

## CHAPTER ONE

# A Larger Calling

### *The Field of Integral Studies*

At any moment, half of the globe, animals and humans included, is engaged in sleeping and dreaming. As the Earth's rotation in space brings about the night, sleep and dreaming slowly pass from one time zone to the next. Given that dreams are such an important part of our life, a simple question lies at the heart of this book: How do dreams participate in our process of becoming the whole of who we are? To try to answer this question we turn to the concept of *integralism*.

The integral paradigm is still emerging, stimulated by a growing need to make sense of the interconnectedness of the various dimensions of our life, from the cellular to the individual, and all the way to global living systems. In this chapter we explore briefly the context and history of integral philosophy (see also McIntosh, 2007) and some of its applications within psychology.

#### THE INTEGRAL MEME: THREE MAIN STREAMS

We have identified three main streams of thought woven into the meaning of the term *integral* (see figure 1). The first stream is *holism* and general systems theory. Holism derives from the insight that both the forms in nature and organization within human cultures became progressively more complex with time

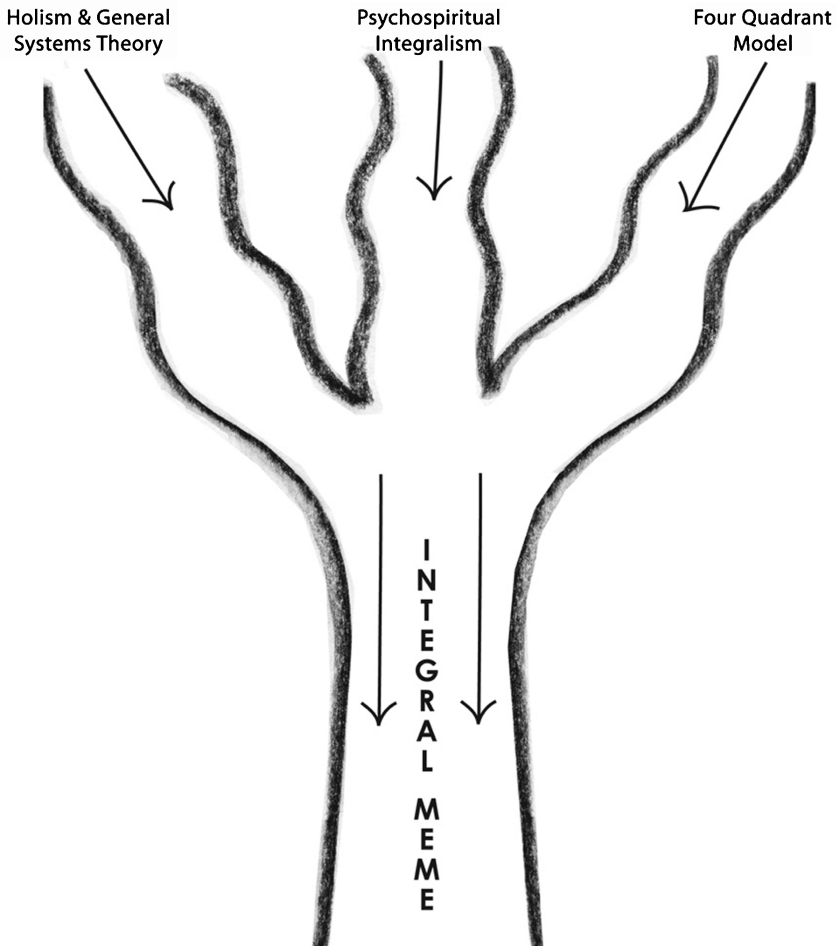


FIGURE 1. THE THREE STREAMS OF INTEGRAL.

and evolution. This insight has fueled an interdisciplinary focus in life and social sciences that has stimulated development of a general systems theory and the science of complexity. The influences and applications of these lines of thought have reached many other fields, including psychology.

The second stream is *integralism*, a term used in the psycho-spiritual context. Founded within philosophy and psychology, integralism focuses on the development of the whole person with a view toward unfolding its fullest potential, at both an individual and collective level.

