KEN WILBER AS A SPIRITUAL INNOVATOR

Studies in Integral Theory

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies the American philosopher Ken Wilber (1949–) through the lens of spiritual innovatorship. Wilber's innovatorship has two dimensions, a conceptual and a practical dimension. The conceptual dimension impacts the realm of worldviews and belief systems, and the practical dimension effects the ways in which we can act on the basis of these conceptual innovations. The aim of my dissertation is to offer an interpretative analysis of the relationship between these two dimensions in order to understand Wilber as a spiritual innovator.

Ken Wilber has been influenced by many traditions, both spiritual and secular, and offers a holistic conceptual system, or a metatheoretical framework, which operates in the emerging field of *philosophia perennis,* theoretical psychology and systems theory. This system is called Integral Theory, the main purpose of which is to integrate various traditions of understanding reality into a coherent epistemological framework.

In this article-based dissertation, I approach Wilber's spiritual innovatorship from the pragmatist approach, where the connection between his conceptual system and the applications it has generated is analyzed in the fields of organizational development, leadership and coaching. The dissertation is composed of an introductory article and four peer-reviewed articles, which open up the concept of Integral Theory from both the theoretical and practical perspectives.

This dissertation contributes to the field of religious studies in explicating and offering a nuanced understanding of Ken Wilber as a spiritual innovator. Despite producing a vast and influential array of original works in the fields of perennial philosophy, transpersonal psychology, and comparative mysticism since 1974, Wilber has not been an object of a dissertation in the Study of Religion. As his work continues to influence future developments in these fields and beyond, it is timely and relevant to present a basic understanding of his approach.

KEYWORDS: Integral, spirituality, tradition, innovation, philosophy, perennialism

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Artikkelipohjainen väitöskirjani tarkastelee yhdysvaltalaisen filosofi Ken Wilberin (1949–) ajattelua henkisen uudistajuuden (innovaattoriuden) näkökulmasta. Wilberin ajattelulla on kaksi ulottuvuutta: käsitteellinen uudistajuus ja käytännöllinen uudistajuus. Käsitteellinen uudistajuus vaikuttaa maailmankuvien ja uskomusjärjestelmien alueella, ja käytännöllinen uudistajuus vaikuttaa siihen, miten noiden käsitteellisten uudistusten pohjalta toimitaan. Väitöskirjani tarkoitus on tulkita Wilberia henkisenä innovaattorina tarkastelemalla käsitteellisen ja käytännöllisen ulottuvuuden suhdetta hänen ajattelussaan ja sen sovelluksissa.

Ken Wilber on ottanut vaikutteita sekä henkisistä että sekulaareista traditioista. Näiden pohjalta hän rakentaa kokonaisvaltaista käsitejärjestelmää, metateoreettista viitekehystä, joka operoi perenniaalisen filosofian, teoreettisen psykologian ja systeemiteorian välimaastossa. Tämä järjestelmä tunnetaan integraalisen teorian nimellä. Sen tarkoitus on muodostaa erilaisista käsitejärjestelmistä yhtenäinen malli maailman ymmärtämiseen.

Väitöskirjani johdannossa ja artikkeleissa lähestyn Wilberin henkistä innovaattoriutta pragmatismin ja soveltavan hermeneutiikan näkökulmasta. Tarkastelen Wilberin käsitejärjestelmän ja sen käytännön sovellusten välistä yhteyttä muun muassa organisaatioiden ja johtajuuden kehittämiseen rakennetun coaching-metodologian kautta. Kokonaisuudessaan väitöskirjani koostuu johdantoartikkelista ja neljästä aiemmin julkaistusta vertaisarvioidusta artikkelista, jotka avaavat näkökulmia integraalisen mallin käsitteelliseen ja käytännölliseen ulottuvuuteen.

Väitökseni tarjoaa näkökulman Ken Wilberistä henkisenä innovaattorina. Wilber on vaikuttanut perenniallisen filosofian, transpersoonallisen psykologian ja vertailevan mystiikan kentällä vuodesta 1974. Laajasta tuotannostaan huolimatta hänestä ei ole aiemmin tehty tutkimusta uskontotieteessä. Tämä väitöskirja auttaa paikkaamaan tuon aukon.

ASIASANAT: integraalinen, henkisyys, perinne, innovaatio, filosofia, perennialismi

Acknowledgements

As a young student in the University of Turku I embarked on a search for wisdom and stupidity in mankind. I chose the Study of Religion as my main entryway into the topic, but soon branched out into the realms of philosophy and psychology to broaden my quest. Contrary to foreboding advice from older students, I actually felt I got answers to my questions. This dissertation is one step in the direction towards those answers.

My search was kept going by the dynamic tension I observed in my fellow humans of academia who were approaching religion, wisdom, and such matters from vastly different corners of reality, with differing perspectives and truth claims. Integral Theory appeared to address this tension by releasing it in a counterpoint of independent melodies in the interdependent Kosmic scale. This music engulfed my intellectual and practical sensibilities, and it did not lose its appeal over the ensuing years, for which I am happy and thankful.

I would also like to thank my supervisors Dr. Matti Kamppinen and Dr. Ruth Illman for providing invaluable insights and comforting words throughout the process of writing this dissertation. Without their support I would have felt like a captain of a ghost ship, alone at sea. Now I just felt like a captain of a ghost ship, but not alone. I also would like to thank Matti Kamppinen for proposing that I write a dissertation in the first place. His systemic and balanced approach – both as a scholar and as a human being – has been an ongoing inspiration.

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I dedicate this step to Ken Wilber, who gave me a theory worth throwing my academic cautions into the wind for; Huineng, who got it early on; and to my clients, who got my advice, went with it, and paid me as a result.

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List of Original Publications

The thesis is based on the following articles, which in the text are referred to as AI—AIV.

AI Jakonen & Kamppinen: Kohti kokonaisuuksien hahmottamista: Ken Wilberin integraaliteoria (In Kallio, E. (ed.): *Ajattelun kehitys aikuisuudessa – Kohti moninäkökulmaisuutta.* Kasvatusalan tutkimuksia 71. Suomen kasvatustieteellinen seura, 2016, 321—353)

AII Kamppinen & Jakonen: Systems thinking, spirituality and Ken Wilber: Beyond New Age (*Approaching Religion*, Vol 5, No. 2, 3—14, November 2015, *Systems thinking, sprituality and wisdom: Perspectives on Ken Wilber,* The Donner Institute, Åbo Akademi)

AIII Jakonen & Kamppinen: Creating Wisdom Cultures: Integral coaching as applied foresight in leadership development (*Approaching Religion*, Vol 5, No. 2, 15—26, 2015, *Systems thinking, sprituality and wisdom: Perspectives on Ken Wilber,* The Donner Institute, Åbo Akademi)

AIV Jakonen & Kamppinen: Integral framework as a systemic foundation for coaching (*Philosophy of Coaching: An International Journal,* Vol. 3, No. 2, 2018, 27—43)

Author's contributions

Article I: Jakonen is the main author. Jakonen developed the outline of the paper and wrote the initial draft. Kamppinen provided insights regarding systems thinking and philosophy of science, and their relation towards the subject matter. He also wrote the chapter on holarchical thinking, and contributed to the chapter on spirituality and evolution. The final chapter was co-written by Jakonen and Kamppinen.

Article II: Kamppinen is the main author. Jakonen wrote the chapters on Ken Wilber and systems thinking and Practice and spirituality. The topic was developed jointly with Kamppinen.

Article III: Jakonen is the main author and proposed the topic. The use of wisdom culture as a conceptual model was suggested by Kamppinen, who also wrote the introductory and the conclusion parts. Jakonen wrote the other chapters.

Article IV: Jakonen is the main author. Jakonen, who wrote the chapters concerning integral theory and Integral Coaching, proposed the topic. Kamppinen wrote the section on voluntary cognitive technologies and the relation of coaching to developmental psychology. Jakonen wrote the final version of the paper.

“We might say that we moved from living in a cosmos to being included in a universe.”

- Charles Taylor

“When we are young, we make immoderate demands on those powers that steer existence. We want them to reveal themselves to us. The mysterious veil under which we have to live offends us; we demand to be able to control and correct the great world-machinery. When we get a little older, in our impatience we cast our eye over mankind and its history to try to find, at last, a coherence in laws, in progressive development; in short, we seek a meaning to life, an aim for our struggles and suffering. But one day, we are stopped by a voice from the depths of our beings, a ghostly voice that asks “Who are you?” From then on we hear no other question. From that moment, our own true self becomes the great Sphinx, whose riddle we try to solve.”

- Henrik Pontdoppian

“Each generation needs its synthesis.”

- Pekka Kuusi

1 Introduction to the topic

1.1 Ken Wilber as an object of study

A few years before the Second World War started, the British historian Arnold Toynbee begun what was to be a project spanning four decades, approximately 7000 published pages and 12 volumes. The result was a series of books titled a Study of History (Toynbee 1934—1961), offering a bird's-eye view model of law-like growth and disintegration of world's major civilizations. For a period during the 20th century, Toynbee was one of the world's most read, discussed and translated living scholars (Lang 2011, 747), who later – and also during his own time – became outmoded (Benthall 2002, 1), and is read by "hardly anyone today" (Ferguson 2011, 298). For some world historians, Toynbee is regarded as an embarrassing uncle at a house party (Lang 2011, 747). For others, he is a pioneer of the global comparative approach, who warns the reader against "methodological nationalism", the privileging of the nation-state, vis à vis a whole civilization, as the object of historical study (Kumar 2014, 814—843). A compassionate contemporary critic of Toynbee, Rushton Coulborn, suggested that rather than seeing him as a historian, Toynbee should be judged as an artist. According to Coulborn, Toynbee was an idealist who works with a medium – world history – where idealism and proposition of laws is bound to create both error and insights. Toynbee's art drew upon the works of realists, but subjugated their techniques to a dominant idea: the search for laws in the "whole career of man" (Coulborn 1956, 235—247).[1]

A similar dominant idea has been the focus of the American philosopher, Ken Wilber (1949–), for the past sixty decades. Wilber has attempted to construct a grand narrative, an "integral vision" (Wilber 2007), that seeks to make the world make sense. Like Toynbee, who was accused of subordinating his scholarship to his religious convictions, where his whole erudition was intended to contribute to a system and a message (Geyl 1955, 260; Coulborn 1956, 235; Trevor-Roper 1957, 14—27), Ken Wilber is the scholar and the believer, or the practitioner, united in one

[1] For more on macro-scale approaches in the study of history, see Evans (2000), Kumar (2014) and Wallerstein (2004).

person.[2] Wilber's integral theory aims at making connections among disparate disciplines, attempting to devise a "theory of everything" that addresses the worlds of insentient physics, as well as the emotional, mental and spiritual realms (Wilber 2000b).

This thesis concentrates on understanding Ken Wilber (1949–) as a spiritual innovator, operating within the broad field of perennial philosophy, or *philosophia perennis*. I aim to elucidate Wilber's central spiritual innovations, the contexts they are derived from, and their contributions when they are used as pragmatic disciplinary tools.[3] The primary source material of my dissertation is the published writings of Ken Wilber from 1975 to 2018. I have focused mostly on the period starting from 1995, the so called "Wilber—IV" (Visser 2003), where Integral philosophy first appears fully, and is a position that Wilber still maintains. The two works I have used the most are the two treatises that bookend that period, namely *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (1995) and *The Religion of Tomorrow* (2017a). These works offer the most complete treatment of the Integral approach both in its first phase, and in its most recent iteration. As Wilber has revised his earlier thinking several times, the earlier sources do not accurately represent the current status of his thinking. In addition, the central term for my research, "Integral", as a marker of Wilber's philosophical position, appears properly during the mid-1990s.

Wilber's innovatorship has two dimensions, a conceptual and a practical dimension, the first impacting the realm of worldviews and belief systems, and the second effecting the ways in which we can act on the basis of these conceptual innovations. The aim of my dissertation is to offer an interpretative analysis of the relationship between these two dimensions. As a syncretistic thinker, Wilber has obtained his influences from many traditions, both spiritual and secular, and offers a holistic conceptual system called *Integral Theory*. During the course of this introductory article and the four peer-reviewed Articles that follow it, I aim to offer a nuanced interpretation of Wilber's contributions, while showing how the context from which his thinking is derived has influenced the formation of

[2] The historian himself was not shy about this. He explicitly said that his work is a theodicy, where history is "a vision ... of God revealing Himself in action to souls that were sincerely seeking Him" (Toynbee 1954, Vol X, 2). Toynbee's rather sympathetic critic Coulborn stated with an English understatement that "the attempt to write history in this light and at the same time to follow the strictly empirical procedure of the modern schools is not easy" (Coulborn 1956, 235, 247). Toynbee was, however, emphatic in that he did not have a vested interest in any single religion, but subscribed to a syncretistic faith conception, which is more or less same with Wilber (Mehta 1962a, 95—96). More on this later.

[3] See Chapter 1.8 for a more thorough explanation on the research questions, the aim and structure of this dissertation.

the innovations. Following the premises of pragmatism, I argue that Wilber's innovatorship is best understood as a dynamic interplay between the theoretical constructs and the practical applications of his system of thinking. This is presented at the conclusion of this introduction, and elucidated further in Articles III and IV, where the connections between Wilber's spiritual innovations and applied foresight in leadership development through the process of coaching is explored. As a whole, this dissertation is situated within the hermeneutical tradition, with a central aim of furthering understanding in a multifaceted manner.

The introduction also serves as providing a further context for understanding Ken Wilber and his spiritual innovatorship, which can be approached from many perspectives. From the point of view of philosophy, Wilber's undertaking can be called "Big-Question philosophy" (Wildman 2010, 8). The Classics of European philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Plato, Kant and Schopenhauer, and their South-East Asian equivalents from Sankara to Asanga, Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna, are dominated by wide ranging, adventurous, and ambitious forms of constructive big-question ventures. During the last two hundred years, the scope of philosophy has narrowed considerably, moving toward historical or logical analysis, and away from Big-Question philosophy. (ibid, 46) As a philosopher, Wilber's inquiry is classical in this sense, as it is concerned with the big questions of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, woven into a systemic approach that attempts to cover "the most amount of reality with the least amount of concepts" (Wilber 2018a, 146). The world-knot that Wilber has tried to unsnarl is well formulated by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, who suggests that the modern human is living in a secular age, where, instead of being included in a cosmos, we inhabit a universe (Taylor 2007). As a proponent of Big-Question philosophy, Wilber stands in a long line of thinkers, who have proposed synthetic philosophical systems aiming at, from a perennialist view or other perspectives, the unification of knowledge.

Wilber's particular approach on the unification of knowledge can be called rational mysticism (Horgan 2003). There are proponents of such a rational mystic approach, beginning from the earliest Greek philosophy to well-established Western philosophers and theologicians such as Plotinus, Anselm of Canterbury, and Baruch Spinoza (Randall 1969; Horgan 2003; Grayling 2019). For Wilber, however, rational mysticism means an approach where reason and rationality are seen as necessary steps in the evolution of a human being, that, in its further reaches, can proceed towards modes of knowledge that supplement pure rationality.[4] Over the course of

[4] As the Renaissance era perennial philosophy has its origins in the "serenity of faith" (Schmidt-Biggemann 2004, 27), there was no need for a critical confrontation between

nearly 50 years and 30 books, Wilber has written extensively about spirituality, religion, nature or the mind, and epistemology, then branching out from those inner perspectives into sociological, cultural and political philosophy. He has proposed a philosophical system that attempts to give his readers a "brief history" (1995) and "a theory" of everything (2000b), pointing them towards "Integral psychology" (2000a), "Integral spirituality" (2006a) and "Integral Buddhism" (2018a). Prior to Wilber, the term "integral" appears, for example, in the works of the Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1940/1985), Swiss philosopher Jean Gebser (1953/1986), and Swiss religious scholar Georg Schmid (1979), who used it to denote somewhat different things, albeit with a certain family resemblance to Wilber's concept. The first known use of integral philosophy was proposed by a Russian philosopher, Vladimir Solovyov (1877/2008), whose philosophical approach had many similarities to that of Wilber, as he proposed a way of knowing and knowledge-formation that should be free of exclusiveness and one-sidedness (Solovyov 2008). [5] Gebser and Aurobindo share a family resemblance regarding an epistemological inclusivity and a developmental approach, both having their respective models for the evolution of consciousness and being in the same philosophical domain as Wilber. The specific use of integral as an All-Quadrant, All-

theology and philosophy. For any contemporary attempt at a perennialist concordance in modern times, however, such serenity is an ill-afforded luxury. Wilber's epistemology has attempted to overcome this problem by positing three general stages of development, namely pre-rational, rational, and trans-rational, following the example set by an American psychologist James Mark Baldwin (1861–1934). In the stages that Wilber calls trans-rational (as opposed to pre-rational, i.e. modes of knowledge that precede rationality, such as the magical thinking of a 5-year old), the capacities of logical, scientific, and rational thinking are retained as a skill, and then supplemented by modes of trans-rational knowledge that are exemplified by practical injunctions ("Do this experiment, have this result, repeat, verify in a community of contemplative scholars") aimed at seeing through and transcending the ego-structure. This practical-injunctive knowledge is culturally contained in traditions that Wilber labels as authentic spirituality (as opposed from legitimate spirituality, the purpose of which is to cope with the world and the ego, instead of transcending them), which include Christian, Jewish and Islamic mysticism, branches of Buddhism such as Zen, Yogachara, Vajrayana and Dzogchen, Indian traditions such as Advaita Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism, and other, more modern traditions that derive from these knowledge pursuits. (Wilber 1984, 1995, 2006b, 2017a)

5 Steve McIntosh proposes that the integral worldview is a new, historically significant level of consciousness and culture that is in many ways the evolutionary equivalent of the emergence of the modernist worldview during the period of the 18th century Enlightenment. If this is correct, he states, then it is too early for anyone to write an intellectual history of integral philosophy; it will be decades before anyone can get an objective view of the full expression of integral philosophy. (Mcintosh 2007, 2; 153) I tend to agree, and share the growing pains of the attempt to describe such a totalistic philosophy.

Level (AQAL) pursuit towards knowledge, however, is Wilber's philosophical trademark[6]. As such, the AQAL formulation of integral forms the basis for further applications, as will be of interest here in this dissertation, in the fields of organizational development and coaching, presented later in Articles III and IV.

According to his biographer, Wilber performs at least seven roles as an author. He is (1) a theorist, (2), a synthesist, (3) a critic, (4) a polemicist, (5) a pandit or a spiritual intellectual, (6) a guide, and (7) a mystic (Visser 2003, 41–42). Wilber is a perennialist in the sense of proposing a psychology that finds in the human mind something similar to – or even identical with – divine reality (Huxley 1946, 1; Wilber 1975; Visser 2003). He can also be viewed as a proponent of the common core thesis, regarding the mystical experience as an ultimate non-sensuous experience of the unity of all things (Hood Jr 2006, 1). He is a systems-builder, who aims to construct a holistic view of the world that honors different cultural traditions and their attempts at situating human beings in the universe (Kamppinen & Jakonen 2015, 8—10; Jakonen & Kamppinen 2016, 10).[7] Wilber is also a philosopher of religion, who operates within the broad field of spirituality. He is, as previously suggested, a rational mystical thinker in the vein of the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus and the 17th century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (Randall 1969, 3–16). Fundamentally, Wilber is a philosopher, a creator of systematic concepts for furthering the big question metaphysical, ethical and epistemological inquiry in the field of religious philosophy; as the very act of philosophy can be defined as creating concepts (Wildman 2010; Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 5). From an emic standpoint, Wilber identifies himself as a pandit, who as a scholar confines his understanding of spiritual traditions to writing, instead of a guru who engages in spiritual therapy in the form of a classic guru-disciple relationship (Wilber 1999, 207–211).

1.2 Tradition and innovation

To situate Ken Wilber within the field of the Study of Religion, we can begin by seeing the dynamics of religion and spirituality as being in constant motion, with tradition and

6 For a brief period the term "AQAL" was an actual, registered trademark. Wilber's AQAL/Integral philosophy refers, among other things, to five dimensions of reality that are seen to be essential: (1) four primordial perspectives or quadrants of reality, (2) levels or stages of development in all quadrants, (3) lines of development in different quadrants, (4) states of consciousness and being in various quadrants, and (5) typologies, wherever they appear. These are shortened to AQAL, referring to "All Quadrants, All Levels" (all lines, all states and all types).

