

Spirit Earth

Evolution and Wholeness: The Integrated Life

— Patricia M. Bombard

What if there existed a theory that could help each of us understand our own self-evolution? Even better, one that could help us see how our own work at evolution will make a difference in the world? Well, there is one. It is Ken Wilber's "Integral Theory."

I think best in images. For me, they help disparate ideas to coalesce. A major element of Wilber's theory is his "4-Quadrant Worldview" also known as the "Integral Map" (see illustration). When someone first walked me through this image, it immediately helped me grasp at a deeper level how my own growth in inner awareness and my behaviors go together, helping me have a more holistic vision of myself as "embodied." It also helped me see how one person's efforts can influence how the future will unfold. It was a realization both exciting and freeing. Most importantly, looking at life with Wilber's Integral Map has helped me to be more patient and more compassionate with my own growth process and that of others.

A 4-Quadrant View of Everything

Wilber drew the Integral Map after realizing the relationship among the four aspects of reality we each experience:

- First, our own interior life, or consciousness (Upper Left Quadrant - I);
- Second, our exterior self, both our physical body and our behaviors (Upper Right Quadrant - IT);
- Third, the interior life, or consciousness, of the collective, found in cultural aspects such as myths, beliefs, and values (Lower Left Quadrant - WE);
- Fourth, the external nature of that collective consciousness, visible, for example, in technology and architecture (Lower Right Quadrant - ITS).

In addition, Wilber's Integral Map shows how the process of change and transformation occurs over time for both individuals (I/IT) and the human community (WE/ITS). The spiral and arrows at the center of the map illustrate this interconnected and dynamic process. Bringing that process down to everyday life, it means the work I do to evolve does have the potential to influence the larger whole.

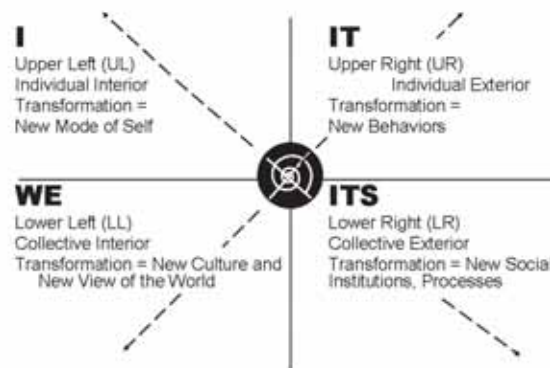
An Integral Daily Practice

Here is one example of how it works to use the Integral Map as a daily practice. We will start with the upper left quadrant. Standing in this quadrant in the present moment, we can ask, "What do I think, feel, or value about what I now am experiencing? What is unique about my story that affects the perspective I bring?"

Next, we can use the upper right quadrant to consider how our own interior development (UL/I) influences how we show up in the world (UR/IT). In the present moment, we can use this quadrant to ask, "What creative action can I take now regarding what is happening in my life?"

The lower quadrants help us to see how our own development relates to that of the larger contexts of our immediate family, our

Ken Wilber's Integral Worldview



EDITOR'S LETTER

With this issue, we at *SpiritEarth* focus on "embodiment" of the Universe Story. Our cover piece, from Board member Pat Bombard, synthesizes Ken Wilber's work on "Integral Theory," which, as Pat explains, helps us to "understand our own self-evolution" into fuller coherence with the universe.

Four religious sisters experienced an eight-week Universe Story sabbatical this past spring at The Well Spirituality Center, and they generously share with us their personal reflections on the journey toward deeper embodiment.

Bridget Sperduto writes on the experience of opening children to "The Language of the Heart" that draws humans into oneness with each other and the whole universe.

Embodiment of the Universe Story compels us to see with fresh eyes and feel with expanded hearts. Read evolutionary Christian minister Rev. Bruce Sanguin's piece for some very new insights into a couple of very old scripture stories. For more from Bruce, allow me to recommend *The Advance of Love: Reading the Bible with an Evolutionary Heart* (Vancouver: Evans and Sanguin Publishing, 2012).