The third stream speaks of integralism within an *epistemological* context. This view takes into account the fact that different types of human expertise are connected to different ways of acquiring knowledge. These diverse areas of knowledge often compete in claiming the best forms of truth. When viewed from an integral perspective, however, their inherent complementarity becomes more apparent.

This book arises at the confluence of these three streams as we attempt to integrate them into an expanded understanding. Although these streams of ideas have their origins in the pre-modern era, their current configuration started to take shape in the early twentieth century and matured into the work of several authors at the end the century. By now, the integral *meme* (understood as a self-reproducing idea that informs the behaviors and beliefs of individuals and groups) is playing out in the global cultural sphere. An integral movement is emerging whose cultural importance is still cresting. What follows is an introduction to each of these three streams that anchor the foundation of our inquiry.

#### THE FIRST STREAM: HOLISM AND GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY

The idea of *integral* conveys comprehensiveness, or the search for an all-inclusive model that helps us find and understand the diverse contributions and recognizable patterns in the workings of the universe and human consciousness. In particular, it relates to the general idea of holism, or nondual thinking, resists any kind of oppositional thinking, and avoids reducing a complex system to the sum of its parts by valuing the creative synergy that is present in any whole.

Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza introduced the idea of holism (1663/1677) in the seventeenth century in opposition to reductionism and in reaction to Descartes' mind-body dualism

(Bennett, 1984; Della Rocca, 1996; Koistinen & Biro, 2002). Cognizant of Spinoza and his dialectics, the eighteenth-century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) used the idea of unity also as a form of anti-reductionism.<sup>1</sup> “The ‘reality’ to Hegel is only in the ‘whole,’ and nothing less than whole is real” (Razali, 2003). Hegel’s dialectic idealism has had a broad influence in social philosophy across many systems including existentialism and socialism.

However, the actual word *holism* was proposed by South African philosopher Jan Smuts in his book *Holism and Evolution* (1926). He defines holism as follows:

[Holism is] the ultimate synthetic, ordering, organizing, regulative activity in the universe which accounts for all the structural groupings and syntheses in it, from the atom and physico-chemical structures, through the cell and organisms, through Mind in animals, to Personality in man. The all-pervading and ever increasing character of synthetic unity or wholeness in these structures leads to the concept of Holism as the fundamental activity underlying and co-ordinating [*sic*] all others, and to the view of the universe as a Holistic Universe. (317)

An alternative formulation of the same idea is that of a system, defined as a set of interacting or interdependent entities forming an integrated whole. From the 1930s through the 1950s, in particular with the work of Austrian biologist Karl Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1951), a creative explosion led to the development of a general systems theory with applications in many fields, including ecology, cybernetics, psychology, medicine, anthropology, and organizational theory.

From a general systems perspective, phenomena can be viewed as a web of relationships. All systems—whether informational, biological, or social—share common patterns, behaviors, and properties. Understanding these patterns brings insight into complex phenomena. As physicist Fritjof Capra explains, “There is something else to life, something nonmaterial and irreducible—a pattern of organization” (Capra, 1996: 81). Capra continues, the “pattern of life, we might say, is a network pattern capable of self-organization” (83). Systems theory

has enabled a dialogue toward a unity of science. One of the most prevalent examples today is seen in the field of health care with the movement toward holistic medicine. Such an approach fosters practices that deal with health problems in their many dimensions—physical, psychological, social, cultural, and existential (spiritual)—and in which different preventive and healing modalities are used in an integrative manner.

Applied to human life and evolution, the core idea of systems theory is that humans are open systems. We participate in and are influenced by many other systems simultaneously. Human life is coextensive with nature (our biology), nurture (our unique developmental journey), and culture (our cultural matrix). For example, our brain reflects our biological and hereditary origins and autonomous programs (one of which is the sleep-wake cycle), but it is also connected to our cognitive-emotional functions that accumulate experience and developmentally make sense of it. In addition, through language and other creative forms (in particular the arts and technology), an extended social consciousness connects our personal awareness to larger social and cultural processes.

