity of pathological anthropocentrism, integral consciousness deeply appreciates the unique creative potentials of human interiors, in individuals and in human collectives. Integral consciousness values the special depth that arises in human beings, including the dignities of modernity and the foundations of traditionalism.

Thus, unlike the postmodern mind of deep ecology, true integral consciousness recognizes sacredness in the highest interior human potentials, not just in the exterior web of life that is our foundation. It has the potential to appreciate the whole spectrum, empathizing with and, at least in principle, communicating respectfully and effectively with traditionalists and modernists; it can even contend successfully with the

egocentric might-makes-right impulses of warrior consciousness. It outgrows postmodern impotence, which can “speak truth to power” but which cannot take and wield power effectively. It rests in a deeper trust of the process of cultural evolution, so it can imagine and participate in hybrid emergent solutions that combine technological advances with deep ecological reverence and restraint.

Thus, unlike weak relativistic postmodernism, integral consciousness has the potential to exert powerful cultural and social leadership and constructive (versus deconstructive) creativity. This can find expression in every realm of human affairs, from business to public policy, to twenty-first-century science and technology, to academic philosophy, to arts and literature, to popular culture. It can take us beyond the impotent “anti-heroes” of ironic postmodern art to a new full-throated “post-ironic” affirmation of human values and virtues that integrate with our whole natural world.

However, a radical integral ecology will also awaken beyond the immature tendencies of nascent integral culture, including reactive rejection of and distancing from the many valid dimensions of postmodern sensibilities and the tendency to naively imagine that evolution’s creativity will automatically solve all problems. The evolution of human culture and human beings is not at all assured. The awe and sense of optimism that arises when we take in the glory and complexity of the evolutionary process is a powerful inspiration and it helps us awaken beyond simplistic materialistic models of cause-and-effect. Even so, evolution isn’t simply a guaranteed linear path of increasing complexity and depth. The dinosaurs were an evolutionary cul-de-sac. They did not spawn the next phase of life’s evolutionary expression. Humans must make many good choices if we are not to become another evolutionary dead end.

A radical integral ecology will also express a truly integral spirituality. It will integrate transcendental spirituality and intuitions of higher states of consciousness with reverent worship of the immanent sacred living earth. It will be awake to the divinity of what is “highest” and truly universal, the nondual consciousness that is the essence and very Mystery of existence. But it will be equally awake to what is “deepest” and most

fundamental, the embodied ground of all human experience—earth and sky and the four directions worshipped by our most ancient earth-based spiritual traditions, through which we express our brotherhood and sisterhood with all our incarnate relations (the whole human and more-than-human family, including the plant spirits and fellow creatures). It will also acknowledge that the evolutionary process of “transcending and including” is disorderly and imperfect, as we are. What is “transcended and included” as we grow in awareness is not always mastered or retained in a whole or healthy way. It is not regressive to reengage and reemphasize aspects of prior states and structures of consciousness that have not been fully integrated. In fact, doing so is sometimes necessary to building a broader foundation for the pyramid of total personal development. This is especially true with regard to regaining a full and healthy relationship with the natural world.

Whether one begins with a sympathy for deep ecology or integral theory, any serious observer of this moment in human history should be able to acknowledge that we are facing a crisis that cannot be surmounted without leadership grounded in the enduring truths of both of these paradigms. And we cannot preserve what is best through technological innovation alone. A dramatic reduction of the pace of human consumption and destruction of the natural world is inevitable. The only benign scenario by which this can be accomplished is through a profound and comprehensive cultural turnaround, a great transition. We will need both interior and exterior change, including transformations of the psychology and behavior of individuals and societies. A radical integral ecology is thus necessary and inevitable.

CREATING AN INTEGRAL CULTURE

Radical integral ecology is characterized by solutions that are both “non-zero-sum” and “out of the box.”

Non-zero-sum means win-win; that one party’s gain is not another party’s loss. We are called to take a more comprehensive view of who and what is involved in any solution, so that the impact on

the commons—especially the air, water, forests, wildlife, and earth we share—is never neglected. Future solutions must actually be *win-win-win*—wins for both sides of whatever human interests are competing, and also a win for the health of the whole. But not dogmatically. Win-win solutions are not always possible; sometimes it is necessary to fight for a single position against others. At times an integral approach to ecology may simply need to engage a battle (for a carbon tax, for example, or other appropriate public policies). Knowing that the perfect is the enemy of the good, integralists won't be so paralyzed by the desire to create non-zero-sum transactions that they will miss opportunities to create positive change. The integral flavor takes righteousness out of the equation so that we can actually hear and respond humanely to one another, rather than be boxed in by identities or polarities.