Finally, I'm very pleased to welcome Susan Dehn Matthews to the *SpiritEarth* Board. Sue comes to us with extensive writing, editing, and teaching experience. She is a spiritual director and the author of *No Longer Silent: The Empowerment of Women in the Gospels* (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 2011). Welcome, Sue!

It's also a pleasure to welcome Tom Schemper to the Photography Committee. Thanks for sharing your time and beautiful images, Tom!

Barbara Foreman
barb4man@ameritech.net

SpiritEarth will celebrate the
100th birthday of Thomas Berry in our 2014 issues.

We invite writers from among our readership to offer reflections or stories around Thomas's influence upon them and ask for contributions from those who knew or studied with Thomas personally.

Submissions are due by December 15, 2013, and are subject to editorial approval. You will be contacted if yours is selected for publication.

Submissions should be emailed to Barbara Foreman at
barb4man@ameritech.net or sent by mail to:
Barbara Foreman
c/o The Well Spirituality Center
1515 West Ogden Avenue
La Grange Park, IL 60526

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Mission Statement

SpiritEarth is a publication that expands and advances The Well Spirituality Center's mission as a regional center for telling and engaging our Sacred Universe Story and fostering the evolving role of humankind in this great drama.

culture, and our world. On a daily basis, exploring these quadrants helps remind us of the bigger world. Using the lower left quadrant (LL/WE), we can ask, “What are people thinking? What story and values are behind what they are thinking? How can I include them in my own story?”

Finally, we can use the lower right quadrant (LR/ITS) to explore how the systems present in our larger context affect us. We can ask, “How will my actions affect these systems?”

Going Deeper

Wilber dives deep into these quadrants, articulating the presence within them of what he calls states, levels, lines, and types. The word “states” refers to personal experiences of conscious awareness such as waking, dreaming, and meditation. Other examples of states we might experience are periods of intense creativity or innovation. States come and go, but “levels” refers to the various stages of conscious development identified by many psychologists. These stages of development are permanent milestones we achieve.

Arrival at a particular level signals a new state of awareness. This description always reminds me of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said, “A mind stretched to a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions.”

While psychologists differ on the number and descriptions of the levels of consciousness, Wilber offers a simplified Integral Map with only three levels of inner development:

- *egocentric* (“It’s all about me.”);
- *ethnocentric* (“It’s all about us.”);
- *worldcentric* (“It’s about all of us.”).

Lines

In addition to our built-in capacity to move sequentially through different levels of consciousness, we also are capable of moving through a complex array of what Wilber calls “lines” of development. Wilber draws here on Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences. Daniel Goleman’s research on emotional intelligence also fits here.

Types

The final element of Wilber’s Integral Theory is the variety of “types” we exhibit. For example, individually

we exhibit different personality types or differ in whether we are extroverted or introverted (UL). We also show up as male or female, tall or short, skinny or fat, blond or brunette, or something in between (UR). The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the *Enneagram* are among a number of tools available to help us discern our own personality type and to recognize how we differ from people of other types. Types appear in the human collective as well: types of cars, architecture, clothing, etc. (LR). Culturally, there are types of music, myths and languages (LL). The important advice here is to make choices in life that fit our type.



— Photo by Thomas Schemper

Our Unique Story

A helpful way of thinking about the differences among people is to realize that our own Integral Map tells a unique story in answer to life’s questions. Wilber and his colleagues offer some examples of such questions. As you read the questions listed below, imagine how you might have answered them at a different age in your life. Then imagine how someone who is a different age than you are, or from a different culture than you, might answer them:

- What am I aware of? (cognition)
- What do I need? (needs)
- Who am I? (self-identity)
- What is important to me? (values)
- How do I feel about this? (emotional intelligence)
- What is the right thing to do? (morals)
- How should we interact? (interpersonal)
- How should I physically do this? (kinesthetic)
- What is of ultimate concern to me? (spirituality)

What is significant for me is that the answers to these questions all have a place on the Integral Map. They no longer are left hanging awkwardly outside of the story of who we are and seek to be.