7 Although Wilber has criticized several holistic philosophies for not being holistic enough, i.e. being reductionistic in a subtle way – one could even call this paradoxically a "reduction by holism".

innovation as the two elements that give the subject its ever-changing quality. Seen from this perspective, religion and spirituality can be viewed as a construction site with various dynamic elements, modes, processes, and environments that constitute its shifting boundaries, where tradition on the one hand, and innovation on the other, compose two dialectical elements within which this dynamism takes on various forms (Williams et al. 1992; Shils 1981; Hammer 2016). This perception of religious traditions as evolutionary entities, more akin to a fluid sense of constant change and continuous movement than a totem erected in times immemorial, was previously seen as consisting of two opposites (Hammer 2016, 719). Classical twentieth century sociological theories up to the 1950s and 1960s regarded traditional and modern societies as radically different modes of existence, until scholars in anthropology and sociology such as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) and Edward Shils (1981) begun to stress the close relationship between continuity and change (Hammer 2016, 722). Lévi-Strauss introduced the notion of cold and hot societies, which respectively handled their historical factors in different manner. The cold societies were built upon a cyclical notion of existence, where the past was repeated with nothing new ever happening under the sun. Hot societies, on the other hand, were geared toward evolution and embracing change, making historical factors the moving power of their development. (Lévi-Strauss 1966, 233–234) Shils proposed, going beyond Lévi-Strauss's sociological dichotomy, that innovation is a natural element within a system of tradition.

According to Shils, the acceptance of a tradition inevitably stimulates certain minds to a creativity that transcends the previous order and stability. Instead of a static monolith, Shils saw tradition as a chain of transmitted variants, where technical practices, patterns of belief, or modes of thinking can be *traditum*: handed down across generations, with disagreements on the parts, but a general consensus regarding the whole that is transmitted. An example of this is the Platonic tradition, where various philosophers have agreed on their mission of preserving the insight of Plato, while disagreeing on particular elements within this tradition (Shils 1981, 13–16; 214). Thus, tradition and innovation can be viewed as one whole, where the hot and the cold elements operate as the interplaying and interpenetrating forces of negating and preserving, instead of being opposing, dichotomized, and completely foreign elements to each other. [8]

Innovation and tradition are interwoven concepts (Hammer 2016, 736). Seen from this broader perspective, innovatorship in traditions is a mode of furthering the discourse, the conceptual models, and the modes of thinking within a tradition.

[8] G.W.H. Hegel used the German term *Aufhebung* which can mean both "annulment" and "preservation", and it serves our purpose here to explicate how tradition is both annulled and preserved, or negated and preserved, in each innovation. For more on this, see Moore (2012, 163) and Hegel (2019).

Innovatorship is not then a threat to tradition, but something that is internal to it and a natural constitutive element, while the role of an innovator, as the one who takes up the task of evolution of the tradition, for one reason or another, is the person who, from within a tradition, transmits its essence, while perhaps disagreeing on the particulars in the process of innovatorship.[9] Traditions framed in this respect – whether they are religious, spiritual, philosophical, or theological – have at their core a multi-faceted dynamic of self-preservation (conservatism) and self-transcendence (innovation), where the function of an innovator is to broaden, deepen, and question the conceptual resources of a tradition in order to facilitate its functional fit into the lifeworld of its adherents and social context of its era. Traditions change because the circumstances to which they refer change (Shils 1981, 258). This fitting-into-the-circumstances can be seen, then, as the primary function of a spritual innovator. In their process of innovatorship, they strive to preserve the essence of a tradition, while transcending its limitations in order to make the tradition fit into the current circumstances better.

1.3 Perennial philosophy as tradition

Perennial philosophy can be seen as a view that holds various exoteric religious conceptions that share a similar esoteric origin, and are thus non-contradictory in their essential nature. I will present a general overview of the origins of perennial philosophy, and then elaborate on its relation to what Wilber has proposed in his own "neoperennial" pursuit (Wilber 1997, 52—71), attempting to go beyond a certain conservatism and subsequent polarities that were apparent both in early perennialism and its 20th century iterations, such as Traditionalism. As can be noticed, perennialist thinking had three major forms of conservatism, namely (1) syncretism that was quite selective, (2) a tendency to be anti-evolutionary, and (3) epistemic resignation. As a tradition that appears timeless and concordist, perennialism was actually quite static and regressive. Perennialism gives a good framework for situating Wilber as the object of the Study of Religion, since it is the tradition inside of which his spiritual innovations are most apparent, as they attempt to both fulfill the concordist promise that was one of the central notions of

[9] Innovative processes and creativity in the context of religious traditions can be seen as a result of three explanative forces (Williams et al. 1992, 7–14). The first explanation for spiritual innovations is a personal or a social crisis. The second explanation is seeing innovation as a modality of the spiritual tradition itself, as Shils has suggested. The third explanation puts the role of the religious genius at the centre stage, where innate religious geniousity is seen as analogous to artistic creativity and is a convincing explanation for the success of most religious founders. In some cases, all of the three forces are in play when spiritual innovations are created. (ibid.)

perennialism, and overcome the perennialist tendency to see spirituality as being "against the modern world" (Sedgwick 2004). Wilber's project is concerned with conceptually innovating spirituality so that it could align with modern and postmodern worldviews.

Although there are many and often conflicting definitions as to what actually constitutes perennial philosophy (Schmitt 1966, 505–506), it can be framed as a philosophy of spirituality that operates within a framework of theological suppositions, deliberately setting itself out to support theology by the notion that there is a concordance between monotheistic theology and philosophy (Schmidt-Biggeman 2004, 27–28). Popularized by the British philosopher-author Aldous Huxley in his book *The Perennial Philosophy* (1946), perennial philosophy can also be framed as the view, which maintains that from the philosophical writings of all historical periods we can find versions of the same, underlying truth (Schmitt 1966, 505–506). Many philosophers have used the term to fit their own particular branch of thinking, from Thomistic Scholasticism to Scholastism in general, Platonism, mysticism, positivism, naturalism, Catholic philosophy, Western philosophy and world philosophy in Eastern and Western traditions. Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) was thought to be originator of the term; however, he was simply a successor, albeit very famous, in a long line of philosophers attempting to express a harmony between various branches of knowledge (ibid, 505–506; 531).

Perennial philosophy is itself a 16th century reconceptualization of the primordial wisdom tradition of *prisca theologia*, ancient theology as the unity of wisdom, and it is thought to be derived from Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras and Zoroaster, and leading up to Plato (Hanegraaf 1996, 390). One of the earliest proponents of *prisca theologia* was a Syrian Neoplatonist philosopher Jamblichus (245–325), whose notion of the knowledge of God being innate and beyond all criticism was at the heart of this tradition (Schmitt 1966, 519–520). This concept of the unity of theology and philosophy was later developed during the Renaissance by the German philosopher and theologian Nicholas Cusanus (1401–1464) and the Italian Neoplatonist philosophers Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1493), who developed their systems in contrast to the then fashionable Aristotelian Scholasticism (Schmidt-Biggemann 2004, xv; Schmitt 1966, 507). Both Ficino and Pico supported the idea that the emergence of truth is not confined to a single philosophical, theological, or scientific tradition. According to them, all traditions could and should contribute to our knowledge, which is handed down to man from God. The tone of this approach is eclectic and syncretistic, and it has been attributed as a specific tendency of the Renaissance[10] – the era where the

[10] For a similar approach in the 21st century theology, see the transreligious theology movement (Martin 2020).

creative class relinquished the technical narrow-mindedness of the Scholastic philosophy for a broader focus on life, knowledge, and society – as in the Renaissance we see, both in writing, thinking, and in art, a rejection of the world as a vale of tears and a celebration of life in all its manifold glories and possibilities. [11] (Schmitt 1966, 507–513; Grayling 2019, 168)

Italian theologian and Vatican librarian, Agostino Steuco (1497–1548) published a treatise called "*De perenni philosophia"* in 1540, where he proposed that there is but one ancient philosophy and theology, namely the Christian, going from its Edenic beginning up to his own time, the Renaissance period. (Quinn 1997, 76–77; Schmitt 1966, 506; Schmidt-Biggemann 2004, xiii) For Steuco, as also for Plato and the Neoplatonic School in general, the functional role of philosophy is to aid a person in the practice of religion, leading to knowledge of God, and ending in union with God. (ibid, 519) A key theme for Steuco was the conception that there is "one principle of all things, of which there has always been one and the same knowledge among all peoples." (Schmitt 1966, 517) Steuco drew on a well-developed philosophical tradition, where the themes of harmony, consonance and universal agreement among varying religious and philosophical systems could already be seen in the works of Plutarch, Neoplatonism, and the Early Church Fathers (Schmitt 1966, 506, 515). Although Steuco's conception of perennial philosophy has been said to be little more than *prisca theologia* in a new guise, it was highly regarded by many scholars throughout the 17th and the early 18th centuries, then gradually forgotten, until it was rediscovered in the 19th century by the Catholic philosopher and educator Otto Willman (Schmitt 1966, 516; 519–520). In the twentieth century, perennial philosophy appeared in the form of Traditionalism, a school of metaphysical thought associated with René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Frithjof Schuon, and Huston Smith. It was a reinterpretation of the perennialist concept, and was marked by its tendency to situate itself and the ancient wisdom against the modern world (Sedgwick 2004). This tendency, however, was not an invention of the Traditionalist movement. There was a clearly recognizable streak of conservatism already apparent in the Renaissance era perennialism, as I will argue in the following.

Lauri Honko defined tradition as a cultural store, where some parts are being used while other parts are waiting to be used, and in danger of passing into oblivion through lack of use (Honko 1995, 133). To see perennial philosophy in this regard is to see a tradition that has a conservative notion weaved into its constitutive fabric

[11] This is also reflected in the difference of the Renaissance art to that of the medieval art, where the rather rigidly portrayed themes of flagellation, crucifixion and iterations of the Divine Mother gave way to landscapes, still lives, and portraits of individuals (Grayling 2019, 168).

right from the very beginnings. Some parts of the *sophia* – the perennial, eternal, never-changing wisdom – are to be used, while other parts – the progressive, evolutionary, contextual aspects of wisdom – are best left neglected. This conservatism takes three forms. First, although Steuco subscribed to the notion of syncretism and concordance, and the key theme in his treatise can be argued to be that there is one, single principle of knowledge in all times and among all peoples, not all doctrines and paths to this knowledge were made equal. Steuco rejected strongly the teachings of the reformist movements of John Calvin and especially Martin Luther[12] – both archetypes of religious innovators, given our definition above – finding various pagan and non-Christian religious traditions to be more in line with his philosophy. (Schmitt 1966, 516) The second form of perennialist conservatism is visible in Steuco's view of history, which can be said to lack any concept of progress; some scholars have suggested that Steuco has a tendency towards the Greek notion that there has been a steady degradation in history. Knowledge, for Steuco, was handed down in a perfect form by God, known clearly in ancient times, from which it gradually diminished, becoming scattered, forgotten, and uncertain.[13] (ibid, 517–518) This anti-evolutionary notion (if such can be attributed here without sounding anachronistic) is a staple of perennial philosophy and especially in the derivative twentieth century movement of Traditionalism (Sedgwick 2004). The Renaissance – new beginning, new birth, *re-naissance* – of the conventional histories was supposed to be the era where traditions were broken (and, of course, rediscovered, as was the case in relation to the classic Greek philosophy). Instead, in the earliest forms of perennialism, we see a single truth that, entangled with Steuco's view of history as epistemological downfall, is available to all who search for it, throughout all times, and all places. The third form of perennialist conservatism is visible in the key theme of *De perenni philosophia*: that there is really nothing new in the world of philosophy. Certain truths were known already by the most ancient of thinkers, and then this wisdom has been passed on, *traditum*, as Shils' chain of transmitted variants, from generation to generation throughout history. As the most ancient authors were seen as being closest to the truth, the study of new sources could

[12] Steuco actually compared Lutheranism to a "plague…the contempt of piety, the ruin and downfall or opposition to religion" (Schmitt 1966, 516). Notable in Schmitt's article is that it uses the original Latin version of Steuco's complete works, Opera omnia, published in Venice in 1591, as a primary source.

[13] As explored further, this is exactly where Ken Wilber offers his innovative conceptualizations, as for Wilber, at least from the early 1980s onwards, spirituality becomes a matter or evolutionary process of growth both in states of consciousness and structures of consciousness; for Wilber's concept of spirituality, there is neither a future Omega point, as suggested by Teilhard de Chardin, nor a metaphorical Eden, from which humankind has spriritually regressed.

only provide more information about what is already known, instead of revealing something essentially novel (Hanegraaf 2012, 11). The three forms of perennialist conservatism are, then, (1) selective syncretism, (2) anti-evolutionary/anti-modernist tendency, and (3) epistemological resignation.

1.4 Ken Wilber as an innovator of the perennialist tradition

Ken Wilber has attempted to update some of the conservative notions, anti-modern tendencies, and the epistemological premises of the perennialist tradition, by offering conceptual innovations within a systemic approach to spiritual philosophy. Wilber's innovatorship is twofold: first, *conceptual*, having an impact on the realm of worldviews and belief systems (how we should understand the world), and second, *practical*, pertaining to how we can or should act on the basis of these conceptual innovations, how we can apply our understanding to changing the world. Wilber has drawn material from a wide variety of sources, including systems of philosophy, religion, psychology, systems theory, and cultural studies, in order to present an axiomatic system consisting of a general theory of theories, or a metatheory (Wilber 1995; 2017a; Visser 2003). Researchers working with Wilber's Integral philosophy[14] have found points of connection with several major thinkers from Eastern and Western traditions, such as Pythagoras, Parmenides, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Maimonides, and Spinoza in the Western philosophies, and Buddha, Nagarjuna, Shankara, Aurobindo, Fazang, Zhu Xi, Ibn Sina/Avicenna and Ibn al-Arabi in the Eastern and Arabic philosophies (Visser 2003; Rothberg 1998). Wilber has named his approach *Integral Metatheory,* aimed at understanding and situating other frameworks of knowledge under the maxim "everyone is right."[15] (Hanegraaf 2002)

[14] I use a capital "I" to denote Wilber's system as distinguished from other approaches bearing the same name, such as those of earlier integral thinkers like Jean Gebser and Sri Aurobindo Ghose.

[15] Jacobs (2009, 368–369) argues in his dissertation, following Gamez (2007), that Wilber's maxim of "everyone is right" leads to unstable hermeneutic circles. Jacobs postulates that "there is no epistemology that can claim that 'everybody is right' without the risk of self-referential contradiction" (Jacobs 2009, 369). Jacobs argues that "everybody is right" leads to including absolutist truth claims, and "since the absolutist disqualifies the veracity of all theories but his own, the inclusionist [Wilber] is left with a contradiction" (ibid.). Wilber's maxim can be read also from a developmentally epistemological perspective, where everybody being right is equivalent to their being right at their own altitude, i.e. them seeing a View from the structure-stage they are at in a particular point in time. That gives rise to a holarchy of Views, each of which describe a view of the world that is true, but partial, in an evolutionary unfoldment of

Wilber has used perennial philosophy as a guiding principle, starting in the 1970s as an author in the field of transpersonal psychology – a school of psychology that attempts to unite the transcendental aspects of human beings with the more conventional aspects of psychology (Visser 2003). Wilber sees the essential message of perennialism as "Spirit exists....[it] is found within...most of us don't realize this Spirit within...because we are living in illusory state...there is a way out of this...a Path to our liberation...the result [of which] is...a direct experience of Spirit within...[marking] the end of sin and suffering, and which...issues in social action of mercy and compassion on behalf of all sentient beings" (Wilber 1993, 79). Wilber has further proposed the core message of perennial philosophy to consist of the "Great Nest of Being" (the view suggesting reality to be comprised of successive levels from matter to life to mind to spirit) that culminate in "One Taste" (the nondual view suggesting reality to be undivisible between the subject of experience and the objects experienced) (Wilber 1999, 54). Wilber's central argument, however, is not that we need to return to a form of wisdom that was somehow more pure or pristine in earlier ages (as the perennialists and Traditionalists maintained), but the timeless, changeless, spaceless, and formless notions of wisdom and truth, that have been the essence of the perennial philosophy, are of use in modern culture (Wilber 1997, 53—55). According to Wilber:

> "[T]he perennial philosophy is not, at its core, a set of doctrines, beliefs, teachings, or ideas, for all of those are *of* the world of form, of space and time and ceaseless change, whereas very Truth is radically formless, spaceless, and timeless, encompassing all space and time but limited to none…[t]hus perennial philosophy, as a direct-insight union with that Reality itself, could never be adequately captured in any set doctrines or ideas…[R]adical Truth can be *shown* (in contemplative awareness) but never exhaustively *said* (in discursive language)." (Wilber 1997, 53, italics in original)

world-Views. According to this interpretation, a 5-year old child would be right in seeing an ego-centric view of the world, as would be a 15-year old teen-ager in seeing a more ethno-centric view of the world. This does not, however, lead to a conclusion that they are equally right. An absolutist truth claim can be understood as a performative utterance coming from a certain altitude of consciousness, describing the world one sees when being at that altitude: the world that is neither "wrong" nor "right", but a world-View that describes a certain truth/View that is rather inescapable when we are that stage. This evolutionary epistemology does not make all truth claims equal; it attempts to make ontological room for them all. Wilber's epistemology should not be separated from his evolutionary ontology.

Wilber has strived to transcend the conservative nature of the perennialist tradition, maintaining the compatibility of the perennialist pursuit with the contributions of modern science and postmodern critique, and has argued that perennial philosophy needs to be updated and modernized in order for it not to be against the modern world, but to be part of its evolutionary unfoldment (cf. Wilber 1997; 2006a). He suggests a clear separation between perennial or ancient wisdom as a form of Truth from a bygone era, and, on the other hand, as Truth that is timeless, formless, and changeless, apparent in spiritual wisdom traditions. Wilber proposes that modern culture does not need ancient wisdom in the first sense, but does need it (as well as cultures in any given era) in the latter sense. The return to truth as a form from a bygone era is for Wilber reactionary, antiprogressive, antiliberal, and anti-evolutionary (Wilber 1997, 55).

What makes Wilber distinctive as an innovator considering his perennialist background is his central thesis that "both the quality of humanity's spiritual understanding, and the form of its presentation, are deepening and becoming more adequate in modern times" (ibid, 56), instead of the devolationary fall from the golden age, which was the core idea of perennial philosophy. This shift from seeing the golden age to be rather in the future than in the past Wilber named "neoperennial philosophy", which is something that, Wilber suggests, our present culture needs in lieu of "old wisdom" (ibid, 57). At the core of this proposal is the same "Formless Truth" that was suggested by several wisdom traditions with culture-specific names (Tao, Buddha Mind, Brahman, Keter, Ein Sof), that is supplemented by a form that is more tuned to present-day needs, ideas, and advances in science, as our current reality includes the complex forms of global politics, the idea of evolution, molecular engineering, artificial intelligence, and so on. Wilber: "[T]he *form* of Ancient Wisdom can no longer be ancient" (Wilber 1997, 57). Wilber's conceptual innovatorship is to account for this disparity between the ancient wisdom and the modern form, and to propose a system that would amount to a marriage of sense and soul (Wilber 1998). This approach, favorable to premodern, modern and postmodern knowledge quests, sets Wilber apart from Traditionalists like Huston Smith (1992), Fritjof Schuon (1984), and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2008), as Wilber's take on perennialism is both more psychological and contemporary than other perennialists' (Rothberg 1998, 6). Wilber views science as an ally of the perennialist cause – as a tool for helping us grow out of infantile beliefs, being a necessary but partial perspective on the way towards the trans-rational[16] stages of development (Horgan 2003, 55–56).

[16] Trans-rational is a Wilberian term that refers to the tripartite nature of epistemology, consisting of pre-rational, rational, and trans-rational modes of knowledge acquisition (Wilber 1983).

Beyond the perennialist tradition, there are three strands in recent philosophy that help to further situate Wilber as a spiritual innovator. These strands are (1) the conflict between scientific naturalism and antireductionism (Nagel 2012, 13); (2) misgivings towards the very idea of big-question philosophy (Wildman 2010, 5); and (3) a distrust of comparative undertakings and the nomothetic ideal in human sciences (Smith 2001, xi). Wilber's answer to these is his systematic Integral philosophy, which is antireductionistic in its epistemology; big-question oriented in its metaphysics; and nomothetic in its searching for general patterns and axiomatic laws that govern the evolution of the cosmos (Wilber 1995; 1996; 2017a). Wilber's approach as a whole can be interpreted as an attempt to form a coherent narrative for a contemporary person, who finds her-/himself without a deeper meaning in a secular age, as a person living inside a universe instead of being at home in the cosmos (Taylor 2007). [17] Wilber's project is, then, an attempt to form a systematic and meaningful synthesis of the nature of reality where the subjective and spiritual ontologies can be argued for, so as to make living in the cosmos – or Kosmos[18] – possible, utilizing pre-modern (i.e. "perennial"), modern, and post-modern knowledge in the making of this synthesis. In this sense, Wilber's approach is clearly soteriological in nature, aiming at individual and collective liberation, with an emancipatory knowledge interest guiding the whole project (Schwartz & Esbjörn-Hargens 2019; Habermas 1971). The creation of this synthesis frames Wilber as a spiritual innovator[19], making him, his innovations, and their contextual connections

17 An intellectual counterpart to this can be seen in the late 18th century when German idealism grew out of the crisis of the Enlightenment, attempting to save rational criticism and scientific naturalism from becoming, respectively, skepticism and materialism, leading into atheism (Beiser 2017, 21).