Holistic models consider the mind not as a simple property that emerged from the evolution of a more complex brain but as the site of a dynamic interplay among many levels and scales of a complex system. These are characterized by the presence of multiple interacting components whose connections, far from being fixed, vary dynamically. For example, within the human personality, we could speak of conscious awareness flowing through not only our bodily self, but also our emotional self, our relational/intersubjective self, our intellectual self (cognition), and our spiritual self (morality, faith). Each of these elements dynamically coalesces with the others to give rise to experience at the fluid border between inner and outer life. Within this holistic view, we bring dream studies as an essential phenomenon of the mind.

Holism and general systems theory arose within the context of the secular humanism of the Enlightenment, where spiritual concerns are confined to personal beliefs and choice. Because of this historical limitation, the theory tends to fall short in one serious way, as Ken Wilber (1995) has pointed out: holism seems overly reliant on “horizontal” (material) explanations

and leaves out the aspects that would give it “vertical” (existential or spiritual) depth. The second stream addresses this lack from a profoundly radical perspective.

#### THE SECOND STREAM: INTEGRALISM IN THE PSYCHOSPIRITUAL CONTEXT

The second stream informing the meaning of integralism connects the insights of complexity, dynamism, and evolution to a deeper, larger, and more encompassing ground. This stream is rooted in the integral philosophy and lifework of Indian philosopher Aurobindo Ghose (known as Sri Aurobindo) early in the twentieth century (Aurobindo, 1970). It was further developed by Haridas Chaudhuri (1965, 1974, 1977) and later on by Ken Wilber (2000). Their views assert that the material universe (the preoccupation of science) unfolds as an expression of a boundless spirit, and evolution is seen as an intelligent process that relies on our conscious human participation—a view that is absent in the purely material rendition of holism.

Integralism originated in the philosophy of *purna* (full, complete, integral) *yoga* (meaning to unite or bind), translated as “integral yoga,” a practice that points toward an integration among the material, psychological, and spiritual spheres of knowledge and being. “For integral yoga the ultimate goal of life is complete self-integration” (Chaudhuri, 1965: 77). This philosophy also considers the evolution of consciousness, both individual and collective, as one of its central concerns.

Sri Aurobindo, a philosopher and yoga practitioner, was born in India in 1872, educated in England, and developed his philosophical ideas out of several Western and Eastern philosophical thought systems. When he returned to India at the turn of the twentieth century, he became embroiled in the fight for India’s independence. While a political prisoner, he underwent a profound spiritual opening. Being familiar with both Eastern and Western traditions at a time when the colonial era was coming to an end, his thinking expressed a form of cultural integration that was unprecedented and contained keen foresight of the global awareness that would emerge decades later.

Aurobindo was familiar with the philosophy of Kant and Hegel and the evolutionary theory of Darwin and Spencer.

Philosopher Steve Odin (1981) states that Hegel appropriates Kant's "impersonal unity of self-consciousness" and develops his metaphysical system of "universal consciousness" or "Absolute Spirit." Within the Eastern system of Indian philosophy, Aurobindo relied on Vedanta (a set of philosophical traditions, based on the Hindu Vedas and concerned with the self-realization by which one understands the ultimate nature of reality or Brahman) and the complex spiritual system known as the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Aurobindo attempts to create a synthesis among these different East-West philosophical systems.

In *The Meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*, Indian scholar S. K. Maitra (1968) shows the commonality and differences between Hegel and Aurobindo in their views of spiritual evolution. Aurobindo disagreed with Hegel in identifying Spirit with Reason. Maitra views Aurobindo's evolutionary philosophy as a "new idea, which is not found in any system, either ancient or modern." Maitra goes on:

This is the idea of integration. Evolution is not merely an ascent from a lower to a higher state. It is also an integration of the higher with the lower ones. This means when a higher principle emerges, it descends into the lower ones causing a transformation of them. Thus when Mind emerges, not only does a new principle appear on the scene, but the lower principles of matter and life also undergo a transformation, so that they become different from what they were before the emergence of this new principle. (38–39)

Aurobindo's evolutionary model considers spiritual nature as an important aspect of an integral view. Chaudhuri and Spiegelberg (1960) state that Aurobindo's philosophy is "integral nondualism." Aurobindo acknowledges that Eastern philosophy in general promotes the idea of nondualism, which is "an intuitive approach to life and existence—an approach which seeks to understand reality in its undivided wholeness and fundamental oneness" (19).