The more we use Wilber’s Integral Map to understand ourselves, the more we can understand, appreciate, have compassion toward, and even take delight in others – and that, to me, offers a great deal of hope for our future as a planetary people.

I have used Wilber’s theory to begin to write my own story of conscious evolution, available on the Internet at: <http://consciousevolutionmemoir.com>

Personal Reflections on the Journey Toward Deeper Embodiment

How do the heart and body respond when immersed in an eight-week sabbatical centered upon the Universe Story? With immense creativity! This past spring, four participants embarked on personal journeys at The Well Spirituality Center that ultimately begged for bodily expression. Here these women offer us their personal insights and creative artwork—their own embodied contributions to the Universe Story.

Pat Monahan, CSJ

Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, puts it this way, “The incomprehensible mystery of God is love beyond imagining.”

How do we, mere mortals, embody “love beyond imagining” at this moment in time? Thomas Berry suggests that humanity has choices. First, we can **continue forward**, believing that science or God will make things right. This worldview is likely headed toward extinction of the human species and major destruction of the life systems of the planet. Second, we can **back away** from reality, refusing to acknowledge that our human mode of being is destroying Earth—that we are separate and immortal and that Earth is finite—our God-given natural resource. In other words, our destiny is elsewhere—evolutionary consciousness will evolve beyond nature. Our withering planet is testament to that worldview. Finally, Thomas advises, we **turn around and walk forward** into the Universe Story and recover our cosmic DNA.

The “new story” explains how everything emerged out of “incomprehensible mystery” from the original flaring forth some 14 billion years ago; how the human is integral to the story from the beginning; and how self-reflective consciousness awakens into communion with ALL that is. It is an invitation to humanity to deepen its understanding of the spiritual dynamics of the universe revealed through its own empirical insights. Indeed, the great diversity of things in their unity is where we glimpse the Divine.

Susan DeGuide, RSM

I have come to see that I am indeed a child of the universe, belonging to so much bigger than I ever dreamed of. The powers of the universe were being played out in me (on sabbatical) as I was able to name for myself what was going on. A new image of God has captured my imagination and holds me tight.

A favorite image of mine has always been the traditional Sacred Heart picture with Jesus pointing to his heart. It held an image of a loving God who is always most compassionate and forgiving. What happens to that image if we embrace the New Story? There is a Hubble photo of a nebula that looks like a heart in the cosmos. It now speaks to me of being enfolded and cared for in the heart of the Divine of the Cosmos. I am wrapped and embraced by God/the Divine Energy who is in me and I in that Divine Heart. We are one! The compassion endures.



— Credit and Copyright, J-P Metsävainio (<http://astroanarchy.zenfolio.com/>)

Kenise Neill, rsj

I completed the plaque, *Tjukurpa*—Holy Wisdom—Earth, in the final days of an eight-week sabbatical at The Well. During this time I experienced a “radical reorientation of self,” towards and in sacred “re-union” with or communion with Holy Wisdom, the earth, and the universe.

I have been deeply blessed to live and work among Aboriginal people in Australia, and during [my sabbatical time], I have come to a new awareness of them as prophets needing to be heard. Their own creation story and their whole way of being and living today is the sacred story of the universe. I have also come to an awareness that the story of the universe is my own story and the story of all life and a story holding our deepest truth.

For Aboriginal people, the land and all of the natural world are holy, in close relationship with and/or experienced as the Creator. The waterholes, snakes, trees, mountains, fish, birds, animals, sky, stars, planets are all within *Tjukurpa*. Ancestral spirits are of *Tjukurpa* because of their relationship and connection with earth and the universe. Aboriginal people know *Tjukurpa* through the natural world and understand themselves as connected to all reality. Aboriginal people belong to earth so closely they describe the earth as their mother. They know themselves in a reciprocal relationship with, of, in, and for earth.