18 Wilber uses the moniker "Kosmos" in his book Sex, Ecology, Spirituality (1995) to refer to the Pythagorean origin of the word. The book was an appeal for a spiritual ontology that Wilber felt was under attack from two fronts. First, the aftermath of what came as a response to German idealism, the positivism of the analytical philosophy, had proposed materialistic "flatland" ontology. This is nothing new in the history of philosophy, as materialistic explanations have been around since the pre-Socratics in the West, as evident for example in the thinking of Leucippos, Democritus and Epicuros, as well as in ancient Eastern schools of Indian philosophy such as Charvaka/Loyakata school (For more on these subjects, see Grayling (2019) and Bhattacharya (2017)). Second, the relativistic and deconstructive nature of knowledge as put forward by postmodern philosophy, particularly in the humanities, made a formulation of a grand synthesis all but impossible. Sex, Ecology, Spirituality was Wilber's attempt at exactly that.

19 A spiritual innovator can be also defined as a person who introduces or does something in a new way within the realms of ultimate truth (Rifkin 2002). This formulation is close to, but not akin to, the concept of a seeker (Mercadante 2014), which is a part of a larger group of "spiritual, not religious" identity, characterized by Fuller (2001) as a mix of intellectual progressivism and yearning toward mysticism, outside the

an interesting and timely study in religious studies, as an increasing number of such attempts at unification and integrated pluralism have been made recently. [20]

1.5 A biographical sketch of Ken Wilber

Kenneth Earl Wilber Jr. was born on 31st January 1949 in Oklahoma City, where his family was temporarily based at the time. His father worked as a career officer in the United States air force. This caused the family to travel a great deal, from the island of Bermuda to El Paso, and from Texas, to Great Falls, Montana. Wilber entered high school in Montana and finished his school education in Lincoln, Nebraska, where his father was stationed at the time, having changed schools four times in four years. His parents thought he would make a good doctor – having been a straight A student in both middle and high school – so he enrolled to study medicine at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. (Rothberg 1998, 4–14; Visser 2003, 17–20)

Entering Duke University in 1967, Wilber felt the materialistic approach of medical studies to be without a deeper purpose. [21] He left Duke University and enrolled at the University of Lincoln in Nebraska to study biochemistry[22], but soon abandoned his studies. Motivated by a feeling of "life being sour" in materialist studies, he embarked on a self-appointed curriculum of cross-cultural transpersonal philosophy, world philosophy, developmental psychology, Eastern and Western varieties of mysticism, religious studies, sociology and anthropology. This led him to writing his first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (1977/1993), in a three-month period in the winter of 1973. Rejected by some twenty publishers over three

boundaries of organized religion. See the next chapter for a discussion on the concept of spirituality.

20 For other recent similar syntheses, see for example Wilson (1998), Godwin (2004) and Nagel (2012). Also, Ninian Smart has proposed for a similar project: "[E]ven if there is not a unity in regard to religion, could there be some kind of world worldview, perhaps at some higher level? I would argue that a global society, such as we are now developing, needs some guidelines as to how religions and ideologies should be held together. Differing expressions of spirituality should be allowed […] So a new world worldview is emerging. We can call it global pluralism for short." (Smart 1998, 591—592)

21 One of the explanations for spiritual innovations is a personal crisis (Williams et al., 1992), which is evident here. Wilber's experience is similar to that of the Iranian-born Traditionalist Seyyed Hossein Nasr's when Nasr was at MIT majoring in geology. This is described in Sedgwick (2004) as Nasr experiencing "'a full-blown spiritual and intellectual crisis' as he began to feel the limitations of natural science as an explanation of reality".

22 Wilber describes getting bored by medical studies, which he felt to be "a glorified plumber's job", and thought that biochemistry had something more creative to offer. It eventually did not, so he left formal academic studies altogether. (Cited from: https://www.consciouslife.com/integral-in-action/)

years, it was finally published by Quest Books four years later. Wilber's first published work was an article entitled "The Spectrum of Consciousness" in the magazine Human Dimensions in the summer of 1974. It was followed by an article "Psychologia Perennis" in the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology. In the article, Wilber stated that "*psychologia perennis"* has been overlooked as in the west interest has increased in the *philosophia perennis* (Wilber 1975). This perennial psychology – "a universal view as to the nature of human consciousness, which expresses the very same insights as the perennial philosophy, but in more *decidedly psychological language*" [emphasis mine] – aimed at an outline of a model of consciousness that would remain faithful to the spirit of the perennialist doctrine, but also take into consideration the insights of modern Western disciplines such as ego psychology, psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, Jungian analysis, and interpersonal psychology (ibid.). This unification of the spiritual philosophy of the perennialist tradition, and the modern psychological traditions of the West would function as a statement of principle that Wilber has followed in the whole of his work, albeit having gone through numerous iterations or revisionary phases, known as Wilber-I, Wilber-II, Wilber-III, Wilber-IV and Wilber-V (Visser 2003, 51; 73—77). This principle can be called, simply, perennial psychology.

During the early phase of his career, Wilber contributed both to the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology.* However, he came to view the transpersonal psychology movement as confusing – as he himself, in the Wilber-I phase, had done – the prepersonal and transpersonal structures of consciousness in one non-rational category, which was often glorified *in toto.* The problem with transpersonal movement was that as long as something was not rational, it was assumed to be divine. This lead, according to Wilber, to internal confusion inside the transpersonalist movement due to the ill-defined category of the very subject matter, i.e. the transpersonal. It also led to the general public seeing any religious orientation in one of two ways: a spiritual, religious person or a transpersonally oriented person was either "a fundamentalist nutcase or a new age nutcase". (Wilber in MacDonald & Friedman 2020, 2—3) Wilber argued, beginning in phase II of his model, that development of consciousness spans successive stages from pre-rational to rational to trans-rational. Wilber searched for a name that would cover all of this development from pre-rational to rational to trans-rational. Not seeing this full-spectrum psychology covered in any of the psychologies he was working with (the transpersonal movement, the more conventional developmental psychology, or the spiritual traditions), Wilber named his approach *Integral*, although he would come to use it only later, during the 1990s. Later still, Wilber differentiated the two types of developmental sequences as "growing up" and "waking up", referring to how the structures of consciousness evolve, and how the states of consciousness evolve (MacDonald & Friedman 2020, 2—3).

The book *Spectrum of Consciousness*, however, was still a product of a retro-romantic approach that confused the pre- and trans-personal stages of development. The book was published in 1977 by a theosophical publishing house, Quest Books. It gained attention in the field of transpersonal psychology, and Wilber was asked to speak at conferences around the United States. After publishing a popular and more accessible version of the book, *No Boundary – Eastern and Western Approaches to Personal Growth* (1979/2001), Wilber hesitated between continuing as a speaker, and continuing to develop his thinking and writing, eventually choosing the latter. He abandoned speaking, and retreated into the career of a writer. Over the next years, Wilber supported himself through part-time manual work, deepened his practice of Zen with several hours of daily meditation, while continuing a life of reading and writing. He wrote works on developmental psychology (*The Atman Project*, 1980), anthropology (*Up from Eden*, 1981), an edited a collection of articles written by scientists working at the crossroads of physics, the study of the brain, and holography (*Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes*, 1982), sociology (*The Sociable God*, 1983/2005), philosophical epistemology (*Eye to Eye*, 1984/2001); a collection on the mystical writings of the pioneers of quantum physics (*Quantum Questions*, 1984/2001), a joint book on stages of comparative contemplative practice (*Transformations of Consciousness,* 1986, with Jack Engler and Daniel P. Brown) and another joint book on assessing spiritual disciplines (*Spiritual Choices*, 1987, with Dick Anthony and Bruce Ecker). (Visser 2003)

After marrying Treya Killam in 1983, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and Wilber gave up most of his writing to care for her until she passed away in 1991. Wilber authored a book *Grace and Grit* (1991) detailing the years from her diagnosis to her demise. For the next three years Wilber lived as a relative recluse, meeting only three people during these years, in order to research and write his magnum opus, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality – The Spirit of Evolution* (1995). After publishing the book, Wilber wrote another popular version of his latest work, *A Brief History of Everything* (1996). The next years were again a prolific period. *The Eye of Spirit* (1997) was a collection of essays on a range of topics from art and literary theory to integral feminism and the effects of meditation. *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* (1998) was another popularization, this time for a larger publishing house (Broadway Books/Random House), that led people like Bill Clinton and Al Gore to promote Wilber's approach. *One Taste* (1999) was a yearlong personal journal at the request of his regular publisher, Shambhala.

At the beginning of the millennium, Wilber wrote a shortened version of a proposed psychology textbook *System, Self and Structure*, published as *Integral Psychology* (2000a). *A Theory of Everything* (2000b) was a short introduction to integral theory applied to business, politics, science and spirituality. *Boomeritis* (2002a) was a philosophical novel that had its voluminous endnotes and sidebars

released on the publisher's website. In 2003, Wilber conducted a 10-CD interview with the Sounds True audiobook publisher Tami Simon (*Kosmic Consciousness*), and released a collection of spiritual writings compiled from his previous books under the title *The Simple Feeling of Being* (2004). *Integral Operating System* (2005) was an AQAL theory primer with a short booklet, 2 CD's and a DVD. The first proper book after Boomerits was *Integral Spirituality* (2006), where Wilber assessed the role of spirituality and religions, as well as updating his epistemological and methodological models. Another short introduction to the theory was *The Integral Vision* (2007), whereas the co-written *Integral Life Practice* (2008, with Adam Leonard, Terry Patten and Marco Morelli) was a practice book for "body, mind, spirit and shadow", the shadow referring to the psychological aspects of growth.

Due to health problems, Wilber's published output diminished during the next ten years.[23] At the same time, Integral Theory was in the process of being differentiated from Wilber's original works, and disseminated into other dimensions, like institutional, experiential, and material (Smart 2008). The early 2000s saw the opening of the fairly short-lived Integral Institute, a think tank purporting to take an integral perspective on global issues. At the same time, the Integral Spiritual Center was initiated, aiming to bring together spiritual teachers from various traditions. The *Integral Life Practice Starter Kit*, a 5-DVD, 2-CD and a 3-booklet program for "transforming body, mind, and spirit [and shadow] in self, culture and nature" was released as a commercial product in 2006 by the Integral Institute, and later transferred to an online course. The peer-reviewed academic *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* (JITP) was established in the mid-2000s. Edited by integral scholar and PhD Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, among others, the journal was in operation from 2006 to 2015, with four issues published annually. The State University of New York Press (SUNY Press) released a series of books on integral theory from 2010 onward. Starting with *A Guide to Integral Psychotherapy* (Forman 2010), the topics ranged from ecology (Mickey et al., 2017), conflict resolution (McGuigan & Popp 2016), sex, gender and sexuality (Nicholson & Fisher 2014), leadership (Forman & Ross 2013), the relationship between jazz music improvisation and education (Sarath 2013), and the philosophical implications of integral theory (Schwartz & Esbjörn-Hargens 2019). The first biannual Integral European Conference was held in 2014, being a successor to the initial Integral Theory conference that was held in 2008 in the United States, with three more in 2010, 2013 and 2015 (Schwartz & Esbjörn-Hargens 2019). [24] Wilber resumed writing in the mid- 2010s, releasing *Integral*

[23] Wilber has suffered from Rnase Enzyme Deficiency Disease (REDD). His own account of the disease can be accessed at: http://www.integralworld.net/redd.html

[24] By 2008 Wilber had many online critics. Many of them published their critiques on a website called Integral World (www.integralworld.net), hosted by former

Meditation (2016), *The Religion of Tomorrow* (2017a), *Trump and a Post-truth World* (2017b) and *Integral Buddhism* (2018a) in rapid succession, with a shorter *Integral Politics* (2018b) published as an e-book. At the time of this writing, Integral Life (www.integrallife.com) is the current virtual hub of the integral community, producing writings as well as audio and video material. It is described as "a member-driven digital media community that supports the growth, education and application of Integral Philosophy and integrative metatheory to complex issues in the 21st century".

1.6 Spirituality as a concept

At the heart of the perennialist tradition lies a spiritual orientation towards reality. This is the orientation taken by Wilber, and innovated by him, which frames him as a spiritual innovator regarding that tradition. Spirituality can be understood as a conceptual framework for seeing the world as an interconnected whole, where different parts of the world are permeated by the same intelligible logic, or the same material out of which different appearances are made (Kamppinen & Jakonen 2015, 3). Mary N. MacDonald's synoptic definition of spirituality furthers this:

> Spirituality is the concern of human beings with their appropriate relationship to the cosmos. How the cosmic whole is conceived and what is considered appropriate in interacting with it differ according to the worldviews of individuals and communities. Spirituality is also construed as an orientation toward the spiritual as distinguished from the exclusively material. [25] (MacDonald 2005, 8718)

Wilber biographer, the Dutch Theosophist Frank Visser. These critics were encouraged to submit papers for the first Integral Theory conference held at JFK University in Pleasant Hill, California, August 7th to 10th in 2008. The most vocal critics did not submit papers for the conference. For more information, see http://www.integralworld.net/visser26.html, http://www.integralworld.net/jfk2008.html and http://www.integralworld.net/forman-hargens.html

[25] An important distinction is to differentiate the use of the word *spirit* in the context of western philosophy and the study of religion. From the perspective of the study of religion the word seems to have a specifically religious (or, indeed, "spiritual") connotation. However, many philosophers in the Western tradition use the term to refer to the part of reality that is not seen by the eyes, or to the mind. This is apparent, for example, in the German idealist tradition, where the word "Geist", often translated as spirit, is prevalent in the works of Fichte, Hegel, Kant, Schelling, Dilthey, and others. The use of the concept of "Spirit" can, from the perspective of idealist philosophy or substance dualist orientations, simply mean to refer to the inner, subjective reality – a "container of reality" that does not necessarily have any religious or spiritual content

Spiritual innovatorship, in the case of Ken Wilber, means understanding the contributions and novel conceptions he offers regarding this relationship to the cosmos, both as regards the basic theory and the practical applications derived from the theory (these are explored further in Articles III and IV). These relationships between human beings and the cosmos have seen a proliferation on the "spiritual marketplace" during the 20th century, and especially from the 1960s onwards, as the spiritual traditions of different cultures and different ages have become available to contemporary Western consumers; manifesting in movements such as the New Age, where the cultural resources of different traditions are recruited to celebrate the self and sacralizing modernity (Roof 1999; Heelas 1996; Hanegraaf 1996; Kamppinen & Jakonen 2015). The primary New Age movement has since been superseded as the cultural scene has moved beyond the New Age to more nuanced worldviews and conceptual resources for situating oneself in an appropriate relationship with the cosmos (Sutcliffe & Bowman 2000; MacDonald 2005). These approaches to spirituality are unified by a search for systemic order, a higher self, and meaning, as well as the attempt to explain, or experience, interconnectedness beyond the material dimension of reality (Kamppinen & Jakonen 2015; Streib & Klein 2016, 76—77). It is within this context of moving beyond the New Age movement, towards a more realistic and reason-including spirituality as a conceptual framework, where the central feature becomes a search for the lawful connections that govern the dynamics of ultimate reality (Elkins et al., 1988), that we can situate Ken Wilber as a spiritual innovator.

Spirituality has been, however, a surprisingly difficult concept to define (King 2005, 306), and there is considerable fuzziness in its use as an etic term. (Streib & Klein 2016, 78) A thoughtfully conceptual integration of spirituality, then, appears to be a work in progress (ibid.).[26] Conceptual clarity between the words "religion" and "spirituality" is suggested to be lacking even in textbooks on the subject (ibid.), but for the common man and the common woman, the word as an emic concept is characterized by a variety of semantic associations. Streib & Klein (2016, 76—77) offer ten components for the semantics of spirituality based on a cross-cultural questionnaire, from "connectedness and harmony with the universe, nature, and the whole", to "search for (higher) self, meaning, inner peace, and enlightenment", and "experience of truth, purpose, and wisdom beyond rational understanding". It has become an important, albeit rather slowly surfacing focus of research in the study of

(Bailey 2017, 449–451). An example of this can be seen in Snellman (1848/1932, 519–524).

26 It should be noted here that Wilber offers his own conceptual definitions for spirituality (cf. Wilber 2000a), offering five aspects of spirituality. These are explored in Article II (Kamppinen & Jakonen 2015, 10—11).

religion over the last few decades (Jespers 2013; Partridge 2004; Ferrer & Sherman 2008).[27] Moreover, the semantics of the word vary, and there is no consensus about how the American connotation of "spirituality" translates into other languages (Streib & Klein 2016, 75).

De Souza suggests that the distinct reluctance to define spirituality or to define it as something manageable and workable is tied to western culture and its character of being derived from Western Christianity. She proposes that this has led to difficulties in finding non-religious language to describe "the innate human characteristic of spirituality" for both philosophers and researches alike, whereas spirituality appears to be an everyday affair for people coming from Eastern or indigenous cultures. (de Souza 2016, 3) However, working definitions of spirituality abound, as well as distinctions between spirituality and religion. One of the wider ones appears in Griffin (1988, 2) as a person's ultimate values and commitments, regardless of their content. This is also close to Protestant theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich's framing of faith as ultimate concern – whether about success, nationality, or the faith manifested in the religion of the Old Testament (Tillich 1957/2009, 1–4). Hanegraaf (1999, 371—272) separates "spirituality" from "religion" in denoting religion as being a "symbolic system which influences human action by providing possibilities for ritually maintaining contact between everyday world and a more general meta-empircal framework of meaning", and spirituality as "any human practice which maintains contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning by way of the individual manipulation of symbolic systems". Partridge (2004, 48—49) presents spirituality as "understood by those outside [the] church to be a *deep* pursuit […] vital and subversive […] break[ing] boundaries [and being] life-enhancing", with beliefs in an impersonal, universal spirit of the life force. Jespers (2013, 209—212) also proposes a division between religious and secular spirituality. In this dissertation, spirituality as it pertains to Wilber's position as an innovator, is used in the sense MacDonald (2005) has suggested above, as the concern of human beings with their appropriate relationship to the cosmos, and the facilitation of this relationship by the construction of conceptual tools for thought.

[27] Something is revealed by the fact that recent general overviews of religious studies, for example Braun and McCutcheon's *Guide to the Study of Religion* (Braun & McCutcheon 2000) and Stausberg's *Contemporary Theories of Religion* (2009), as well as the 1987 edition of *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Eliade 1987), lack an original entry on the subject. Jespers (2013) proposes that attention to spirituality has been traditionally stronger in particular areas of the field, particularly in psychology and sociology of religion.

1.7 Previous studies

Articles I—IV approach Ken Wilber from a phenomenological-hermeneutical perspective, with an emphasis on the relationship of theoretical constructions and their applications in Articles III and IV. As a subject matter in the field of the Study of Religion, Integral Theory is a new and contested phenomenon, especially in traditional academic settings, with a somewhat growing interest in the topic among scholars and practitioners (See Appendix for a list of disciplinary and scholarly applications). SUNY Press releases an on-going series of books on Integral Theory, from a wide range of topics including approaches to ecology, psychiatry, and philosophy (Esbjörn-Hargens & Zimmerman 2009; Ingersoll 2005; Schwartz & Esbjörn-Hargens 2019). The University of Calgary has produced dissertations based on the Integral Theory from 2002 to 2017. Private universities such as JFK University and California Institute of Integal Studies have offered programs on the Integral model. As a focus of research, Integral Theory has been mainly studied from a conceptual perspective, from the standpoint of the theory as theory (Brys & Bokor 2013; de Quincey 2000; Walsh & Vaughan 1994). There are studies in which the relation of the theory to a specific discipline is explored (e.g. psychotherapy in Marquis 2008; coaching in Hunt 2009; ecology in Esbjörn-Hargens & Zimmerman 2009; see Appendix for a list). As an autodidact regarding his main foci of psychology, philosophy, and religion, Ken Wilber has worked outside academia for most of his career. After obtaining a double bachelor's degree in chemistry and biology, and receiving a scholarship in graduate studies to study biophysics and biochemistry at the University of Nebraska, Wilber eventually left before graduating (Visser 2003, 20—22). In the Study of Religion, however, Ken Wilber and the Integral approach has not been the object of study, either from a theoretical/conceptual or from a practical/pragmatist standpoint. This work attempts to close that research gap.