Originally, non-Western approaches to an integral philosophy meant almost exclusively "Eastern" approaches.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the integral approach has grown to encompass other wisdom

traditions, including mystical and indigenous or Earth-based spirituality as well as insights from new spiritual movements, such as that sparked by Aurobindo himself. Chaudhuri and Spiegelberg offer an interpretation of the concept of integral nondualism within Aurobindo's philosophy: "Integral nondualism integrates the significant distinctions of ethics, religion, logic and metaphysics in its nondualistic philosophical outlook, without deprecating their value and importance. It reconciles the dualities of thought and existence in the unity of integral experience, integral living, and the integral sweep of cosmic evolution" (19).

The *integral* concept has also been applied within the field of psychology. For some, it relates principally to the psychology derived from the integral philosophy of Aurobindo (e.g., Sen, 1986; Cortright, 2007). For others (e.g., Shirazi, 2001; Chaudhuri, 1977; Combs, 2002), integral psychology takes its inspiration from Aurobindo but remains an open-ended inquiry into human wholeness and incorporates the findings of science.

Shirazi (2001) speaks of four general postulates that form the essence of the integral worldview:

1. Nonduality: the nonseparability of body-mind and spirit.
2. Multidimensionality: the spectrum of qualities and characteristics that is the outer manifestation of the unified self.
3. Holism: a potential state of integration of our multifaceted self, actualized through a process of self-realization.
4. Evolution: the transitional nature of being, engaged in participatory movement toward a personal and collective transformation of consciousness.

Shirazi's main work has been to expound on the writings of Chaudhuri. In particular, he uses Chaudhuri's simple but profound triadic principle of uniqueness (each individual has a particular signature and contribution), relatedness (we learn who we are through our being with others), and transcendence (our relationship with something larger than the self or community), to capture the complexities of human self-realization. The views described by Chaudhuri question the assumptions of dualistic mind at all levels of discourse and foster the ultimate



philosophical principle of unity: "A thoroughly integrated person seems somehow to go beyond all striving and straining and to touch the bedrock of timeless Being. . . . The conflict and tension of becoming are replaced within him by the profound peace of being. The anguish of ethical struggle is overcome with the joy and love of union with the infinite" (Chaudhuri, 1965: 102).

Chaudhuri and Shirazi propose a psychology that integrates and acknowledges the spiritual nature of the human experience. In the same vein, and following the insights of Aurobindo, Cortright (2007) describes how integral psychology addresses the growth and transformation of consciousness as a central feature of psychological life. Within its maturational arc, human development eventually discloses the existence of a psychic being, a "soul aspect" that is open to evolutionary changes. The maturation process, combined with spiritual practice, can bring about a refinement of consciousness through opening the heart, quieting the mind, and nurturing authentic relationships (Cortright, 2007). Transpersonal psychologists Almaas (1986, 2000), Ferrer (2002), Grof (1988, 1998), Walsh and Vaughan (1993), Washburn (1994), and Wilber (2000) have given similar accounts of these realms of experience as delineated by integral psychology (see also Caplan et al., 2003 and Hartelius et al., 2007). In the past decade, research in the emerging field of "positive psychology" has begun to provide empirical evidence of what it calls *psychological flourishing* (Fredrickson et al., 2005).

In integral psychology, the Western and Eastern configurations of psychology are viewed as complementary. Western psychology fosters the healing of psychological fragmentation that results from psychological wounding, as well as the relational deficits and defensive structures that make up the unconscious. Eastern psychology, on the other hand, helps us "find our psychic center so it becomes a guiding influence in our life" (Cortright, 2007: 72). Aurobindo called the latter process *psychic transformation*. Integral psychology thus sees the two movements—psychological healing and psychic transformation—as interconnected and inseparable.

To summarize, the notion of integralism has been used in a psychospiritual context in the following ways:

- As valuing cultural diversity, syncretism, and reciprocal integration of Western and non-Western approaches to the self and being.
- As understanding psychological development and moral/spiritual advancement as complementary and interconnected.
- As fostering a diversity of practices that address the multiplicity of our being.