An integral approach isn't going to think only in familiar "boxes" or categories, focused merely on how to improve our existing systems. Integral approaches will address these problems in a whole variety of ways that defy the frameworks through which we are used to seeing them. One out-of-the-box approach that has already caught the global imagination is to educate girls in the developing world. Another equally significant priority is to make fossil fuels noncompetitive. Many out-of-the-box approaches are bubbling up all through culture and the integral evolutionary community. Some integral initiatives make an entrepreneurial art form out of incubating new out-of-the-box communities, artistic creations, or ideas. New technologies will also be critical here: more efficient renewable energy sources, new types of batteries, and ideas that no one has thought of yet. Rather than merely incrementally tweaking the current system, we must also imagine how it can be bypassed. We are already creating more jobs in the United States with solar and wind than we are with coal; they could already outcompete fossil fuels in many situations if government subsidies for fossil fuels were eliminated. But even more radical changes are called for. Evolutionary tension is building for exponential advances, and so is the integral impulse to imagine them, and to extrapolate into the territory ahead.

Because these are *integral* approaches, they won't exclusively focus on such *exterior* technical solutions and systems upgrades (the right-hand quadrants), but also will take into account the *interiors* of the individuals and communities who must implement and sustain them (the left-hand quadrants). The integral four-quadrant matrix is out-of-the-box—it makes us think beyond any specialized area of expertise. Most people already understand that transitions to renewable energy in communities dependent on the coal economy will collide with the attitudes, needs, and identities of their workers and residents. What may be harder to imagine is the pervasive cultural transformation that will necessarily occur as human societies radically economize our consumption of non-renewable natural resources.

No matter how many great, out-of-the-box, non-zero-sum, technologically dazzling, socially minded, and economically generative innovations we develop, the true test of a Radical Integral Ecology will come from our capacity to communicate with, cooperate with, tolerate, and care for one another. Cultural fragmentation and conflict, and the cynicism and resentment that enable them, are environmental poisons. The real ecological crisis is not a merely practical and technical problem, but equally a crisis of collective will, a cultural crisis.

A 10 PERCENT TIPPING POINT?

Ken Wilber has pointed out that at the time of the American Revolution, about 10 percent of the colonists were educated people who actually thought of the world in rational modern terms like those the Founding Fathers imbued in our founding documents. He has also speculated that when 10 percent of its population grows into a new structure of meaning-making and values, a whole society is able to rewrite its public rules based on that new structure. Although this claim is by no means mainstream, it is an extremely interesting conjecture. A 10 percent tipping point is observed or theorized in several other sociocultural models.

Scientists at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute reported in 2011 that when just 10 percent of a population holds an unshakable belief, their

belief will always be adopted by the majority. Members of the Social Cognitive Networks Academic Research Center (SCNARC) at Rensselaer used computational and analytical methods to discover the tipping point where a minority belief becomes a majority opinion. The scientific press regarded this finding as having “implications for the study and influence of societal interactions ranging from the spread of innovations to the movement of political ideals.” According to SCNARC Director Boleslaw Szymanski, “When the number of committed opinion holders is below 10 percent, there is no visible progress in the spread of ideas. It would literally take the amount of time comparable to the age of the universe for this size group to reach the majority. Once that number grows above 10 percent, the idea spreads like flame.”²⁹ This research bolsters Wilber’s “integral tipping point” conjecture. I find it entirely credible that a new stage of maturity, and a more integral worldview, might begin to reach critical mass at this 10 percent level.

In various places at various times, integral theorists, especially Wilber, have estimated the percentage of the population of the U.S., Europe, and the world who share various worldviews. It is estimated that between 2 percent and 7 percent of the populations of educated wealthy societies have adopted an integral worldview at some level. *If* this theory holds, and *if* general social forces are causing more and more people to mature into structures of awareness that are free of the limitations of postmodern presumptions, attitudes, habits, and beliefs, then a social transition might soon be possible. A transition into a new structure of meaning is an exciting time, a cultural renaissance. It can be seen in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and in what we often call the Sixties—the arrival of a significant cohort of people holding new postmodern values. Ahead of us might be another transition, this one to an integral consciousness—self-aware in important new respects, and capable of a new level of skillful and harmonious relating.

Maybe or maybe not. But it is good to know that there may be unexpected tailwinds ahead, for which the recent past is no prologue. It can be psychologically positive to expect good luck, to imagine “grace” is with us in the great enterprise this book points to. Perhaps cultural forces

can catalyze nonlinear gains in our ability to wisely govern our collective affairs, even as technological advances make it critical to our collective survival.

Maybe radical integral ecology can play a role. After all, it is a holistic mode of being. It reflects a rooted integral consciousness with an innate telos toward the reweaving of our social fabric and the healing of our general inability to speak to and be heard by one another, intimately, socially, and across our cultural divides.

And yet even that is not dogma. There are lots of ways to do it. There are many early expressions of radical integral ecology. They can be found in communities of practice at the leading edge of culture, such as cohousing arrangements or eco-villages. In some of these communities, people are experimenting with cooperative and altruistic modes of being and living. The game we are playing is accomplished through self-transcending practice, powerful friendships, and deepening mutual trust. In order to become a cultural force, we must build powerful intra-group resonance and shared practice. That is why the radical implications of an integral ecology imply a revolution of the heart—a growing capacity for appreciation, care, generosity, courage, and creativity. It is both a solo and a team effort.