In reviewing Frank Visser's biography of Ken Wilber, Wouter Hanegraaf (2002) suggests that Wilber can be regarded as an unknown celebrity, who has attracted little interest in academic circles. Only a few scholars of the psychology of religion or religious studies know his name, let alone have read his work. According to Hanegraaf, Wilber was seen as a New Age author from whom no serious contributions to scholarly debate can be expected. Hanegraaf proposes that if one actually reads Wilber, one discovers a "highly intelligent and critical thinker, whose work is rooted in a thorough familiarity with the professional literature of the psychology and sociology of religion".[28] The problem that remains, Hanegraaf

[28] A former senior writer for *Scientific American*, John Horgan, says that despite having no formal academic affiliation or a degree in religious studies, Wilber is "almost certainly as knowledgeable about the history of mysticism as any academic scholar" (Horgan 2003, 55).

continues, is Wilber's tendency to base his theory on mystical-spiritual axioms, believing that "religion can only be understood by taking a religious point of view oneself", which makes his theory incompatible with the very foundations of critical academic research. Comparing the quality of the theory, Hanegraaf however compares Wilber's place in the pantheon of 20th century scholars of religion to those of Carl Gustav Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Rudolf Otto, all of who have been the objects of a religionist criticism. Eliade, especially, has a contested legacy, having been reproached for his generalizations, his ontological assumptions, and what is called the "soft Perennialist" thesis of a general model of human religiosity (Sedgwick 2004, 192). McCutcheon (1997) has suggested that Eliade ignores the nonreligious origin and function of religion, and deflects attention away from the political aspects of religion. This perspective, however, has been suggested to be as equally one-sided, totalizing, and reductionistic as the "religionism" it supposedly opposes (Segal 2005, 84—85).

Walsh (1998, 370–372) proposes Wilber's integral framework to be a logical argument based on and integrating scientific data, philosophical analysis, and contemplation that is grounded in, but updates perennial philosophy. According to Walsh, in order to assess this framework, we need two levels. The first is the determination of the validity of the constitutive elements (the scientific data, logical and hermeneutical processes, contemplative insights) of the framework. The second level is to assess the value of the framework as a whole, at least in its major dimensions. Walsh suggests four criteria for this, namely Plato's classic triad of the Good, the True and the Beautiful; Joseph Campbell's four functions of mythic vision (envisioning and supporting the cosmos, religion, society, and individual development); Aldous Huxley's four features of perennial philosophy (existence of a divine ground, human unity with this ground, the possibility of realizing this unity, and the overriding value of doing so); and Lewis Mumford's three requirements for transformative syntheses (broad syntheses of knowledge, acknowledgement of a hierarchy of existence, and evolution toward the good) (ibid.). Walsh concludes by suggesting that Wilber's integral framework seems to embody and update the essential elements of perennial philosophy, to fulfill Campbell's four functions of myth, and to match Mumford's three requirements or characteristics of major intellectual and social transformations. This assessment is important since it offers another perspective on how to revise and assess conceptual frameworks with different criteria and knowledge interests in addition to the first level, the validity of the constitutive elements.

Wilber's writings have sometimes been controversial. Among mainstream scholars of psychology, philosophy, religious studies and anthropology, Wilber's work used to be little known (Rothberg 1998, 14), although this has changed somewhat during the last 20 years. Wilber has been criticized by, for example,

Meyerhoff (2010)[29], Falk (2009), Visser (2010) and Bazzano (2016). Visser has also categorized some of the Wilber criticisms into a spectrum, ranging from strong negative to strong positive.[30] From the perspective of transpersonal theory, for which Wilber has been a seminal influence, Wilber has been criticized for difficulties with integrating the feminine aspect and confusing deep structures and culturally variant surface structures (Wright 1998), not engaging with constructive criticism (Kramer 1998) and, if doing so, being unproductively polemical (McDermott 1998)[31]; also of omitting the pre- and perinatal domains from his spectrum psychology (Grof 1998), and not taking the participatory approach in spirituality (Ferrer 2015). An American graduate school, the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), has offered programs studying integral thinking, Wilberian and otherwise[32]; the relationship between the faculty members, such as Robert McDermott and Jorge Ferrer, and Ken Wilber have been complex in nature (see Wilber 1999; McDermott 2001; Wilber 2001). Besides criticizing Wilber's post-metaphysics as being unoriginal, Ferrer also proposes that Wilber's particular genius is not in invention but in the integration of other's ideas (Ferrer 2015, 52–55). From within the integral philosophy movement, Wilber has been criticized for using his sources in a way that the authors he cites would be in disagreement with, as well as not adequately addressing the basics of causation and being in the analytical and methodical way that the philosophical profession generally requires (Mcintosh 2007, 155). [33]

1.8 The aim and structure of the dissertation

In this dissertation, composed of an Introduction and four peer-reviewed Articles, I aim to offer a nuanced interpretation of the relationship between the conceptual and practical dimensions of Ken Wilber's spiritual innovatorship. Methodologically I follow the premises of applied hermeneutics, where hermeneutics depends on

29 A good review of Meyerhoff's book (originally published online) by Andrew P. Smith can be accessed at: http://www.integralworld.net/smith20.html (Accessed on 11.12.2019)

30 For a very thorough analysis, see http://www.integralworld.net/visser11.html (Accessed on 11.12.2019)

31 This point came to a – depending on one's point of view, either hilarious or nefarious – boiling point in what is known as the Wyatt Earp episode, where Wilber attacked his online critics with rather biting countercriticism. For a critical commentary, see http://www.integralworld.net/visser15.html

32 CIIIS was founded by Haridas Chaudhur, who used "integral" in the sense of Aurobindo. The institute began under a different moniker, and started using integral as part of its name during the mid 1970s.

33 Mcintosh (ibid) proposes that many of the same criticisms were leveled against Wilber's sources like Bergson and de Chardin.

finding cases of "life unfolding in action" on which scholars can build good cases for our interpretations (Moules et al. 2015, 68). These cases are presented in Articles III and IV. I situate my understanding and interpretation of Wilber's innovatorship as a dynamic interplay between his conceptual model and the practical uses it has when it is applied to a specific discipline. By inquiring into the practical applications and processes in disciplines that use Wilber's conceptual innovations as their knowledge base, we, as it were, are researching the base theory as it appears and is lived in practical life; we are seeing its phenotype in addition to its genotype, effected by and effecting the environment. I argue that to analyze concepts although necessary does not provide a sufficient condition for understanding Ken Wilber as a spiritual innovator; we need to understand how those concepts operate in everyday life, as applied to disciplines, such as the examples of coaching and organizational development provided in Articles III and IV. This is almost self-evident, as the purpose of innovations is to change the practical, lived-in reality to which they are applied. By looking at, and analyzing this reality in the light of pragmatism and disciplinary applications we gain an understanding of Ken Wilber's innovatorship in a new light: that, which is illuminated by praxis, in addition to theory; and the praxis which, in the case of Wilber, is usually carried out by practitioners other than Wilber in particular disciplines and professions (Jakonen & Kamppinen 2015; Jakonen & Kamppinen 2018; see also Appendix). Following the philosophy of truth in applied hermeneutics – as the dichotomous relation between self and world / inner and outer/practice and theory is relaxed – it is only through our practical, everyday involvement that the meaning of something becomes accessible (Moules et al. 2015).

In this introduction, I pose three main research questions to systematize the aim stated above:

1. What are Wilber's central spiritual innovations?
2. How do they relate to the context they are derived from?
3. What are the special characteristics and contributions of Wilber's innovations when used as pragmatic disciplinary tools?

As an article thesis, the structure of the dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part is an introductory section that presents a general overview of the topic, and offers an orientation to the articles that follow the introduction. The second part is composed of four original peer-reviewed articles (Articles I—IV in the text) that study both the theory and the pragmatics of Ken Wilber's philosophy. Articles I and II explore the conceptual side, offering answers to the first and second questions, while Articles III and IV concentrate on the practical side in the context of organizational development and coaching processes, thus, offering answers to the third question. The purpose of this introductory part is twofold. First, it functions as a guide to understanding the articles as answers to the questions stated above. The

second function of this Introduction is to argue that the distinguishing feature of Ken Wilber as a spiritual innovator – especially regarding the relation to the perennialist tradition – is that Wilber's innovations at least attempt, if not achieve, to fulfill the concordist promise that was one of the central notions of perennialism, and posit spirituality as an integral part of the modern world, instead of being opposed to it. In this light, the Integral model offers a framework for reaching beyond polarities that appear in the *zeitgeist* of the 21st century.

2 Methodology and research position

2.1 Applied hermeneutics as an orienting framework

This dissertation concentrates on understanding Ken Wilber as a spiritual innovator, aiming to give contextual elucidation of his conceptual system, Integral Theory, as it is presented in his published works. The methodological orientation is a combination of individual methods, which as a whole can be situated within the field of hermeneutics, as they all share the same intention of comprehension, interpretation, and understanding, and contribute to hermeneutical reflection (Gilhus 2011, 276). The data, consisting of Ken Wilber's published works, is approached from a comparative framework (Freiberger 2019) by thick description (Geertz 1973; Denzin 2001; Pontoretto 2006), grounded in the hermeneutical research tradition (Gadamer 1960/2004; Moules et al. 2015) with an emphasis on conceptual analysis (Kosterec 2016). It is guided by a knowledge interest[34] (Habermas 1971) in philosophical pragmatism (Pihlström 2015), i.e. the unification of the conceptual system in the practical bearings of its usage (Peirce 1935). I have applied the hermeneutical approach as an attempt to preserve the original, the particular, and the idiosyncratic voice of Ken Wilber. With the comparative approach, I have attempted to give a thick description, especially in Articles I and II, to supplement the contextualization of Wilber as an innovator within the traditions of spirituality and philosophy. Conceptual analysis can be detected as a hidden meaning, instead of as

[34] According to philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1971, 308) all knowledge – and thus, the chosen methodology for pursuing that knowledge – is ultimately guided by a particular interest: (1) technical cognitive interest, concerned primarily with control and survival, and using empirical-analytical sciences as its methods; (2) practical interest, concerned with seeking mutual understanding within a common tradition, and using historical-hermeneutical sciences as its methods; and (3) emancipatory cognitive interest, which is concerned with gaining freedom from a dogmatic and controlling past, using critically oriented social sciences as its methods. In this dissertation the interest is practical, and the orientation towards knowledge acquisition is pragmatic, proposing that the truth of our belief systems can only be measured and indicated by the various utilities, which emerge as the product of adopting (and applying) those beliefs.

a strict research method, as an operating principle that gives a certain rigor to the vaguer hermeneutics of preservation. There is a slightly different methodological emphasis in Articles I—IV, as in hermeneutics different topics call for different approaches (Moules et al. 2015, 4; see chapter 2.2). The methodological positions presented below are mutually supportive, as they are all concerned with the process of interpretation and a subsequent deeper understanding regarding the topic. I will present the hermeneutical approach first, as it functions as the guiding methodological principle of my research.

Hermeneutics is a complex subject, with disparate origins, and no one standard approach. For some, it is thought primarily in terms of method and practice; for some, it is a more like a philosophy of understanding. This ambivalence can lead to different overviews of the history and significance of hermeneutics, leading to variable emphasis on what actually constitutes the subject (Green 2005, 392; 404). Flood (2016, 151) has proposed three main branches of hermeneutics: Theological Hermeneutics, Historical-Critical Hermeneutics, and Philosophical Hermeneutics. Another position, following from the premises of the philosophical tradition, is Applied Hermeneutics (e.g. *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*). Applied Hermeneutics views the strengths and the character of hermeneutics as becoming visible through the act of interpreting the living features of the world. It explores how hermeneutics contribute to the development of disciplinary knowledge (Estefan 2015, 1). From a research standpoint, then, one should define the "hermeneutical" position one occupies as a scholar in such a multifaceted field.

Moules et al. (2015, 4—5; 62) offer a definition of hermeneutics as a philosophy of knowledge acquisition that orients us towards careful probing and questioning of what appears, rather than a strategic method to guide the research. In this sense, being called by the phenomenon (see chapter on Research position) requires careful questioning of what appears, instead of an instant methodological call to arms. The phenomenon is there to be learned from, both about what it is as a case, but also about what this particular case requires from us to deepen our understanding of it, in relation to itself and its context (ibid, 62). Hermeneutical inquiry is, then, a method of stopping, suspending judgment, learning, deepening, bringing forth, and stopping again. It is in this sense that I use hermeneutics as a research position in this thesis.[35]

[35] Modern hermeneutics is defined by German philosophers, beginning from the Plato scholar and theologician F.D.E. Schleiermacher (1768—1834), who as the founder of the movement contributed to the notion that in textual interpretation attention should be paid to the "art of understanding". Wilhelm Dilthey (1833—1911) made hermeneutics the foundational method of the human sciences by delineating their qualitatively different objects of inquiry. Dilthey's ideas were further developed by philosophers Martin Heidegger (1889—1976), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900—2002) and Paul Ricoeur (1913—2005). In his major work *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960),

Hans-Georg Gadamer suggested that it is impossible to determine a way to proceed in an inquiry without being guided by the topic (Gadamer 1960/2013). The hermeneutical method is interested in preserving the character of the research topic without reducing it; in understanding more than explaining; in directing attention to the object of study without rendering it something else through taking a certain route, i.e. making one's way along (*meta*) a path (*odos*) to truth. (Moules et al. 2015, 5; Caputo 2015, xi; Green 2005; 396—400) As a philosophical orientation, to "do" hermeneutics is to rise to the "thick, dense, rich complexity" of the individual occasion, and to attempt to see, and be seen by, a particular instance of human expression, instead of "lolling lazily amidst the thin transparencies of universals" (Caputo 2015, x). From a more prosaic perspective, hermeneutics can be defined as theoretical reflection on the principles and rules of interpretation and understanding (Green 2005, 392). The hermeneutical approach is not an easy task, nor does it always strive to make the object of its study clearer; rather, hermeneutics can be seen as an attempt to restore the topic to its original difficulty (Caputo 1987, in Moules et al. 2015, 26). This, I feel, has been an important part of my work in this dissertation, functioning as a double-duty through making the research topic more understandable by presenting it as a difficult, original, and complex constellation of a conceptual systemic universe. Retaining the "original difficulty" is the core function of my hermeneutical approach in this dissertation *contra* a contextual explanation, which here serves an important supplementary function, as proposed by Schmid (1979/2011) to be part of a three-fold hermeneutics of description, [contextual] comprehension, and understanding.

Another distinctive aspect of the hermeneutical approach is the interpenetrative interpretive relationship of the scholar and the text, the object, or the interpreted thing. The researcher does not encounter his or her research subjects devoid of preconceived notions, but rather as a "notepad that is scribbled over" (Illman 2014, 18). To see understanding as a project where we move in an upward spiral, not presuming familiarity with the views and perspectives of the subject, can provide a strategy for preserving the multiplicity of voices in the original material and moving against tendencies to reductionism (ibid, 21). Another version of this can be called "the science of getting lost" (Lather 2007), which is based on respect for complexity and an

> Gadamer suggested a theory of understanding that was to be superior to other methods attempting to arrive at the truth. Gadamer believed in the possibilities of understanding, as long as the interpreter acknowledges and enters the context and tradition of the text. This view was contested by Jürgen Habermas (1929—), who maintained that communication is often distorted in ways that are impossible to recognize by the participants. This view of deceived (inter)subjectivity has been also explored by the famous "masters of suspicion": Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche. (Green 2005, 396—402).

awareness of our epistemic limits, where "constitutive unknowingness becomes an ethical resource and aporetic suspension becomes an ethical practice of undecidability", where the imperative is to hold open a space for treating the 'not known' creatively (Lather 2008, 227). That is to say, from a hermeneutical standpoint, we need to try to see things with fresh eyes, and with a beginner's mind. Hermeneutical research attempts to give methodological tools for this process (Moules & al, 2015). The Swiss scholar of religion Georg Schmid (1979/2011) has suggested a methodology for hermeneutics, where the tasks of (1) description, (2) comprehension and (3) understanding are seen as complementary aspects of the research process.[36] This approach appears also as the overall logic of my thesis, as Articles I—IV proceed from a general description, towards a contextual-comparative comprehension, resulting in a deeper understanding from the pragmatic point of view.

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, I have utilized supplementary positions in addition to applied hermeneutics. I will give a brief overview of what they are and how I have approached their research methods.

French historian Marc Bloch described comparison as the selection of two or more apparently analogous phenomena; describing their lines of evolution; observing similarities and differences between them; and then offering explanations as to the nature of those variables. The study of religion as a sovereign discipline started from that very premise, which has been recently debated, possibly due to the renegotiation of the identity of the discipline. (Stausberg 2011, 21) Smart (1995, 183) has noted that the comparative approach as a phrase comes in and out of vogue in the study of religions; out of vogue when the comparisons themselves are seen as odious, and in vogue when we wish to make use of the opportunities inherent in the comparison and contrast when testing various hypotheses. Due to the complex nature of the topic, many specialists in the study of religion have sought to reduce their dependence on

[36] Schmid (1979/2011) operates from the presupposition that the mass of information accumulated by the modern study of religion threatens to become a chaos (Wyman 1983). The solution for this is for science of religion to adopt an integral stance, which is a union of detailed research and reflection on the whole of religion, all the while keeping a methodological and a self-reflexive eye on itself. This approach is constituted by three complementary methods: description, comprehension and understanding (Schmid 1979, 89) Schmid's approach, equally a treatise in philosophical epistemology as an exposition of a systematic method for the study of religion, appeared to a contemporary critic as thin in applicability, idiosyncratic in nature, and obscure in parts. (Wyman 1983, 94) This was also due to translation challenges, as it seems to be the case with quite a few German philosophical works; the same complexity is apparent in, for example, translations of Kant (1999), Hegel (2019) and Buber (2000). Later reflection reviewed it in more positive light, as a perceptive and subtle analysis into the nature of religion and self-reflective requirements of the discipline, while contesting its too inclusive definition of religion (King 1995, 151).

comparative categories or to avoid them altogether. (Wildman 2010, 134) It is, alas, impossible to avoid using comparisons, as they suffuse everything we say and think; moreover, the possible distortions and misuses of a thinking tool, such as comparative categories, does not entail their inherent futility, but rather helps scholars to delineate their boundaries. (ibid.) Freiberger (2019), Schmidt-Leukel & Nehring (2016), and Cornille (2020) offer informative and up-to-date accounts of the current status and the possibilities of the comparative approach in the study of religion.

Thick description originated as a qualitative research tool for ethnographers who were doing participant observation (Geertz 1973). From there, it was generalized as a tool for a wide array of qualitative approaches (Ponterotto 2006, 541). It can be contrasted with "thin description", which describes facts, independent of intentions and circumstances (Denzin 2001). Geertz, who borrowed the term from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle, described the data of ethnographical writing to be "our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they…are up to" (Geertz 1973, 9). In order to penetrate this complex network of constructions and contexts, and consequentially to offer "thick interpretations" (Denzin 1989; Pontoretto 2006) that generate new knowledge, our descriptions of the phenomena should be sufficiently thick. Neville & Wildman (2001, 201—205) offer an interesting contribution in the Boston University Comparative Religious Ideas Project (CRIP), where a "phenomenological thick description" (ibid.) was used in order to understand the phenomenon of religious ideas from several points of view: from the inside, from the outside, from the contextual, and from practical points of view. Moreover, a remarkable advance in their method was the addition of the concept of singularity, i.e. how a particular religious idea is resistant to comparison, offering a meeting point between a comparativist and a particularist approach. In this dissertation, thick description is used as an orienting principle and an attitudinal stance towards conceptual and contextual comprehension.

Conceptual analysis[37] shares the same general intent as hermeneutics: to get closer to an object of study in order to form a more precise understanding of

[37] Conceptual analysis is a method used in studying systems of thought, cultures and other human representations (Daly 2010; Grice 1991; Hanna 1998). It is a technique that treats concepts as classes of objects, properties or relationships, and involves precisely defining the meaning of a given concept by identifying the conditions under which any entity or phenomenon is (or could be) classified under the concept in question (Furner 2004, 233). Conceptual analysis is associated with names of G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, Gottlob Frege and Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose work gave rise to an entire field known as analytic philosophy that came into prominence in the early 20th century, largely as a rejection of German idealistic philosophy of the 18th and 19th century and its neo-Hegelian British variants (Kosterc 2016; Schwartz 2012; Beaney 2015; Ameriks 2017). The general purpose of analytic philosophy is to confine the activity of philosophizing to clarification and analysis, instead of formulating speculative truths or

it.[38] The aim of conceptual analysis is to examine the place of a concept in the conceptual network of a language or theory (Kosterec 2016, 220).[39] By doing so, we also clarify the contours and features of relevant concepts, making us better equipped to address difficult questions involving those concepts (Zanghellini 2017). Analyzing any idea or concept requires its precise definition as a necessary requirement in order to generate understanding and expand knowledge regarding that particular subject matter, before any investigation into its meaning and relationship to other ideas and concepts can occur (ibid.). Conceptual analysis guides this dissertation as providing philosophical rigor in the presentation and definition of the spiritual innovations.