THE THIRD STREAM:  
INTEGRALISM IN AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONTEXT—  
WILBER'S FOUR-QUADRANT MODEL

Wilber (2000) addresses integral psychology as an important subset of his own formulation of an integral philosophy. He attempts to substantiate a synthesis of developmental research by comparing a number of developmental theories and models proposed over the past fifty years in the West and borrowing aspects of Eastern philosophy, such as Buddhist and Vedantic ideas of human development and Aurobindo's evolutionary schema.

Wilber's main contribution to the notion of integralism has been to explain the diversity of the various fields of knowledge by mapping them in a simple epistemological framework: the four-quadrant model. This section looks at Wilber's philosophy in some detail.

Wilber's integral psychology (2000) borrows from holism and systems theories in viewing humans as *holons* (i.e., units of reality). Each human holon is composed of smaller holons (e.g., organs, cells, genes, etc.) and is nested within larger socio-cultural (family, affiliative groups, nation-state), ecological, and cosmological holons. In his theory of nested holons, Wilber echoes the dialectics of Hegel in proposing that more complex holons include more fundamental ones as well as presenting new properties at each level of complexity.

Wilber acknowledges an equal inclusion of three main epistemological approaches: "first-person" phenomenal accounts—that is, the subjective stance of "I"; "second-person" accounts—the intersubjective view from the collective stance of "we"; and "third-person" accounts of physical systems given

by objective science (2000: 183). Wilber colloquially calls these approaches the “Big Three.” Within his model, he postulates that phenomena (in particular, human consciousness) can be understood by looking at the intersection of two main orthogonal dimensions: 1) the interior/exterior dimension and 2) the individual/collective dimension. Together, these constitute the classical four-quadrant cells:

Individual + Interior	Individual + Exterior
Collective + Interior	Collective + Exterior

In its most simple expression, the upper half looks at the individual holon, the bottom half looks at collective holons. The right half deals with exterior knowledge (objective, material) seen in the dispassionate observer stance, the left half deals with interior knowledge (subjective consciousness) unfolded from a participative stance. For Wilber, human phenomena, in particular human consciousness, unfolds as a “mesh” involving the four quadrants simultaneously. Different aspects of consciousness and human phenomena are disclosed when looked at from the vantage point of each quadrant.

In approaching dream studies from the larger context of integralism, we have found Wilber’s model useful for locating diverse theories and methods about the process of dreaming and the understanding of dreams. The four-quadrant map incorporates what can be understood as four epistemological perspectives or four broad categories of knowledge, as presented as follows.

*Upper-Left Quadrant (UL)—Individual Interior: Subjective Modes of Knowing (e.g., phenomenology, psychotherapy).*

The upper-left quadrant concerns internal and subjective knowledge. It includes the various ways that we know ourselves through experience. Thus, we can understand this quadrant as dealing with self and consciousness as we all experience it. It includes the realm of meaning and aesthetics and how they

inform our actions in the world. Psychological models of the self and spiritual inquiry practices generally fall within this quadrant.

*Upper-Right Quadrant (UR)—Individual Exterior: Objective Modes of Knowing (e.g., biology, physiology, and cognitive neuroscience).*

The upper-right quadrant represents scientific knowledge about objects. It includes the study of the organism at all levels, and in particular, of brain functions. For example, all biologically based models explaining consciousness and experience fall into this mode. It also includes third-person approaches to dream text, such as content analysis (Hall & Van de Castle, 1966).

*Lower-Left Quadrant (LL)—Collective Interior: Intersubjective Modes of Knowing (e.g., hermeneutics, social anthropology).*

The lower-left quadrant concerns interpersonal, linguistic, and cultural knowledge. It includes the realms of values and morals that regulate our familial and collective life. Generally speaking, it could be construed as the realm of culture and worldview, disclosing collective and normative meanings, attitudes, ethics, aesthetics, and cultural practices that shape our experience.

*Lower-Right Quadrant (LR)—Collective Exterior: Interobjective Modes of Knowing (e.g., critical theory, general systems theory, history).*

The lower-right quadrant represents objective knowledge about groups, including social systems and the ecological environment. It focuses on material, economic, and social factors and is best equipped to disclose social structure and design (including their inequities) and how socioeconomic factors affect human experience (including learning).