— Photo by Kenise Neill, rsj

The clay relief [I created] is set both on the edge of a waterhole, *tjukula*, and deep within the earth. During the sabbatical time, as I heard the Universe Story, I have dreamt and held within me an image of being in a waterhole deep within the earth. I have included images of a rainbow, falling rain, and a boab tree, with an imprint of creation on the trunk. The snake is central and surrounds the image to honour the creation story, *The Rainbow Serpent Dreaming*, of many Aboriginal nations in Australia. The sacred snake emerges from the waterhole, as in many of the creation stories, representing the creator, wisdom, integrity, and healing. The waterhole snake, called the *wanampi*, is resident in many permanent waterholes in Australia.

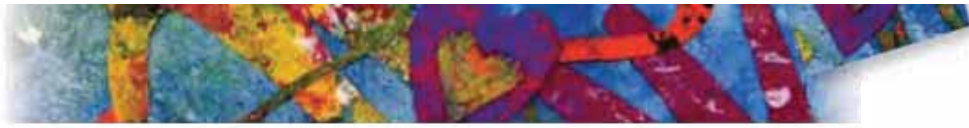
Pauline Guindon, CSJ

The metaphor I need to use for my experience at The Well is the open canvas and some broad sweeping strokes which an artist’s brush has placed there.

The canvas is my life. The artist is the holy energy which emanates from and *permeates and moves within and around* the persons, rooms, and halls of The Well. The paint strokes are the impressions made on my heart, mind, and spirit. These continue to nudge me into a different lived experience.

I identify an ongoing impulse within...gently inviting me to pay attention to the inner transformative process alive there, it is an impulse toward personal authenticity—to try to “live out of my truest self.” All my life I have been a passionate seeker after TRUTH...and more so during these more chaotic times in society and church.

Some previously loved authors have taken more space in my personal library: Thomas Berry (and friends of), Teilhard de Chardin, Ilia Delio, Barbara Marx Hubbard, Bruce Sanguin, Brian Swimme. Through their words and reflections, I am more awakened to the grandeur and mystery of God in humankind, nature, and myself. The interconnectedness of the worlds of science and religion are presented with respect, humility, and awe and encourage me to venture further along my own path of discovery.



A Language of the Heart

—Bridget Sperduto

“Let [us] effect a miracle of love.” Pierre Medialle, SJ

To participate in an evolutionary universe, one must be willing to stand on the edge of the “news that is [always] arriving out of the silence” (Rilke) - ears attentive, spirit alert, sleeves rolled up. This is what it means to be one with the evolutionary impulse, to breathe as one with the God who is always breathing new life into being, to participate in a future that is yet to come. In this space, miracles of love are incarnated.

The Universe Story was embodied, love was deepened, and a web of interconnectedness was extended this past year at The Well Spirituality Center. Nineteen fourth- and fifth-grade students from diverse backgrounds, ten teachers, a team of retreat leaders, the death of a young and promising American diplomat, the courageous and generous hearts of her parents, and youth from Afghan Peace Volunteers coalesced into ONE. We gathered over three days: once in January, once in April, and once in September. The tangible outcome is *“A Language of the Heart,”* the third book in “The Stories of Oneness” Project. The intangible outcomes are many. This is the story I would like to share. Though the miracles are many, I will focus on just a few.