Philosophical pragmatism is a method of knowing reality pluralistically and non-reductively, considering all the perspectives and standpoints that might be significant for the matter at issue – letting different voices, as well participation of the theory with practical reality, be heard. In pragmatist philosophy, no sharp dichotomy is presupposed to exist between theory and practice. Rather, even the most theoretical and philosophical matters are examined as they appear in connection to practical human action. (Pihlström 2015, 1—4) This has proven a fruitful research position, since I am an active scholar-practitioner of applied foresight in the field of coaching (Jakonen & Kamppinen 2015; see further notes on research position). Seeing the participation of the theory with practice has helped me to understand how Wilber's spiritual innovatorship can be approached differently when supplemented and deepened by knowledge about the processes and results it begets when exposed to the complexities of daily life through disciplinary applications. This relation between the hermeneutical tradition and the pragmatist approach in my dissertation is mutually inclusive. Here the whole – Wilber as a spiritual innovator – is understood

looking for first principles (Ayer 2001, 36—37). This clarification and analysis is the central case of conceptual analysis (Zanghellini 2017). In the empirical study of religious and spiritual traditions, conceptual analysis is usually labelled content analysis, interpretation, or cultural analysis.

38 Hermeneutical tradition and conceptual analysis as a derivation from analytical philosophy form, thus, a sort of a good cop/bad cop –dialectic in approaching an object of study, where hermeneutics helps one to open the door for interpretation, and analytical philosophy is pushing forward and asking for "just the facts". Pragmatism helps to lessen the distinction between these two apparent opposites, rejecting the notion between theories separated from practical results.

39 There is a difference between classical (pre-World War II) CA and contemporary CA. Contemporary conceptual analysis is not as interested in delivering necessary analytic truths about language, but rather uses CA as a tool for gaining philosophical insight into a phenomenon by attending to the conceptual distinctions we use to talk and think about it (Zanghellini 2017; Langlinais & Leiter 2016, 674).

by the parts, the praxis, as exemplified by the discipline, process, and methods of Integral Coaching (Jakonen & Kamppinen 2015; Jakonen & Kamppinen 2017).

2.2 Methodological emphasis in the articles

Article I, "Kohti kokonaisuuksien hahmottamista", takes a decidedly comprehensive approach, aiming to give an overview of the topic as *a theory*. This stance frames Wilber's theory as a subject of foundational studies (Bunge 1983), where the perspective is taken from the philosophy of science. This was done in order to situate the article within the context in which it was published: a textbook on adult learning and development of thinking in adulthood (Kallio 2016), where the majority of the articles were more concerned with the subject matter of developmental psychology *per se*. Here the methodological approach is comparative in nature, and as such, varies from Articles III and IV, which come from a more pragmatic standpoint. The methodology of Article I is, then, close to comparative philosophy, as it situates Wilber within a wide framework of system thinkers, such as Ervin Lazlo (1996), Gerald Weinberg (2001), and the Systems Intelligence project of the Finnish Aalto University (Hämäläinen & Saarinen 2008). Holarchical thinking, as a staple of the Integral framework, is situated within the context of world philosophy, with examples appearing in Western, Indian, and Chinese philosophy (Smart 2008), and especially in the *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900) of Edmund Husserl. The sources used from Wilber in the article are, with one exception from 1977, from the period between 1995 to 2007. Article II, "Systems thinking, spirituality, and Ken Wilber: Beyond New Age", offers a similar comparative approach, with a focus on world philosophy and systems thinking in the study of spiritualities (Kamppinen & Jakonen 2015). The source selection remains the same, concentrating on the "Integral" period from 1995 onward.

Article III, "Creating Wisdom Cultures: Integral Coaching as applied foresight in leadership development", is somewhat different from a methodological standpoint. Here I move from a comparative framework towards a more pragmatist approach in the sense that Wilber's ground theory is seen in the light of how it ameliorates the processes found in the discipline of coaching (Hunt 2009). Leadership is framed, following Australian futurist Richard Slaughter, as the act of creating wisdom cultures, where the leader as part of a systemic network of stakeholders from within and without the organization is responsible for this creation by taking the first initiative of change, by the process of coaching, i.e. a process of human development involving structured and focused interaction that is aimed at promoting desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and other stakeholders (Slaughter 2012; Cox et al., 2018). This methodological approach is a tentative suggestion towards using the resources offered by the study of religion for

an interdisciplinary inquiry where business coaching and cultural studies meet and hopefully shake hands (Jakonen & Kamppinen 2015, 25).

Article IV, "Integral Framework as a Systemic Foundation for Coaching", assesses and analyzes the position of the Integral model when it is used as a base theory for coaching processes. The method used is a combination of approaches, which can be called comparative-pragmatist hermeneutics. The use of the method is generated by the context of the publication, *Philosophy of Coaching: An International Journal*. As can be inferred from the name, the journal concentrates on the philosophical aspects and nuances of the coaching profession. There is a lack of robust theorizing in the field, due to multiplicity of reasons. The article offers to show, in the most general sense, how voluntary cognitive technologies in facilitating transformations can be based on more or less comprehensive theories about the nature of the mind, culture, and change (Jakonen & Kamppinen 2018, 28). In a more particular sense, the article tracks the process of change in the integral coaching method as proposed by Hunt (2009). The article shows how the specific conceptual innovations of Wilber are used in different contexts, such as those of horizontal growth (translation) and vertical growth (transformation). Here, the methodological position completes a full circle, when the mutual interaction between scientific disciplines and technological applications is shown: "Knowledge bases formed in basic science are used in applied science and technology, and practical applications feed new questions and challenge for basic research, and breakthroughs in basic research give birth to new technologies" (Jakonen & Kamppinen 2018, 38—39). This connection, evident in the Integral model when applied to coaching as giving rise to new possibilities of furthering a voluntary evolution of the human being, can also be detected in the general methodological position of this dissertation, where the complementary hermeneutics of the practical applications and the knowledge base behind them is explored, and, eventually, argued to provide novel insights into them both. In short: practice speaks for the theory, but theory gives language to practice, in a pragmatic cycle of applied hermeneutic inquiry.

2.3 Introduction to the research articles

The research articles that form the second part of this doctoral thesis have been published in peer-reviewed publications in 2015, 2016 and 2018. The articles follow a logical progression regarding the research questions. The first question, concerning Wilber's central spiritual innovations, is explored in Article I and Article II by an exposition of Wilber's conceptual model. The second question, concerning the relation of Wilber's conceptual system to the context it is derived from, is explored in both articles, but more fully in Article II. The third question, concerning the

special characteristics and contributions of Wilber's innovations as pragmatic disciplinary tools, is explored in Article III and Article IV.

Article I, "Kohti kokonaisuuksien hahmottamista: Ken Wilberin integraaliteoria", the only article in this doctoral dissertation that is written in my native language, Finnish, was originally published in a book on adult development, *Ajattelun kehitys aikuisuudessa: Kohti moninäkökulmaisuutta* (edited by Eeva Kallio 2016, 321—353). The book was the first book in Finnish that concentrated on the development of thinking in adulthood. Its topics ranged from presenting various developmental models, the development of scientific thinking, learning, and an epilogue offering perspectives on adult development from systems thinking and philosophy. The article appeared in this epilogue, introducing Ken Wilber's integral framework as an example of a systemic type of philosophical thinking that appears in a continuum of development as an extension of systemic modes of cognition. The article aims to give the reader an overall view of how Wilber's model in constructed, and, especially, how it applies and is related to the concepts of spirituality and wisdom by offering innovations in the form of a comprehensive conceptual system.

Article II, "Systems thinking, spirituality and Ken Wilber: Beyond New Age", is a general introduction to the relationship between systems thinking and spirituality, and how Ken Wilber has contributed to their conceptualizations. The article was originally published in the journal *Approaching Religion* (Vol 5, No. 2, 3—14, November 2015). I was the editor of the special issue "Systems Thinking, Spirituality and Wisdom: Perspectives on Ken Wilber", along with Dr. Matti Kamppinen and Dr. Ruth Illman. The article represents how systems thinking, science and spirituality are interrelated concepts in that each constructs the world as a systemic whole. It also frames Wilber as a philosopher who constructs conceptual spiritual innovations. We offer examples of spiritual innovations from Wilber's writings: The Big Three of Spiritual Practice, [trans-rational] spiritual methodologies as spiritual science, and a classification scheme for types of spiritual experience.

Article III, "Creating Wisdom Cultures: Integral coaching as applied to foresight in leadership development", was originally published in the same issue of *Approaching Religion* (Vol 5, No. 2, 15—26, 2015). It applied the contributions of the Australian integral futurist Richard Slaughter – notably his concept of a wisdom culture – to the field of coaching[40], used widely in facilitating personal development in different contexts. In the article, we concentrated on how the concept of a wisdom

[40] Coaching, as a specific discipline, is an intersubjective human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of strategies, tools and techniques that promote sustainable change towards mutually agreed upon objectives in a non-clinical environment. (Cox et al. 2018, xxix)

culture in a business context entails the conscious cognitive development of the business leader. We framed leadership itself as the creative act of facilitating wisdom cultures, using the applied integral theories of the Belgian business theorist Fredrick Laloux and Canadian coaching specialists Laura Divine and Joanne Hunt.

As explored in Article III, Integral Coaching is a form of coaching that is based on Ken Wilber's Integral model. Integral Coaching utilizes many of Wilber's innovations, applying them as methodological tools in the coaching process (Jakonen & Kamppinen 2015). The concept of four quadrants (see Picture 1, in Chapter 3.2.4) has been used for situating different change orientations in the field of coaching, as different coaching schools operate from different knowledge bases. These belief structures produce orientations that emphasize either exterior or interior approaches to facilitating change; and within those frameworks, either the individual or the collective interior/exterior. Thus, we have individual-oriented coaching that either focuses on insight from the client, or on new actions and accountability to the coach; and we have collective-oriented coaching that either focuses on conversations between the coach and the client or on optimizing the systemic fit, function, and the context of the coachee by analyzing, understanding and changing something in the wider framework within which s/he is situated. According to Integral Theory, all four orientations supplement each other (Wilber 1995) This is the central application of the four-quadrant model in Integral Coaching theory and process (Jakonen & Kamppinen 2015).

Article IV, "Integral framework as a systemic foundation for coaching", was originally published in *Philosophy of Coaching: An International Journal* (Vol. 3, No. 2, 2018, 27—43), in a special issue on systemic approaches to coaching. The article concentrates on the core argument of the dissertation, namely how Wilber's spiritual innovatorship is understood more deeply when seen from the perspective of how his innovations are used as parts of a disciplinary system (coaching), quite far removed from the original tradition (*philosophia perennis*) that Wilber set out to innovate. Elaborating on the premises presented in Article III, it proposes how coaching processes can be founded on different knowledge bases or theoretical frameworks, and argues that systemic coaching is best facilitated by an integral framework that acknowledges the diversity and multi-faceted nature of human existence. We also show how the four quadrants are applied in a process of change using the methodology of integral coaching. This article further develops the pragmatist orientation and applied the hermeneutics of action inquiry (Torbert et al., 2004) that appears in the previous article. It attempts to understand something new about the integral framework by approaching it as if from the end point: from the process and the results it has produced when applied to the pragmatics of betterment, i.e. acting in the course of things to make a change for the better (Rescher 2014, 119).

2.4 Speaking for the address and reflecting on the research position

"Understanding begins when something addresses us", proposes hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960/1989, 299). A place where inquiry into understanding begins is when we feel that something – an idea, an experience, a system of thinking – is personally addressing us. Moules et al. (2015) see the need for the researcher to give a voice to this address, to speak for it, as part of the self-reflexivity of hermeneutical research. This address is by nature existential, it engages us unexpectedly, causing us to take note, to stop and listen. In being addressed in such a manner, we are guided by the topic of our interest and its own form of address, rather than assumed versions of it. Sometimes, being addressed by a topic can remain hidden from us because of our prejudices. This, if brought into awareness, can be led into the hermeneutic circle in the Gadamerian sense, where our prejudices are part and parcel of the revision of our understanding, resulting in a rich tapestry of *horizontverschmelzung*, the fusion of horizons between the scholar and the object of study. (Moules et al. 2015, 71; Gilhus 276—277) In research of the hermeneutical variety, it is often apt to elaborate on this arrival of the topic, and to instantiate the relevance of the topic beyond the secluded interests of the individual researcher: why the topic matters and what is its relation to the phenomena that surround it (Moules et al. 2015, 81).

Ninian Smart suggests (1995, 181) that all science involves interplay and a struggle between the inquirers and that which they are concerned to understand. In contrast to the natural sciences, we encounter in the human sciences not a mute nature, but living and communicative beings (ibid.), with which we often have complicated relationships. Scientific objectivity is, of course, a very fundamental philosophical problem to which different solutions have been proposed (see for example Feyerabend 1975; Lacey 2005; Nagel 1986). A final solution might not be available, since the acute problem of subjectivity remains even after points of view and subjective experiences are admitted. This problem, phrased succinctly by philosopher Thomas Nagel as [the problem of] "being someone", is evident in the fact that a particular person in the world is himself (Nagel 1986, 54). In the hermeneutics of human sciences, Smart proposes, empathy is of the essence: "Never describe a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins" (Smart 1995, 181).

I was addressed by Integral Theory one year after entering the School of History, Culture and Arts Studies in 2003, as a student of Comparative Religion (the Study of Religion was then called by that name), when borrowing books from the University library to read during the summer. One of the books was *A Brief History of Everything* (1996) by Ken Wilber. The reason for being addressed by the topic was the multifaceted nature it seemed to give to the phenomenon of religion. It did not seem to favor a particular side in explaining or interpreting religion (away), but

rather invited it to a conversation that let it exist from many sides at the same time. Integral theory, when applied to religion, approached it as something that could be seen as having a deep independent history and, at the same time, existing as a scholarly invention without a *sui generis* category. It let religion be, and become, a many-sided story, without silencing the voice of the cultural context (e.g. Durkheim 1912/2001; Berger & Luckmann 1966); without silencing the voice of cognitive science (e.g. Lawson & McCauley 1990; Boyer 2001; Geertz 2016); without silencing the voice of the phenomenon-in-itself (e.g. Wach 2017; Smart 1973; Lusthaus 2003); without silencing any of the aspects that scholars of religion had found useful in the course of their inquiry. Curiously, as human beings usually choose sides in matters of intellect and opinion, Integral thinking seemed to go beyond polarities in that it offered a meta-style context for social scientific, cognitive scientific, phenomenological, and other approaches for studying religion. This intellectual context, with its non-reductive ontology and methodologically pluralistic notions that were held together with an "integral" approach, making them parts of a wider framework that functioned as a guard rail against a *laissez-faire* ἐπιστήμη was appealing, since the rails seemed to be either too close or too loose in many other approaches. Integral Theory addressed me because I felt that it enabled both sides of the complex phenomenon of "religion", that initially lead me to its study, to co-exist, namely the potentiality for wisdom and for stupidity in humankind. It did not condemn "religion" to be reduced to a cultural, cognitive, or constructed category; neither did it elevate, essentialize, or edify it without further analysis.

The address was such that I decided to focus on understanding Wilber's model from early on in my studies. From 2004 to 2009 my research interest was theoretical, loosely described by following a hermeneutical-phenomenological method in the sense of Smart (1995, 182) and included mainly reading the primary texts produced by Wilber in order to understand the approach as deeply as possible, and reading contextualizing literature in religious studies, philosophy and psychology, in order to broaden the horizon of my understanding. I translated Ken Wilber's *A Brief History of Everything* (1996) into my native language, Finnish (2009), and wrote books that applied aspects of Integral theory to fields of leadership, philosophy, and entrepreneurship (Jakonen & Halinen 2011; Jakonen 2013, 2015, 2016; Jakonen & Kamppinen 2017), as well as translating two other books by Wilber (2011; 2018). From 2009 onward, I added a practical research interest, trying on the Integral moccasins at an applied hermeneutical level, when I begun professional studies in the discipline of Integral Coaching. I was trained as a part of an inaugural European group of Integral Associate Coaches by a Canadian school of coaching called Integral Coaching Canada, between 2009 and 2010. The school was founded by Joanne Hunt and Laura Divine, who acted as co-editors of the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* (2009) special issue on applying the Integral model to the field

of coaching (Cox, Clutterbuck, Bachkirova 2018). Since 2009, my involvement in studying Integral theory has been an action-inquiry (Torbert et al., 2004) a mixture of theory and practice: theory in the form of researching the topic, and practice in the form of being actively involved in coaching people in organizations using, among other resources, the Integral Coaching model, as an independent consultant.

My position as a researcher of Integral theory is complex. A unique feature of my research is having worked professionally as a practitioner using an application of the integral model from the year 2010 onwards in coaching and consulting people and organizations (Jakonen 2011; Jakonen & Kamppinen 2017). A hermeneutic sense of practice suggests that the distinction between the theoretician and the practitioner is not absolute, and the resulting identity with its personal and social/institutional implications should be balanced with a proper exercise of judgment (Moules et al. 2015, 52). I have attempted to be aware of these dangers by consciously reflecting on my research position during the writing of this thesis to the best of my abilities. This dichotomy of the insider/outsider has been part of religious studies since it emerged as a discipline separate from theology, more than a century ago (Knott 2005, 255; Sharpe 2005, 42). As for my research position, I consider myself a theoretical pragmatist insider (Pihlström 2015; Malachowski 2013) regarding the Integral framework, as I have found it to be a useful model in representing, analyzing and understanding various phenomena. I have also used it as an orienting theoretical framework in my work as a writer, consultant and coach. Using Junker and Gold's model of four role conceptions (Gold 1958, 217), I situate myself somewhere between Participant-as-observer and Observer-as-participant as regards to theory, practice and culture of the integral worldview. This could pose a problem of not being scientifically neutral towards a subject that one is sympathetic towards both intellectually and pragmatically. Taking these dangers into account, I see this close familiarity with the subject both as a liability as well as an advantage. This polarity is one of the topics I have struggled with during the writing of this dissertation.

3 Conclusions, results and answers

3.1 The central spiritual innovations in Wilber's model

My research questions concerning Ken Wilber's spiritual innovations and their contextual connections are explored in Articles I and II. The third research question, concerning the special characteristics and contributions of Wilber's innovations when used as pragmatic disciplinary tools, is answered in Articles III and IV. In the following chapters I offer some additional answers, conclusions and commentary to those questions. First, the spiritual innovations that appear in Wilber's work are considered in more detail. Then, an analysis is made of how these innovations illustrate a few of the key metaphilosophical commitments that Wilber makes. Lastly, the connections between theory and practice in the spiritual innovatorship of Ken Wilber are explored.

Wilber's concepts borrow heavily from various traditions, both spiritual and secular, East and West, so much so that critics like Ferrer argue that much of what is valuable in Wilber's model is not conceptually new. Ferrer believes Wilber himself to admit that his genius manifests not in invention, but in integrating other people's ideas (Ferrer 2015, 54). In this light Wilber can be seen more as a storyteller – a position he himself subscribes to – who takes perennial subject matter and frames it in a way that is appealing to modern and postmodern sensitivities. This is also reminiscent of judging historian Toynbee's merits as those of an artist (Coulborn 1956, 247).

Wilber's innovatorship is two-fold, as previously stated, with a conceptual side and a practical side. The conceptual side relates to innovatorship within the realm of worldviews and belief-structures, and can be seen as a continuation of several traditions of spirituality. Within these conceptual traditions, Wilber's approach to innovatorship is marked by a tendency to present a vision for the future of the great spiritual traditions, offering a more inclusive, more comprehensive, more complete picture of how these traditions can be a viable and a melioristic force in the modern and post-modern world (Wilber 2017a). This presentation is attempted by constructing thinking tools that aim to preserve the insights of the pre-modern spiritual traditions in such a manner that the *psychologia perennis* they offer could

survive and thrive as part of the more modern attempts at wisdom, such as critical theory, material scientific progress, and systems theory. Other scholars, researchers, and disciplinary professionals than Wilber himself carry out the practical side of Wilber's innovatorship. Thus, the practical dimension of Wilber's spiritual innovatorship can be seen as being detached from Wilber himself, and dispersed among various approaches that use the basic tenets of Wilber's conceptual innovations, most often in some form of the AQAL model. These approaches include psychologists working with an Integral model (Marquis 2008), architects using the AQAL approach to design (Buchanan 2012), and coaching professionals applying the Integral framework to the field of coaching (Hunt & Divine 2009), which is explored in more detail in Articles III and IV.