The mapping of these modes of knowing is further refined when combined with the developmental stages (or structures of consciousness) that mark the human maturational process. Wilber follows Piaget's argument that each stage of cognitive

development will be accompanied with shifts in cognitive understanding of the world. The connection between ontogeny (the arc of structural changes within the development of an individual) and epistemological sophistication (the acquisition of more encompassing cognitive functions and capacities) also finds expression in each higher stage of maturation. Not only do particular dimensions of consciousness get disclosed by each mode of apprehending reality (the four quadrants): subjective, objective, intersubjective, among others, but deeper, more comprehensive, and possibly more refined dimensions of our experience get disclosed as we mature and engage with transformative practices such as meditation and working with dreams. Developmental phases are seen as progressive stages. We can only understand and explain our experience from the place of our highest achievement along any developmental lines described by Wilber and other developmental theorists.

Beyond the developmental stages described by Piaget for the first two decades of the human life cycle, Wilber explains subsequent, more advanced stages—sometimes called *post-formal* or *post-conventional* stages. Aurobindo has also described these stages and cross-cultural views of human development found in contemplative religious systems such as Buddhism, Vedanta, or even mystical Christianity. Following the principle of “include and transcend,” each developmental phase includes earlier achievements and transcends them, affording a new perspective on earlier capacities and knowledge.

Evolutionary thinking as well as the idea of holism pervades Wilber’s approach. He finds it necessary to account for the developmental arc traced by individuals along several maturational lines—including cognitive, moral, emotional, and spiritual. His emphasis is on mapping broad structural stages rather than understanding the more fine-grain, micro-developmental processes that define day-to-day adaptation. The latter, however, are more likely to be the scale at which ordinary dreams operate. Perhaps this is why Wilber makes very little mention of dreaming in his own work. When he does, he considers that we understand reality from the perspective of particular states of consciousness. In his view, advanced and possibly mystical states of consciousness (unitive experiences, meditative

absorption) derive from (or show refinement of) the three basic states of consciousness available to healthy individuals, no matter their age: waking, dreamless sleep, and dreaming. How one interprets these experiences, he concludes, depends on the maturational level of each individual (Combs, 2002, 2009).

In summary, Wilber emphasizes an epistemological context in understanding the concept of *integral*, from modes of knowing (corresponding to the four quadrants) to levels of development. He has coined the acronym AQAL (short for "All Quadrants, All Levels") to summarize this complex idea in one word.

### THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRAL

The word *integral* is thus used in three senses: the strict Aurobindonian sense, the Wilberian sense, and in a more generic sense. Wilber's work was strongly influenced by Aurobindo at first. However, over the years, Wilber's usage of the term has changed as his philosophy evolved. He states that his current model supersedes that of Aurobindo.

In the marketplace of current ideas, the term *integral* has acquired a strong Wilberian overtone, following his published attempt to signify a holistic, comprehensive, and all-encompassing map framed around the AQAL model. We can't blame Wilber for adopting the word *integral* as the best qualifier for his all-encompassing philosophy. The popularity of his writing has served as a strong attractor that has, for many, become equated with the word's usage and meaning. For many others, however, who have been in the integral movement for decades, to find the word *integral* "reduced" to only Wilber's model seems restrictive. Many scholars have used the word *integral* without strictly associating themselves with a particular philosophy (e.g., Ferrer, 2002; Schlitz et al., 2008). For them, the word has become almost synonymous with *holistic* or *wholeness*. Others have presented ideas that are consonant with the notion of integrality without necessarily adopting the term. In this book we claim the use of the word in a way that reflects both Wilber's and Aurobindo's meanings but is not entirely Wilberian nor Aurobindonian.

## SUMMARY

In this chapter we have reviewed the different meanings of the integral meme. We use the word *integral* in a broad and non-denominational way. Our approach seeks to explore and understand the multiplicity of human experience. In the next chapter we will explore how the concept of *integral* applies to dreams. Within dream studies, an integral approach to dreams would foster multidisciplinary awareness, embrace the complexity of dreaming phenomena, and recognize that dream practices engage countless forms of creative participation in the ongoing mystery of life. We also explore different epistemological approaches to dreams and apply the four-quadrant model to situate the many disciplines within the field of dream studies.