To understand the conceptual side of Ken Wilber's role as a spiritual innovator, I will now elucidate some of the concepts Wilber has offered in his works. This orients the reading of the Articles I and II, where the conceptual side is explicated further. In the case of Articles III and IV, the practical side – how some of these concepts, like the four quadrant model (3.1.1) and the differentiation between translation and transformation (3.1.6) are applied – is explored in the context of organizational development and coaching processes. The concepts below have been selected on the basis of their being a *sine qua non* of Integal Theory. In the AQAL (All Quadrants, All Levels) version (Wilber 1995; 1996; 2017a), Integral Theory requires, at the very least, the horizontal and the vertical ontologies in order to function as a systematic philosophy. To paraphrase Wilber, these – and the other spiritual innovations presented below – are the concepts that are required to get an Integral universe going.

3.1.1 Holarchical tetra-emergence of reality

The epistemic status of Wilber's four quadrant model – or, holarchical tetra-emergence of reality – illustrates the central manner in which Wilber's conceptual innovatorship unfolds. Wilber starts by taking pieces of an existing puzzle, then putting them in a new order, or rebranding them, as it were, and ending with a result that attempts to retain the complexity of the original idea, while presenting it in a more streamlined manner. Holarchical tetra-emergence of reality, or, more simply, the four quadrants, is probably Wilber's most recognizable and widely applied conceptual innovations, and is a good example of this process (Wilber 1995). It has points of origin, among other sources, in E.F. Schumacher's four fields of knowledge, Erich Jantsch's phylogeny of everything, Ervin Laszlo's realms of evolution, Arthur Koestler's concept of a holon, Alastair Taylor's systems-approach to sociocultural evolution, and developmental studies from various contemplative and secular disciplines (Schumacher 2015; Jantsch 1980; Laszlo 1987; Koestler

1976; Taylor 1975). [41] Innovation here is not so much in the originality of the concept, but rather in the way it has been synthesized. Wilber's innovatorship with conceptual models lies heavily in the usage of words, concepts and illustrations that simplify complexity.[42] It is this process of simplification, of getting to the simplicity on the other side of complexity, the one thing Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said he would have given his life for, that is the essential core of Wilber's innovatorship. What Wilber does is to search for unifying clues amidst various, and, seen from another point of view – the one that can be called the "dry-biscuit" perspective versus the "plum-cake" perspective (Mehta 1962b, 47) – conflicting sources, and shows how these contradictions can, indeed, fit together in the same framework. Wilber's innovatorship appears, conceptually, in suggesting that these contradictory sources only approach the "whole career of man" from differing corners (quadrants, see picture 1) and levels (see picture 2). This approach is not unlike the one proposed by the German humanist philosopher Ernst Cassirer in his Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (2021), where various approaches to making meaning from myth to art to science were seen to be mutually compatible expressions of the symbolic animal that is the human being.

The four quadrant model proposes a view of the world that is composed of natural hierarchies, familiar from the taxonomy of natural sciences. As a trained natural scientist, Wilber has a tendency towards axioms, which is seen throughout *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (Wilber 1995) and its 20 tenets. This hierarchy is tetra-emergent: it exists simultaneously, or can be viewed from four correlating perspectives. The four quadrant model is close to what many systems thinkers have explicated, and its holarchical levels are also reflected in the works of the neo-platonic thinker Plotinus (Randall 1969, 3–16). Its history as a concept of the Great Chain of Being is explained in Lovejoy (1990). Reality, according to Wilber, has an evolutionary component of levels, or stages, or waves, or phases that are nested within each other, somewhat like Russian dolls. This stage conception, when seen as a systemic whole, is framed within integral theory as a holarchy that is composed of holons (Wilber 1995). A holon is a whole in itself, but is also a part of another whole, which is bigger than its predecessor. A simple example is a cell, complete in itself,

41 See Wilber (2000) for a comprehensive comparative list of developmental approaches and Ferrer (2015) for criticism.

42 This process reminds me of the painting inspired by George Stubb's famous portrait "Whistlejacket" (1762), remade by the Finnish contemporary artist Anna Retulainen (2012), where the original portrait of a horse is painted anew with a more impressionistic vision. Our eyes, accustomed and weary to the realism of 18th century portraiture, may relax more fully in front of a more abstract expression, where we fill out what is left unpainted. However, with Wilber, this process is reverse: his aptitude is in clear expression more reminiscent of Stubbs than Retulainen.

but also part of a cluster of cells that form an organ. That organ, another holon, is a part of an organism, that is a part of a group – like a tribe – that is a part of a nation, et cetera. Ontologically holons cannot be reduced to their individuality ("agency"), nor can they be reduced to their belongingness or context ("communion"); rather they are simultaneously whole/parts, or holons. (Wilber 1995; 1996)

The four quadrant model connects Wilber to the tradition of systems thinking, where the notions of level, emergent novelty and hierarchy are central concepts (Bunge 1979). A system is a collection of components that are linked with each other, and depending on the type of systems thinking, the ontology and interconnectedness of these links is postulated in differing manners. (Kamppinen & Jakonen 2015, 6—7) With the four quadrants, Wilber posits this linkage as the four-foldedness of reality: there are four different perspectives to every phenomenon, or four sides to every ontological story. These form the horizontal component of the integral model.

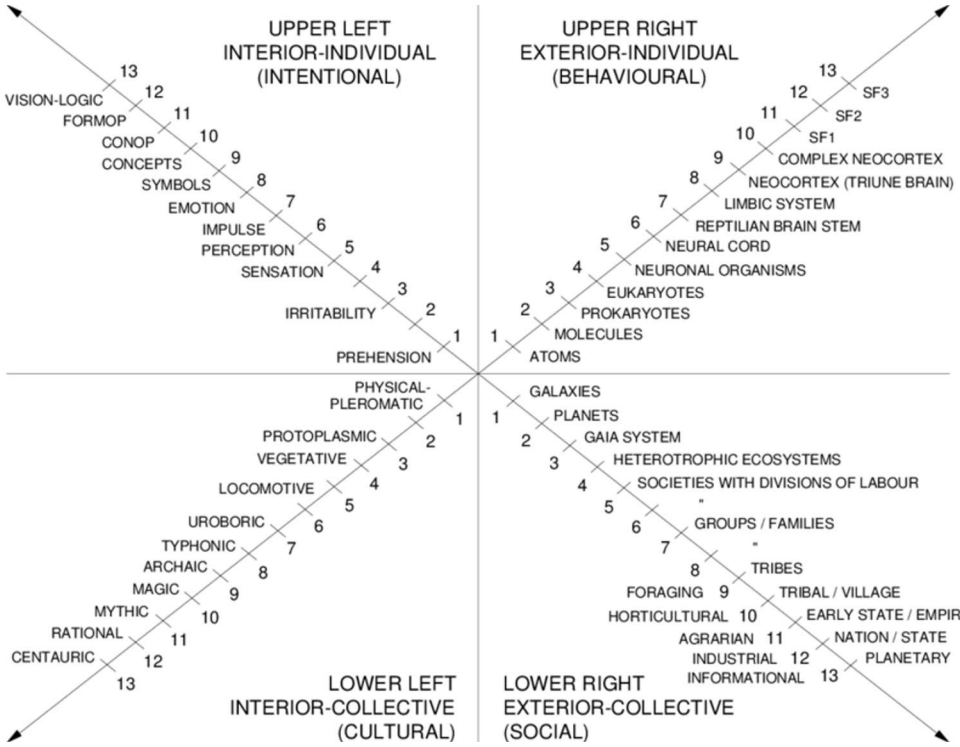
	INTERIOR ONTOLOGY	EXTERIOR ONTOLOGY
INDIVIDUAL ASPECT	**UL: Consciousness (I)** • Psychoanalysis • Phenomenology • Introspection	**UR: Matter (It)** • Biology • Behaviorism • Observation
COLLECTIVE ASPECT	**LL: Cultures of consciousness (We)** • Hermeneutics • Cultural studies • Contextualization	**LR: Systems of matter (Its)** • Systems sciences • Ecology • Engineering

Picture 1: The four quadrants

Upper left (UL) and lower left (LL) ontologies are interior or subjective ways of interpreting reality. Upper right (UR) and lower right (LR) ontologies are exterior or objective ways of interpreting reality. They can be understood as four windows from which we tend to look at the world and its contents. Integral theory maintains that we tend to favor one of these ontological quadrants, thus forming a native perspective from which the world is seen, and to which possible reductions are made. These reductions can be humanistic, thus made from the left-hand quadrants,

favoring interior ontologies. Reductions can also be materialistic, made from the right-hand quadrants, favoring exterior ontologies. (Wilber 1995; 1996)

According to Wilber, no quadrant is ontologically superior or primary; rather things should be viewed from four sides at the same time – or at least we should acknowledge their "simultaneity". Wilber sees reality to be composed by perspectives (Wilber 2006). It means that reality emerges in four non-reducible quadrants simultaneously, none of which is reducible to any other. Thus, according to Integral Theory, reality cannot be reduced to either matter (physics) or non-matter (mind); or to collective expressions of matter (systems) or to collective expressions of non-matter (culture). Reality is four-fold. A materialistic opposite of this is a flatland, where everything is seen only as surfaces, and where everything (most specifically, mind and culture) is reduced to biology and/or physics. This reductionism can go in many directions: everything can be seen as contexts, or as mind-only, or as systems, etc. We can have idealist reductionism, physicalist reductionism, contextual reductionism, and so on, all of which are according to Integral Theory based on less than tetra-emergent ontologies.



Picture 2: Tetra-emergent levels of complexity (Wilber 1983/2005, 42)

Wilber also suggests that there are levels of complexity in all four quadrants (Wilber 1995). This means that both the individual and collective aspects of both interior and exterior ontologies evolve. Complexity can go from very crude forms to very complex and multi-faceted forms in all quadrants. In the lower right quadrant, we see the evolution of exterior-collective systems from galaxies, planets, and the ecosystem of Tellus, on to societies with increasingly more complex forms of organization and structure. In the lower left quadrant, we see the evolution of interior-collective cultures with protoplasmic, vegetative and locomotive capacities, on to cultures with more nuanced ways of sharing meanings. In the upper right quadrant, we see the evolution of individual-exterior forms of matter from atoms, molecules and cells, to more finely tuned material structures of neural cords, limbic systems, and, with the advent of the neocortex, more evolved structural functioning ("SF 1—3" in Picture 2) of the brain.[43] In the upper left quadrant, we see the interior-individual evolution of consciousness from prehension[44], sensation and perception, towards representations of emotions, images, symbols and concepts, and onto the structures of consciousness that have the potential to develop across the individual life span.

3.1.2 Consciousness as a vertical and horizontal continuum of growth potentialities

Wilber's innovatorship is closely connected to his conceptualization of what consciousness is, what it consists of, and how it develops. Wilber's conception of consciousness is innovative in several ways. The perennialist tradition had a notion of the mind / consciousness[45] akin to a bucket that is descended into a well of ancient wisdom, instead of the mind / consciousness as a capillary for the wisdom to grow

[43] From the perspective of the study of religion, many of the "neurotheological" studies, where specific brain areas are shown to correlate with a "religious experience" are poor science and driven by confessional agendas (Geertz 2009). In a similar vein, cognitive scientist of religion Uffe Schjoedt (2009, 328) argues that the searching for "God" inside the brain ignores the complexities of religious experience and the brain, and their relation. This type of approach is an illustrative example of reducing the multifaceted universe to its material correlate. For a more nuanced approach, see McNamara (2006; 2009), Austin (1999), and especially the work of the Institute for the Bio-Cultural Study of Religion, founded by Patrick McNamara and Wesley Wildman, with their journal *Religion, Brain & Behavior*.

[44] For more on prehension and its formulation in the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, see Griffin (2001).

[45] I use mind / consciousness here to avoid the anachronism of "consciousness" as a perennialist term, as it is a more modern concept, related to the way "Geist" (Spirit / Mind) was used in German Idealism.

through during the course of the development of the mind / consciousness. This notion of the evolution of consciousness was lacking in perennialists' thinking, whether in the early form of the Renaissance (cf. Schmidt 1966) or in the 20th century perennialism of Guénon, Coomaraswamy, or Schuon (cf. Houman 2014; Sedgwick 2004). The perennialists saw consciousness as a static phenomenon that had, at its best, the capacity to receive innate wisdom in the Platonian sense of ἀνάμνησις or remembering knowledge. Following modern psychological research along with philosophers such as Hegel, Aurobindo, and Habermas, Wilber sees this the other way around: that consciousness reaches wisdom by ascending through levels of complexity in cognition and awareness. This concept of consciousness as growing *upward into wisdom*, instead of descending *back toward wisdom*, is innovative in the context of perennial philosophy in the most fundamental manner. The reason for Traditionalism (Sedgwick 2004) and perennialism (Houman 2014) not being a viable force in the modern world is their very defining idea of being, as Sedgwick frames it (2004, in the title), "against the modern world". The ontology behind this opposition lies in the epistemological (and basically faulty, in the light of modern clinical psychological research, cf. Cook-Greuter 1999; Commons 2008; Kegan 1982, 1994; Kallio 2016) position that to understand and wholly grasp the perennial φιλοσοφία – the love of wisdom – we need to reach back towards the past, instead of continuing on an unstable, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous journey of evolution of consciousness. Wilber differentiates the "Ancient Truth" from the "ancient truth", by denoting the former to represent the "radical, timeless, and formless Truth", and the latter to represent the particular past forms and expressions of that radical Truth, i.e. the culture and time specific manifestations in symbols, texts, and practices (Wilber 1997, 58) Thus, by simply suggesting that the true perennial wisdom is to be found from the "increasingly adequate and more comprehensive structures for truth's expression and representation" (ibid., 59), Wilber takes a 180 degree turn from the direction of the retro-romantic notions of the perennialist tradition. Here, we have the first innovation from within the perennialist tradition, and one, that is not against, but for the modern (and future) world. In essence, Wilber utilizes the cultural resources provided by the perennialist tradition, and unites them with the resources provided by another culture, that of the systemic-scientific study of consciousness and cognition.

Second, Wilber maintains that consciousness is not located in the organism, but is rather a four-quadrant affair (Wilber 1997, 243). This is innovative regarding the philosophy of the mind, and as such is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Suffice it to say here that Wilber does not posit consciousness to exist in the upper-left quadrant, but that consciousness is localized in and as the four quadrants of reality. This notion spreads consciousness in the world at large, seeing it fully anchored in cultural meaning, or the intersubjective chains of cultural signifiers. Consciousness

exists for Wilber also in and as the material social systems in which it finds itself, or the chains of social signifiers, without which – without the material conditions of the social system – individual consciousness fails to emerge. Consciousness is not located in, nor does it emerge from, the brain, the mind, the ecosystem, or the cultural context. It is anchored in and distributed across, Wilber posits, "all of those domains with all of their available levels" (ibid., 247).

The third innovation unites the perennialist tradition with the modern science of consciousness research. As the Renaissaince perennialism was supposedly a concordist affair (cf. Schmitt 1966), it was ironically static and conservative regarding the spiritual innovations of its own era, as noted earlier. In the modern science of consciousness and philosophy of mind, we see approaches ranging from cognitive science, neuropsychology, introspection, social psychology, developmental psychology, and psychosomatic medicine, with no unifying theory to account for them all in a coherent manner. This is what Wilber attempts to do, in maintaining that all of these approaches are equally important, and by elucidating the phenomenon of consciousness from various quadrants. This, in my view, is the actual concordance that was promised, but not attained, in earlier versions of perennialism, and represents a third form of innovatorship relating to the tradition in which Wilber can be seen to be situated.

Wilber's view of consciousness as viewed from the upper-left quadrant has two basic components: (a) structure-stages and (b) state-stages. These can be pictured as floors of a building (structures) with ever deepening views available from each floor (states) (cf. Jakonen & Kamppinen 2017). These two components offer a wide array of growth options, first as structures of consciousness through which we can "grow up" vertically. These are most often studied in Western psychologies. The second growth options appear as states of consciousness, into which we can "wake up" horizontally, most often studied in various contemplative wisdom traditions, West and East. This theme was originally known as the spectrum of consciousness (Wilber 1977) and later as altitude(s) of consciousness (Wilber 2017a).

Wilber has maintained, in the vein of developmental psychology, that the human psyche has a natural capability to span a wide spectrum of altitudes of consciousness (or stages, or waves, or levels, or structures of consciousness – Wilber uses these terms interchangeably, cf. Wilber 2000a). These stages range from the earliest pre-rational stages of an infant and early childhood, to the rational thinking of late childhood and adolescence, and also towards post-formal and post-rational thinking typical for a highly mature person. Different things can go wrong at each stage, forming a correlation continuum of different modalities of treatment and therapy with the various altitudes (Jakonen 2009, 92—93; Wilber 1993, 7—10). The concept of the developmental altitude – that as things and consciousness evolve, they do so in a series of successive, holarchical levels – is the basic component of the integral model. This concept forms the *vertical axis,* or the dimension of *depth*, in Wilber's

philosophy. If reduced to only two human-related components, Wilber's philosophy could be summarized as having a horizontal and a vertical dimension. The latter refers to stages of consciousness in all living beings. The former refers to the perspectives through which the living reality manifests itself. (Wilber 1995) This conception reflects a way of seeing human beings in a positive humanistic light with transpersonal possibilities of growth. That orientation is closely connected in the worldview to the human potential movement of the 1960s (Grogan 2013), humanistic psychology (Schneider et al., 2015) and transpersonal psychology (Friedman & Hartelius 2015), to which Wilber was an important contributor, making the field better known by placing it in the same theoretical context as traditional psychological theory with his early works (Combs 2015, 177—186). Later, Wilber distanced himself from the psychology movement, as discussed above.

3.1.3 Differentiation of the pre-rational and trans-rational structures of consciousness

In revising his theory in the early 1980s[46], Wilber differentiated the spectrum of consciousness as having a prerational, rational and trans-rational stage, each distinctly separate as structures and contents of consciousness (Wilber 1984). In the prerational stages, the consciousness of the infant is embedded in the consciousness of the primary caregiver, thus having no separation between his or her own needs from those of the caregiver. From that phase, consciousness begins its inevitable disidentification, then forming an ego proper, after which it is possible to have experiences of oneness, which necessitate a functioning ego in order for them to appear. Oneness without (or prior to) ego is embeddedness, or narcissism; oneness with (or after the formation of) ego is what is commonly known as a mystical experience (*satori*, *unio mystica*, *samadhi*, cloud of unknowing, etc.). Thus, the concept of pre/trans fallacy is based on the notion that the spectrum of consciousness has three stages, two of which are non-rational, namely the pre- and trans-rational stages. Both non-rational stages can appear to be alike in both concept and content, since both prerational narcissism and trans-rational spirituality are non-rational by definition. The difference is, according to Wilber, that trans-rational consciousness includes but transcends rationality – this is at the core of Wilber's rational mysticism

[46] As noted earlier, Wilber's work has been divided into five phases: Wilber-I, Wilber-II, Wilber-III, Wilber-IV and Wilber-V, reflecting the evolution of his own thinking. It has also made it rather difficult to have an overview of Wilber's philosophy, as the proper question should be: "What phase?". Wilber-I was marked by retro-romanticism, where human development was postulated as going from the oneness of a new-born to the existential angst of a mature adult, and again back to the source of oneness (Visser 2003, 73—77).

– while pre-rational consciousness is neither (yet) rational nor trans-rational; it is only non-rational. Two forms of the pre-trans fallacy are the reductionistic version (where every non-rational phenomenon is reduced to pre-rational forms), and the elevationist version (where every non-rational phenomenon is elevated to a "spiritual" or trans-rational status). (Visser 2003, 73—77; Jakonen 2009, 94—95)

It should be noted that as his work has evolved, Wilber has revised the concept of whether there actually is a trans-rational stage, or whether it is a state of consciousness. The first iteration of this problem is the *Wilber-Combs Lattice* (see chapter 3.2.6), and the second can be found in *The Religion of Tomorrow* (2017a), which studies in both a structural-developmental and phenomenological fashion the convergence between the structure-stages (of consciousness) and state-stages (of consciousness). Wilber postulates that in the upper echelons of human development – which he names 3rd tier – structures of consciousness begin to mingle, in a way, with trans-rational states of consciousness. The four postulated structure-stages in the 3rd tier are called Indigo Para-Mind, Violet Meta-Mind, Ultraviolet Overmind, and White Supermind. Wilber maintains, however, using psychologist Susanne Cook-Greuter's research as an example, that "structure-stages do not predict any sort of correlation with state development" (ibid, 531), but are relatively independent. This dual axis of consciousness development leads Wilber to propose the need for both state development and structure development. These developmental conceptions he calls Vantage Points (states of consciousness) and Views (structures of consciousness), which lead, if pursued as a practical application of an integral spiritual development practice, to Waking Up and Growing Up (ibid.).[47]

3.1.4 Integral stage of consciousness

The implicit (and sometimes, of course, explicit) notion in the Integral framework is that it is authored from a perspective or altitude of consciousness known as "Integral". This altitude is sometimes also referred to as teal (Laloux 2014), second tier (Beck & Cowan 1996), yellow meme (McIntosh 2007), or turquoise (Wilber 2016), among other names.[48] This stage is echoed in, for example, the developmental

[47] For more on this, see Wilber, Patten, Leonard & Morelli (2008)

[48] This altitude can be and often is further refined, according to the theorist proposing it, into sub-stages; in Wilber's framework, for example, Teal integral altitude is followed by Turquoise integral altitude, which is followed by 3rd tier post-integral altitudes. The clinical evidence for these further reaches is scant, possibly due to the small population inhabiting those levels; however, the model of hierarchical complexity by Commons (2008), as well as the dynamic skill theory of Fischer (Fischer 1980; Mascolo & Fischer 2010), and full-spectrum theory of vertical growth by Cook-Greuter (1999) should be noted as interesting avenues of research.

models of Beck and Cowan (1996), Torbert (2004), and Cook-Greuter (1999). Sometimes the concepts of someone being "at" the Integral stage of development, and being "Integrally informed" are differentiated, suggesting that there is a gap between cognitive ability to grasp the concepts of Integral Theory, and having a full-spectrum development in other relevant lines of growth, such as maturity, values, or emotions (Watkins 2014, 243).

McIntosh (2007, 84) provides an informative illustration of the central features of Integral consciousness. He cites several intellectual figures as operating from this stage (Albert Einstein, Teilhard de Chardin, Alfred North Whitehead, David Ray Griffin, Ken Wilber). He also cites the values and worldview of this stage as having:

i. New insight into the "internal universe";
ii. Confidence in potential of evolutionary philosophy;
iii. Personal responsibility for the problems of the world;
iv. Renewed appreciation of the previous stages' values;
v. Appreciation of conflicting truth and dialectical evolution;
vi. An aspiration for the harmonization of science and religion (ibid.).

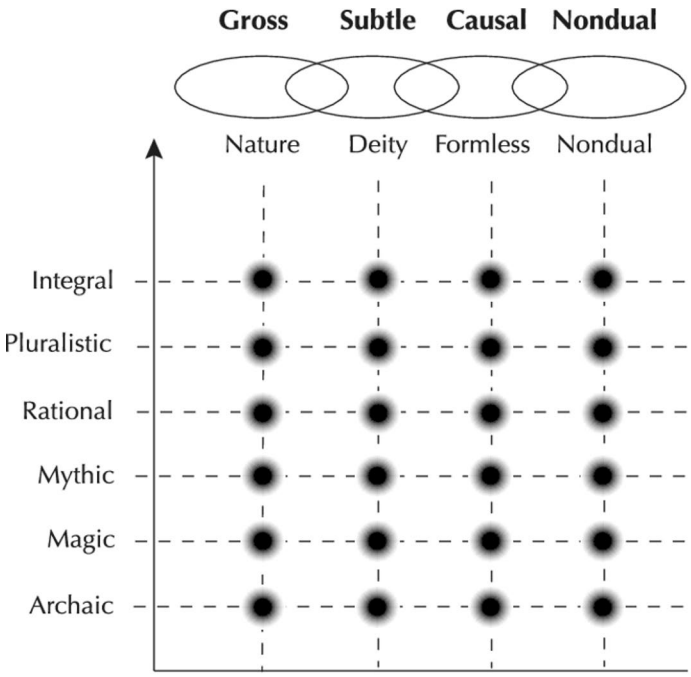
According to McIntosh, there is a strong undercurrent in Integral Theory of including as many truth-claims as possible in order to have them all fit into the same picture; the same theoretical framework. Wilber explains this tendency as an attempt to have a "map of our life that is actually complete"[49] – a map that includes conflicting truths, since those are produced by the human mind. Indeed, the whole integral endeavor can also be seen as an attempt to accurately reflect the human mind that produces mutually incompatible truth claims, mutually exclusive perspectives, and mutually warring worldviews, in mutually exclusivistic disciplines. This endeavor would thus be dependent on a worldview, or value aspiration, that had an "appreciation of previous stages' values [instead of a strong opposition to a particular value system]; appreciation of conflicting truth and dialectical evolution [instead of a reductive epistemological tendency]; and an aspiration for the harmonization of science and religion [instead of presupposing one or the other to have the correct perspective]" (McIntosh 2007, 84).

3.1.5 Relation of stages and states of consciousness

The Wilber-Combs matrix (see picture below), offering a theory about the relationship between stages and states of consciousness, can be seen as a

[49] Cited from: https://www.consciouslife.com/integral-in-action/

classification scheme that attempts to map every type of spiritual experience that human consciousness is able to have. It was originated by consciousness researcher Allan Combs (2009) and Ken Wilber (2006), who came upon the concept, unbeknownst to each other, at around the same time. This concept came to be known as the Wilber-Combs matrix, first presented in *Integral Spirituality* (Wilber 2006a). The Wilber-Combs matrix attempts to categorize consciousness as having two axes, where the vertical refers to altitude (or stages) of development, and horizontal refers to states of consciousness.



Picture 3: Wilber-Combs matrix (Wilber 2016)

Where the stages of consciousness, studied by developmental psychology, indeed span a wide spectrum that appears to unfold sequentially in successive stages, states of consciousness can be experienced more or less anywhere along the spectrum. States of consciousness are referred to as a gross state of consciousness, a subtle state of consciousness, a causal state of consciousness, and a nondual state of consciousness. Later on, these concepts were formulated as *states and their Vantage points*, and *structures and their Views* (Wilber 2017a, 112). States determine the types of phenomena that can arise and be experienced, or the "what" of consciousness: gross phenomena, subtle phenomena, causal/witnessing phenomena, and nondual phenomena. Structures (or stages, levels, altitudes) determine how these

phenomena that arise in consciousness are interpreted and how, following that, they actually are experienced. Wilber maintains that the same phenomena (be it a meditative state or any other) seen through a different View (that is, interpreted by a different stage of consciousness) will result in a virtually different phenomenon (ibid.). A nondual state of consciousness can be experienced by a View from an archaic, magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic, integral or super-integral consciousness structure, each giving the experience a different interpretation. A popular example is the case of a "Nazi monk" Ashin Wiratu of the nationalist Buddhist 969 movement in Myanmar. Seen through the Wilber-Combs matrix, a Buddhist monk (or any other expert in meditative disciplines) can be entrenched in a mythic culture and its corresponding worldview, where the ethnocentric us-versus-them structure can lead to nationalistic persecution and hate speech, regardless of the otherwise highly developed Vantage points, or states of consciousness. This is also echoed in the book *Zen at War* (Victoria 1997), showing examples of ethnocentric beliefs expressed by Zen masters. Another example would be of a neurotheologician who attempts to explain a nondual state of consciousness by the structural View of rationality, with the technical resources available through fMRI scans.

3.1.6 Transformative and translative functions of spirituality

Wilber (2006b) makes a distinction between two functional modes of spirituality: transformative spirituality and translative spirituality. Translative spirituality aims at creating meaning for the separate self by offering myths, stories, narratives and rituals that help constructing meaning and creating some sense of order out of chaos. This function, according to Wilber, does not change the level of consciousness in a person, or offer liberation from the separate-self identity. Instead it "consoles the self, fortifies the self, defends the self, promotes the self" (Wilber 2006b).[50] The other function that spirituality performs is the one of liberation and radical transformation. This function of religion "shatters the self, instead of consoling it", offering "not entrenchment but emptiness, not complacency but explosion, not comfort but revolution" (ibid.). These can also be seen as *horizontal* meaning-making functions (translative spirituality or religion) and *vertical* change in the meaning-maker (transformative spirituality or religion); or *legitimate* forms of

[50] This approach to seeing spiritualty as performing a translative function, where the problems of this world are translated (via means of religious rituals, myths and narratives) to the language that one's self can understand and make sense of, without the self having to change or to transform, brings to mind the words of the English scholar-mystic Wei Wu Wei (Terence Grey): "Why are you unhappy? Because of 99,9% of everything you think, and everything you do is for yourself – and there isn't one" (Wei Wu Wei, 2002, xviii).

spirituality, and *authentic* forms of spirituality. Although Wilber claims both forms and functions are important[51], he does offer that "somewhere in our maturation process, translation itself, no matter how adequate or confident, simply ceases to console…[n]o new beliefs, no new paradigm, no new myths, no new ideas will staunch the encroaching anguish…[n]ot a new belief for the self, but the transcendence of the self altogether, is the only path that avails" (ibid.). In the context of Wilber's main spiritual influences – Advaita Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, Madhyamaka, Yogachara and Vajrayana schools of Buddhism, among others – this offering is hardly surprising (Visser 2003; Wilber 2017a). This differentiation is also applied in the process of integral coaching (see Articles III and IV), where it is used in a secular context, in illustrating how sufficient translation – health and satisfaction at one's current level of meaning-making – is required for transformative growth towards a new level of meaning-making.

3.1.7 The four imperatives for the religion of tomorrow

In his book on the religion of tomorrow, Wilber offers suggestions for updating the Great Traditions of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism, so that they might function as "conveyor belts" of human development and transformation (Wilber 2006a, Wilber 2017a). [52] Using Buddhism as an example, Wilber suggests it has been close to a thousand years since something profoundly new has been added to its core tenets. The major texts and teachings of the Great Traditions (sic) were written in the pre-modern era, when slavery was thought to be natural, the earth was thought to circle the sun, and evolution did not cross anyone's mind. Yet, Wilber proposes, the world's great contemplative and meditative systems East and West produced discoveries that are still as true and useful as they were two thousand years ago. Many of the meditative schools, such as Zen and Vajrayana Buddhism, Vedanta

[51] This seems actually to be the case, as he continues: "[M]uch of what we have to do, in our capacity to bring decent spirituality into the world, is actually to offer more *benign and helpful modes of translation*...[E]ven if we ourselves are practicing, or offering, authentic transformative spirituality, nonetheless much of what we must *first* do is provide most people with a more adequate way to translate their condition. *We must start with helpful translations, before we can offer effective transformations.*" (Wilber 2006b)

[52] Wilber's student Dustin di Perna (2016) elaborates on this, introducing what he calls a new paradigm of inquiry called Integral Religious Studies. He suggests religion to be a "sociocultural acupuncture point", with stages of religious orientation in various traditions. di Perna arrives at the concepts of Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist conveyor belts, with examples of magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic and integral versions of all four traditions (five vertical orientations for each tradition, giving 20 major phenotypes for the four world religions).

Hinduism, and western contemplative paths from the Jewish Kabbalah to Christian contemplation to Islamic Sufism, still flourish. However, there has been a number of new truths learned about human nature, mind, consciousness, and development of human traits and qualities, which should be added to the core teachings of the Great Traditions, if they are to survive and contribute in the modern and postmodern era. This is the task that Wilber undertakes in his 806-page book *The Religion of Tomorrow*. (Wilber 2017a, 2—5)

To perform this task, Wilber proposes several conceptions that frame his vision. These can be simplified as four imperatives: (1) Waking Up, (2) Growing Up, (3) Cleaning Up, and (4) Showing Up (sic). Wilber argues that the Great Traditions have specialized in Waking Up: the cultivation of states of consciousness that contribute to the loosening of the ego and the gradual or sudden process of enlightenment, liberation, or Moksha. The modern and postmodern worldviews have, on the other hand, gained an enormous amount of knowledge about Growing Up (the stages of human consciousness development), Cleaning Up (the shadow material, problems and processes of the psyche), and Showing Up (the dimensions of reality and existence). The lack of understanding about the importance of Waking Up in the modern and postmodern worldviews Wilber calls a "cultural disaster of unparalleled proportions", where the most important critique towards the Western culture is based on the West losing track of its own sources of Waking Up, replacing them with the promises of technological advancement. According to Wilber, this happens elsewhere in the world too, for two suggested reasons: first, the teachings of the Waking Up imperative are often confused with the outer, exoteric, mythic narratives that "constitute probably 90 percent of the world's religions as presently taught" (cf. chapter 3.1.3), and secondly, the Waking Up schools[53] have become out of touch and out of date, with important features that should be added to them from the other three imperatives. (ibid, 11—12)

Wilber is empathic on the importance of the Waking Up process. He calls it "a gorgeously glorious discovery of humankind", that should not be allowed to wash away into obscurity: "A greater crime could hardly be imagined". The key to understanding Wilber's urgency is also his own personal history as a practicing Buddhist of 30 years, along with "[practicing] virtually all of the world's great religions to varying degrees". The same close-knit relationship with practice was also evident in many of the important 20th century Traditionalists, from Réné Guénon to Frithjof Schuon, the former of which was exclusively devoted to Islam, whereas

[53] By these Wilber refers to the trans-rational, esoteric, practice-based schools that usually have a traceable lineage, such as Zen, Vajrayana, Dzogchcen, Mahamudra, Kabbalah, Sufism, and such.

the latter's syncretism has more connections with Wilber's path as a practitioner (ibid, 7—15; Sedgwick 2004; Houman 2014)

With the four imperatives for the religion of tomorrow (which in the context of Buddhism is called "Fourth Turning [of the wheel of Dharma]") Wilber frames the cultural criticism of modernity as reciprocal. With the Traditionalist school of perennialism being largely against the modern world, Wilber suggests that both the Waking Up schools and the modern worldviews could benefit from mutual learning and dialogue. This dialogue takes the following forms:

(1) The advancement of structural (spiritual) intelligence (in the form of asking questions of ultimate concern and growing through stages of perspective-taking abilities).

(2) The cultivation of direct spiritual experience (in the form of practices intended to foster states of Waking Up).

(3) Shadow work as part of spiritual evolution (in the form of discussions and discoveries about the personal repressed shadow elements).

These "3 S's" constitute the main framework that Wilber suggests is needed for the two-way dialogue between the contributions of the modern world and the pre-modern world. Wilber does not deny either or them, but sees them both as incapacitated without the other. The meaning of life is to be derived from Waking up to the absolute truth[54], imbued with the requirements of the modern world for Growing Up, Cleaning Up, and Showing Up. The meaning of life, then, from an integral standpoint, is a matter of "Waking Up" with as much capacity for perspective-taking as possible, with as little shadow material as possible (or at least having it recognized), in as many dimensions of reality (cultural, personal, behavioral, environmental; the four quadrants) as possible.

3.2 Context and commitments of Wilber's metaphilosophy

The Dutch historian Pieter Geyl, known for his love of the Dutch language, was known to have composed just one sonnet in English, containing his philosophy. In it, Geyls wrote of the frightening stars, the cold universe, and of the "vast

[54] Wilber frames the goal of meditation in contemplative forms of spirituality as "[moving] Wakefulness from its limited identification with the gross waking state, though all 5 states [of consciousness, from gross waking, subtle dreaming, causal deep dreamless sleep, formless Witnessing, and ultimate nondual Unity or Suchness], resulting in Enlightenment, Awakening, Liberation, or Nondual Realization, an identity with ... unqualifiable Spirit itself and the entire manifest world." (Wilber 2017a, 72)

indifference, deadlier than a curse" (Mehta 1962a, 106). He wrote of the world that Charles Taylor later described as a secular age (Taylor 2007). Geyl was a staunch opponent of Arnold Toynbee, whose attempts to generalize and search for patterns, being against the predominant mood of his era, attracted both critics and public acclaim. As a secularist, Geyls made a poignant comparison, seeing Toynbee as a Faust-like figure, who tries to know more than can be known. For Geyl, history was an argument without an end, with the grace of God gone, where the boundless and silent universe goes revolving on. (Mehta 1962a, 106) It is easy to see a similar figure in, and a similar opposition from the same premises, towards Ken Wilber. His ontic approach to the universe is totalistic. His practical call for the evolution of our species is demanding. His epistemic attempt to know more than perhaps can be know is Faustian. It is nowhere as evident as in the case of the four imperatives – or the "3 S's" – for the religion of tomorrow, where the evolution of spirituality as a phenomenon is dependent on the steps each individual practitioner takes, in the form of Waking, Growing, Cleaning and Showing Up – that is, in engaging in spiritual, intellectual, psychodynamic, and practical/vocational voluntary growth. That places an enormous responsibility to "remake the world, using a better, more comprehensive, more ultimately accurate map", since "[i]f you can't do it, it can't be done...[w]e're all anxiously awaiting, and deeply depending on *you* for our own salvation..." (Wilber 2017a, 663), which can, indeed, appear as Faustian, at least if one does not take into account the metaphilosophical basis of Wilber's project.

Toynbee noted how his classical education was the reason he had concentrated his energies on looking for order in human experience (Mehta 1962a, 98). Although Hugh Trevor-Roper, another sharp critic of Toynbee, shared a similar classical background, the overarching style of thinking Toynbee had was metaphysically inclined, in the sense shared by Hegel, Marx and Spengler, who all produced grand scale explanations regarding human life on planet earth. This all-embracing approach can be said to be the home terrain of certain thinkers, while other thinkers approach their subject in narrower fashion (the "plum-cake" and "dry-biscuit" approaches mentioned in Chapter 3.1.1). These differences and their analysis can be approached with the tools provided by metaphilosophy.

Metaphilosophy is a branch of philosophy that asks what philosophy is, how it should be done, and to what ends (Overgaard, Gilbert & Burwood 2013, vii). Philosophers, however, are no different from other human scholars as regards explicating the theories and the methods we use in our work. Like any scientist immersed in the topic of their interest, being busy researching, thinking and writing, philosophers seldom make their metaphilosophies explicitly clear (Piercey 2017, 276). It should also be noted that metaphilosophy is done not only by professional philosophers, but even more importantly by all kinds of thinkers, adherents of religious and spiritual traditions, self-made intellectuals and theologians, when they

participate in discussions about the fundamentals of human existence. Spiritual innovators belong to this heterogenous group of thinkers.

The most overarching metaphilosophical feature of Wilber's Integral theory is the attempt to situate itself both beyond, above, and in the middle of various branches of knowledge: to touch them all in the spirit of nonexclusion, while remaining untouched itself (cf. Mickey 2019).[55] The spiritual innovations presented above elucidate a tendency of ontic minimalism: to explain the maximum amount of reality with the least number of concepts (Wilber 2018, 146). This is done by using a concordist approach that was already visible in Renaissance perennialism, with an orientation towards knowledge as not being confined to a sole domain of inquiry, but rather pictured as, in the words of a contemporary philosopher and religion scholar, a multidisciplinary comparative inquiry (Wildman 2010). Some scholars suggest that there is a current trend towards this type of inclusivist approach, as integrative, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches have recently been emerging in human and natural sciences, aiming to counter the fragmentary nature of specialized disciplines, and fragmentation within a given discipline (cf. Schwartz & Esbjörn-Hargens 2019, xxi; Wildman 2010, 72). This, on the other hand, can be seen less as an emergent, and more of a return to the original conception of philosophy – the love of wisdom as "knowledge of things human and of things divine" – as it was practiced by the pre-Socratics in the earliest phase of Western thought (around 585 BC—470 BC), when wisdom was not distributed among departments, and thinkers did not indulge in specialization (Barnes 2001, xiv—xv). Be that as it may, examples of these current integrative perspectives include an approach known as systematic reviews, offering a meta-meta-analysis of scientific studies by collecting and pooling together data from primary research studies in order to form a more comprehensive and trustworthy picture of the topic being studied, than is possible from individual studies (Gough et al., 2016). Computational modeling and simulation have been applied to advance research in the humanities, arts, and social sciences (Diallo et al., 2019). Philosophy offers similar approaches in systematic and meta-level philosophies (cf. Puntel 2008; Bhaskar et al., 2016).

3.2.1 Seven metaphilosophical commitments

The approach towards "meta", "trans", and "inter"-disciplinary approaches is the most general overall metaphilosophical commitment in Wilber's integral theory. It aims to follow the principle of nonexclusion (Schwartz & Esbjörn-Hargens 2019, xxiii), where critical inclusiveness and rigorous openness are the *de rigueur* building

[55] This is in line with the etymology of the word "integral", which can be defined as "untouched" (Mickey 2019, 169).

blocks of any integral endeavor. What Wilber has done is to offer novel conceptualizations in the form of spiritual and philosophical innovations that aim to go beyond the irony of conservatism that is inherent in many approaches that purport to offer streams of wisdom in the contemporary world; be the world in question that of the Renaissance, or that of *Aufklärung*, or the one that we are living in now at the beginning of the 21st century.[56] For further analysis, here are seven general metaphilosophical commitments that frame Wilber's style of thinking:

1. *Ontological pluralism*. Reality is not reducible to a single perspective. Reality is multi-faceted. This approach is present in many philosophical sources and traditions, from perennialism to Solovyov's 19th century integralism, which suggested a way of knowledge-formation that should be free of exclusiveness and one-sidedness. Wilber phrases it as "everyone is right", a principle which holds that each perspective comes from a certain Kosmic address, and its epistemic merits should be seen and judged as such. This address is a specific combination of elements that indicates where a person is located in the AQAL Matrix, that is, it specifies, at least, the developmental altitude, a preferred quadrant, a typology, line constellation and access to states of consciousness the person in question has. (Wilber 2017a, 579) This is also an important tool in integral coaching methodology, which is discussed more fully in Articles III and IV.
2. *Epistemological pluralism.* Reality is not known through a single mode of inquiry. It is approached through various methodologies, uncovering four different types of truth. Together these methodologies comprise what Wilber terms as "Integral Methodological Pluralism", or IMP (Wilber 2006a). These methodologies cover the four quadrants, but introduce another aspect called "zones [of inquiry]". These zones, rather prosaically named Zone # 1,

[56] Richard Rorty (1984) describes how philosophers can engage with their subject and its history in various ways. One of these ways is the writing of "big, sweeping histories" written by, for example, Hegel and Heidegger (ibid, 56). Rorty names this approach *Geistesgeschichte*. He proposes its hallmark to be the justification of certain questions as the genuinely philosophical ones, being an exercise in "canon formation" (ibid, 58; Piercey 2017, 282). During the course of almost 50 years of writing, Wilber has formed his own canon, using the perennialist tradition as a starting point, and then forming his "neoperennialism" (Wilber 1997, 52—71). He has carefully selected conversation partners that fit into his framework of Kosmic constructionism, and written a neo/perennialist narrative that concentrates on philosophical big questions as the most genuine ones worth pursuing, and evolutionary-melioristic answers as the ones worth giving. In so doing, Wilber has, in the form of his writings, determined a neo/perennialist playground by his canonizing of certain questions and most valuable discourses.

Zone # 2, et cetera, cover the inside and outside of the four quadrants as places from which anything can be approached, seen and understood. Interior-singular perspective produces phenomenology (zone 1) and structuralism (zone 2). Interior-plural perspective produces hermeneutics (zone 3) and ethnomethodology (zone 4). Exterior-singular perspective produces autopoiesis (zone 5) and empiricism (zone 6). Exterior-plural perspective produces social autopoiesis (zone 7) and systems theory (zone 8). We can see a personal reality as if from the pure consciousness perspective as phenomena unfold (zone 1), as well as seeing what common shapes, structures, and features they exhibit (zone 2), with the same principle applying throughout the quadrants. (Wilber 2006a, 33—38; Jakonen 2009, 104—105)

3. *A melioristic attitude.* As Rescher (1993, 160–164) points out, a melioristic attitude – the idea that the human condition can be improved through concerted effort – is hard to substantiate or hard to refute. It is rather, a metaphilosophical commitment or attitude. This attitude has been a crucial component of philosophical endeavor right from the earliest origins, in many cultures: Stoic, Epicurean, Indian, and other melioristic systems of thinking and practice have been with us, as a species, for almost as long as the history of philosophy reaches back in time.

4. *A psychological disposition towards a systemic order of things. James* (1977, 398) suggested two psychological tendencies, where the first tends towards doom and gloom, and the other towards "eternal moral order" (ibid.). Wilber's philosophy belongs to the latter. This tendency is evident, for example, in many of the classics of philosophy, who in their very performing of philosophy reveal a push and pull towards seeing things, and the laws behind them, as a unified whole that has at least systemic connections, if not a τέλος or a purpose.

5. *A unification of tender mindedness and tough mindedness.* James (ibid, 365) proposed that all philosophical debates result from two types of psychologies clashing: those of the "tender minded" and those of the "tough minded". He also posited (ibid, 366–369) that most people are psychologically mixed, and yearn for elements from both sides of the philosophy that has been offered throughout history. Wilber tries to do this by suggesting that different disciplines approach the same reality from different perspectives, and all of them are partially right.

6. *Connection to Spirit.* James (1977, 354) held a notion that the need to feel an intimate connection with the divine is "one of the deepest" in our psyches. So it is with Wilber. There is from the start to finish not only a

yearning, but an attempt to rationally argue for, epistemologically elucidate a method of, and phenomenologically point out a reality that Wilber calls spiritual. This process of WAKING UP (Wilber 2017a, 531; sic) is "arguably what is most crucial in any spirituality – indeed, in life itself". One should note, however, the nuances of the word. For more on this, see footnote 26.

7. *The emancipatory function of philosophy.* Talisse (2017, 236) proposes that William James' conception of philosophy was a "kind of intellectual therapy, a way of finding one's place in the cosmos, and making oneself at home in the world". This is akin to Wilber, with one notable exception. Wilber does his philosophy as a way to point out the contours of consciousness, which, according to Wilber, is a case of mistaken identity (Wilber 2017a, 533) leading both to unnecessary suffering, as well as to various endeavors of substitute gratification which Wilber calls "the Atman project" (Wilber 1980). This "mistaken identity with a small, finite, born and dying, skin-encapsulated ego" is transcended (but included) in the process of Waking Up (sic), which leads to an "infinite, timeless, spaceless, unborn, and undying True Self, and from there to an ultimate nondual 'unity' consciousness or Suchness, which is one with Spirit per se, the Ground and Goal of the entire process" (Wilber 2017a, 533). For Wilber, the intellectual territory of philosophy amounts to "a map of Samsara", from which it is easier to free oneself if the map is comprehensive and accurate. Philosophy, integral or not, is for Wilber a means to an end. This end is always for Wilber of soteriological nature, grounded in his (nondual) spiritual worldview. This relationship between reason and spirit is stated at the end of Wilber's major book Sex, Ecology, Spirituality as: "And so there we stand now, at rationality, poised on the edge of transrational perception, a *scientia visionis* that is bringing here and there, but ever more clearly, to all sorts of people in all sorts of places, powerful glimmers of a true Descent of the all-pervading World Soul" (Wilber 1995, 551).

These are some of the metaphilosophical commitments, tendencies, and hallmarks of Ken Wilber's philosophy. They frame Wilber as an antireductionistic, comparative big-question philosopher, who with an emancipatory knowledge interest strives towards nomothetical, axiomatic patterns of *psychologia perennis,* in a systematic and ontologically comprehensive form of philosophy that is ultimately a map to be discarded as the true self of the navigator becomes the Sphinx whose riddle is dissolved in nondual union.

3.3 Contributions: from theory to practice

In my dissertation, I offer an interpretation of Ken Wilber's spiritual innovatorship as something that comes into being as it is practiced, where the doing of something – the integral vision – cannot be separated from the theoretical contributions that underlie it, and vice versa. "It is only by studying a strictly theoretical philosophy", said the German Idealist philosopher Schelling, "that we become most immediately acquainted with Ideas, and *only Ideas provide action with energy and ethical significance*" (cited in Habermas 1971, 301, italics mine). Hermeneutic research, as I have defined it, following Moules *et al.* (2015), focuses on a particular topic in relation to how it is lived out in the world of practice, how it has evolved over time, and how it relates to the surrounding culture. In this quest, the analysis of the data is divergent rather than convergent, as the associations that strengthen the process of understanding are opened up and, in a sense, spread out all over the research field. Interpretation itself is the analysis. (ibid, 117) With this approach in mind one should embark on a reading of the articles that follow, and especially Article III and IV, which respectively trace the practice of integral theory as applied to coaching and the pragmatics of betterment (Rescher 2014).

Wilber's innovations regarding the spiritual concern of human beings with their appropriate relationship to the cosmos (MacDonald 2005, 8718) should, I argue, be interpreted from the hermeneutically entangled perspectives of theory and practice. For this, we can use the insights of mutually supportive approaches from cultural studies to philosophical pragmatism. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), representing the pragmatist tradition, formulated his famous maxim as:

> Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of conception of the object. (Peirce 1935, 402)[57]

This offers a good way to interpret Wilber as a spiritual innovator. There are the theoretical innovations ("the object of our conception") and their practical applications ("conception of their effects"). Following Peirce, I argue that analyzing

[57] As I understand it, Peirce is suggesting that a concept is only worth in meaning what it entails in action. Proper philosophy is done, however, by separating practical utilities from the act of doing philosophy: "[P]ractical utilities, whether low or high, should be PUT OUT OF SIGHT (sic) by the investigator… [as for] the two masters, *theory* and *practice*, you cannot serve [italics in original]." (Peirce 1932, 349) For Peirce, the point of view of utility is always a narrow point of view. When practically important objects guide our interest, our theories are not able to roam free.

the practical bearings of the Integral theory gives us a more nuanced understanding of what makes Wilber unique as a spiritual innovator.[58]

Taking such a pragmatist perspective towards understanding Ken Wilber as a spiritual innovator can be seen through an analogy with the smart phone. Were we to approach the smart phone through its hardware, we would be describing the object and seeing the material of which it is made. Were we to approach the smart phone through its software, we would comprehend the systemic connections that make the smart phone what it is. However, I argue, were we to understand the functional applications that the smart phone has – and, as it were, manufactures, discovers, and creates – in the daily lives of its users, we would understand the smart phone on a deeper, more nuanced, and more real, practical level.

When seen from the perspective of conceptual thought – as a mental framework that attempts to represent reality behind the appearances – Wilber's innovations aim to offer a spiritual map for thinking individuals in the 21st century, situated in an age marked by both secular notions and various forms of post-truth claims (Horgan 2003, 55—56; Streib & Klein 2016, 76; Taylor 2007; Wilber 2017b). From a practical perspective, Wilber's innovations can be seen as conceptual building blocks for applications in pragmatic disciplines and scholarly approaches. As Moules *et al.* (2015, 68) have proposed, hermeneutics depends on finding cases of "life unfolding in action", and letting those cases inform our hermeneutical quest. Honko (1984, in Kamppinen 2014, 9—10) has argued that texts investigated in comparative religion

[58] This perspective is apt, I would add, as pragmatism is a quintessentially an American philosophical tradition, and Wilber, though a cosmopolitan in his thinking, is an American philosopher by his unequivocal tendency towards world improvement. Emblematically, Wilber was featured in a book journalist Tony Schwartz wrote as self-assessed therapy, after writing an early biography of Donald Trump. The book featuring Wilber was called *What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America* (1995). The book featuring Trump was called *The Art of the Deal* (1988). As successors in Schwartz's bibliography, the two books shed revealing light on the crux of the American pursuit: to go both wide (*The Art of the Deal*) and deep (*What Really Matters*). As these two successes, the worldly and the inwardly, are usually seen as separate poles, or the twain that shall never meet, it is interesting to read them as being the two sides of what Rescher (2014) calls the "pragmatics of betterment". On the other side, we are attracted by success that is measurable in wealth, size, and quantity, following Trump, ending up as President of the United States of America. On the other, we go for success that is measured in wisdom, depth, and quality, ending up as philosophers, mystics, or sages. One would hope, following Plato, that the sides could be united in service of a more unitive goal. We have models for this in recent political history: philosopher and scholar of comparative religion Sarvepalli Radhakishnan served as President of India in 1962–1967, and author of books on spiritual philosophy (for example, *Thoughts on Life and Consciousness*), Janos Drnovsek, served as president of Slovenia in 2002–2007. In addition, it should be noted that French President Emmanuel Macron worked as assistant for philosopher Paul Ricoeur for two years.

receive their full meanings – those that are worthy of study, versus their "empty" structural meanings – in the context of use when they are actualized in functional roles. Following Honko, the "full" meaning of Wilber's innovatorship can be interpreted as appearing in the contexts of use – and, from the pragmatist point of view, the practical bearings, i.e. the results – that are explored further in Articles III and IV, originally derived from various pools of tradition, such as *philosophia perennis* and its corollaries.

If, to paraphrase Peirce's famous pragmatist maxim, the effects of our concept[ion]s is the whole of the concept itself – if the idea is equal to the practical result – then the deeper understanding of Ken Wilber's spiritual innovatorship lies not in his ontology or *theoria*, but the *praxis* resulting from his philosophy. As a base theory, Integral has produced applied melioristic projects in fields that at first glance do not have anything in common with each other. From a fishery supply chain development to psychotherapy, concepts derived from Integral Theory have had a wide impact on various professional fields and also, to a limited degree, on academic research. Here, however, the duality of my research position can prove helpful. As I have personally utilized both Wilberian metaphilosophy and the applied foresight of integral coaching in conducting leadership development programs, I understand their pragmatic function in daily interactions with people in organizations, varying from entrepreneurial start-ups to multi-national companies. There are many factors to succeeding in a process consultation and a coaching project; results are not always the most important thing, but usually they matter. My position as an applied hermeneuticist and a practitioner should elucidate the basic notion of pragmatism: that the content and the meaning of a concept is a matter of the role it plays in human practice, and might I add, the results it achieves? (Talisse 2017, 245; Kamppinen 2014).

Therefore, in conclusion, I offer the following remark. The more nuanced understanding of Ken Wilber as a spiritual innovator, which I have strived to attain in this dissertation, can be found from two hermeneutically complementary sources: from theory and practice, as they form the two dimensions of Wilber's innovatorship. Studying the concepts in the context of their applications forms a hermeneutic circle without which the theory would remain silent and laden with prejudices.[59] This

[59] This has been another address on the topic, when observing people who have been impacted by the Integral Theory, but have never applied it to a discipline, practice or the ongoing challenge of everyday life experiences. This group of people has a higher expectancy to navigate toward the "strong negative" end of the Integral criticism spectrum, as the feedback loop of intriguing theory, never meeting life as it is lived in the world of practice, remains painfully open. The situation is akin to having a book that one knows is interesting and potentially rewarding on one's bookshelf, but in fear of the challenges presented by the contents, one never reads the book, and eventually, comes to resent it.

approach, as I have come to appreciate it, provides the most illuminating light for reflecting back the essence of Wilber's project as a spiritual innovator and creator of concepts, i.e. a philosopher. It is the same as with the ubiquitous smart phone. Understanding it both as an object and through its relationship with the culture that surrounds it comes not so much through the analysis of the software or the hardware, but through the apps, and how they participate and are acted upon in human consciousness, behavior, culture and systems.

In the course of writing this dissertation I have found Wilber to be part of a larger cultural, intellectual, and sociological picture instead of the lone intellectual figure he sometimes is purported to be. Regarding further research, this research work has revealed many new points of connection. However, due to the limited focus of this investigation, I have not been able to account for many of those contexts. I have also been forced to refrain from commenting on the perspective of structural power in Wilber's philosophy, as the Integral Theory is rather hegemonistic in its metaontology. I have not focused on important viewpoints regarding the relationship of Integral philosophy and spiritual consumerism, or the role of the Integral movement as part of a wider sociological landscape. I have offered answers in the following articles to questions of applied hermeneutical nature. There are also many other questions to consider and perspectives to take. These omissions offer a deep and wide avenue for future research.

Appendix: Pragmatic, scholarly and disciplinary applications of Integral Theory

- acting (Melody 2008),
- addiction and recovery (Dupuy & Morelli 2007; Shealy & White 2013),
- adolescent addiction treatment (Calleja 2011),
- architecture (deKay et al. 2018; Buchanan 2012),
- art (Rentschler 2006),
- athletics and sports (Wilkinson, Thompson & Tzakiris 2013; Matos et al. 2012),
- career counseling (Foster 2007),
- climate change (Zimmerman 2014; Esbjörn-Hargens 2010; Slaughter 2009; Luftig 2009; Inglis 2009),
- coaching (Hunt & Divine 2009),
- conceptions of mental illness (Adekson 2014),
- conceptualizing the 2008 financial crisis (Bowman 2010),
- congregational ministry (Johanson & Forman 2006),
- consciousness studies (Combs 2009; Zeitler 2012),
- constitutional interpretation (Fischler 2007),
- correctional education (Gehring & Buffer 2006),
- couples therapy (Habib 2014),
- creating New Thought churches (Simmons 2009),
- criminology and criminal justice (Gibbs, Giever & Martin 2006; Champion, Martin & Cohen 2020),
- critical realism (Ingersoll 2013; Marshall 2012; Despain 2015),

- dancing (Petersen 2008),
- ecology (Esbjörn-Hargens & Zimmerman 2009),
- economics (Bowman 2011),
- education (Stein 2013; Crittendon 2007; Bohac Clarke 2018),
- elementary and middle school math education (Simons 2011),
- emotional development (Rubin 2010; Leslie 2010),
- entrepreneurship (Voros 2007; Jakonen 2016)
- ethical development (Baratta 2010),
- evidence based medicine (2011),
- feminist theory (Nicholson 2006, 2014; Wilson 2007),
- finance (Wagner 2006),
- fishery supply chain development (Hordjik & Jonkers 2012),
- futures studies (Slaughter 2008, 2012; Hayward 2008; Voros 2001, 2008; Morgan 2011, 2012),
- healthcare management (Goddard 2006),
- improvisation and creativity (Sarath 2013),
- individual psychotherapy (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010; Marquis 2010; Lewis 2011; Witt 2014; Parlee 2006; Landraitis 2006),
- international development (Hochachka 2007),
- international relations (Cordeiro 2014),
- interreligious theory and practice (Alderman 2011),
- investing (Bozesan 2013a, 2013b),
- law (Fischler 2006),
- leadership and business (Pauchant 2005; Volckmann 2005; Burke et al. 2006; Kofman 2006; Spence & McDonald 2010; Jakonen & Halinen 2011; Forman 2013; Watkins 2014; Watkins 2016),
- management and organizational theory (Robledo 2013),
- mediation (Perloff 2010),
- meditation (Wilber 2016),
- medicine (Howard & Arroll 2011; Kreisberg 2011),

- meta-integral approach to integral theory (McIntosh 2007; Edwards 2008; Walsh 2009a, 2009b; Stein 2014)
- metaphilosophy (Schwartz & Esbjörn-Hargens, 2019)
- methodologies of well-being and life balance (Leonard 2006; Jackson 2006),
- mindfulness (Witt 2014),
- narrative prose creation (Ornst 2008),
- nursing (Jarrin 2007; Beck et al. 2011),
- open source software analysis (Millar, Choi, Russell & Kim 2005)
- organizational change management (Landrum & Paul 2005; Edwards 2005; Anderson & Ackerman Anderson 2010; Jakonen & Kamppinen 2017)
- parenting (Martineau 2007),
- philosophy of science (Koller 2006; Herrada 2011; Bowman 2012)
- play (Gordon & Esbjörn-Hargens 2007),
- politics (Wilpert 2006),
- postformal scholarship (Klisanin 2011),
- posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Johnson 2012),
- psychiatry (Short 2011, 2006; Marquis 2008; Ingersoll 2005),
- psychological field theory (Bowman 2012),
- psychopathology (Ingersoll & Marquis 2014)
- psychopharmacology (Ingersoll 2007),
- psychotherapy (Forman 2010),
- quantitative/qualitative debate in social sciences research (Black 2008),
- religious education (Filipsone 2009),
- sexual abuse trauma healing (Araujo 2008),
- sexual identity (Eliason 2009; Bailin 2009),
- significant relationships (Pfeiffer 2007),
- social services (Larkin, Beckos & Martin 2014),
- social work (Larkin 2006; Kerrigan 2006),
- socially conscious curriculum development (Schmidt 2011),

- spirituality-related interventions in an organizational setting (Larkin et al., 2012)
- standardized testing (Suttle 2010),
- strategy in corporations (Landrum & Gardner 2005),
- suicidology (Webb 2006),
- sustainable design (deKay 2006; 2011),
- sustainability (Divecha & Brown 2013; Riddell 2013),
- teacher education and evaluation (Klein 2012),
- team dynamics (Gunnlaugson & Moze 2012),
- technology (Richardson 2013),
- unity experience conceptualization (Smith & Savtchenko 2014),
- video game design (Silbiger 2010),
- wisdom (Walsh 2010),
- world philosophy (Winton 2013)

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