Our original agenda was to create a book based on a song by Sr. Kathy Sherman, CSJ, “I Dream a World.” At our first gathering, the children were told the Universe Story. They heard that God has been dreaming for almost 14 billion years, and God continues to dream in each of them. The children reflected on and expressed how they imagine this dream being manifest through them. Nathan wrote, “God is dreaming in me to become a famous musician. I can participate by practicing a lot...[and] by playing in public. Then I can be ‘discovered.’” At our third gathering, Nathan’s dream began to unfold. Students from each school were commissioned to present through art, music, poetry, or drama, the message they learned in our time together. This message would be taken back to their schools. Nathan and his classmates wrote a song that Nathan put to music. The refrain says, “Love around us, peace abounds, hope within us, Christ surrounds.” Nathan performed his original song for our group and a reporter from *The Doings La Grange*. Moved by his creativity and talent, Kathy Sherman plans to translate the song into

sheet music for Nathan. This same day, Adrian, an insightful girl with a beautiful heart, wrote, “God’s dream is for all people to be friends. God is inviting me to tell them to be friends.” Adrian is deaf and nonverbal. God’s dream in her was manifested on our second day together.

Just two weeks before the students returned to The Well in April, a young, intelligent, and selfless U.S. diplomat, Anne Smedinghoff, 25, was killed by a Taliban explosive while delivering textbooks for Afghan students. Anne had been a student at St. Luke elementary school, one of the grade schools participating in the retreat. Several members of the retreat team knew and had taught Anne and her siblings. While hearing a story about an appearance Anne made on Afghan television during which she said, “We are more alike than different,” I immediately thought, “Just like ‘A Language of the Heart.’” At that same time, Sheila, one of the retreat team members who had known Anne, suggested sharing Anne’s story with the children because, as a fourth grader, Anne had all the leadership qualities we are calling forth in these children, yet at 10 years old she could never have imagined how God’s dream in her would unfold. In tune with the evolutionary impulse, the retreat team switched gears, deciding that our book would now be based on Kathy Sherman’s original composition, “A Language of the Heart.”

I called Anne’s parents, Tom and Mary Beth Smedinghoff, to get their permission for the project and to invite them to speak to the children about Anne at 10 years old and about her work as she matured. They graciously accepted the invitation and shared with the children pictures and stories of Anne. Sr. Kathy then spoke to her inspiration for the song, “A Language of the Heart” and sang it to the students and the Smedinghoffs. Lastly, the retreat participants were invited to join with Sr. Kathy in singing a blessing to the Smedinghoffs. At this point Mary Beth, Anne’s mother, was moved to tears. Adrian, desiring to tell the whole world to be friends, walked up to Mary Beth and Tom and hugged them. Each of the students and adults followed.

When we later asked the students, “What do we mean by a language of the heart?” they replied, “It is what we

(Continued on page 7)

Creation Stories Revisited

—Rev. Bruce Sanguin

Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, reminds us that "When circumstances change, the experience of the divine undergoes a shift. Images, intellectual constructs, and rituals that mediated a sense of God in one age often do not make sense in the next with its change of perceptions, values, and life-styles. The search must be undertaken anew if religious traditions are to remain vibrant and alive." And so we have here the Rev. Bruce Sanguin's fresh approach to scripture.

In a universe that is evolving, it makes sense that the prime directive of any religion, including Christianity, is to evolve along with it. When a religious system and its priesthood are invested instead in freezing divine creativity into an unchanging expression, it violates both nature and grace. Inevitably, this commitment will enact violence against those people who show up as evolutionary provocations on behalf of a new order. This is the fate that Jesus, a true evolutionary provocateur, suffered. Tragically, the church has enacted the same violence upon those who threatened the status quo.

When I read the myth of Adam and Eve, I interpret it as a story written by the priesthood to threaten and discourage those who feel the evolutionary impulse to reach out for a new wisdom, a new moral order, and new possibilities for self and community. Eve reaches out for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the encouragement of the serpent. It always struck me as strange that this natural desire for wisdom was a crime against God, leading to the shame of banishment. The serpent calls God's bluff on it, saying that He is just jealous and zealous to keep those powers for Himself. That kind of jealousy sounds to my ears, not like God, but priests who are invested in being the sole mediators of morality and wisdom. This story is not, therefore, a true creation story, because creation stories encourage ongoing creativity (evolution).

Harvard psychologist, Robert Kegan, describes the evolution of self through various developmental stages in

his book *The Evolving Self*. In the context of "holding environments," the self naturally evolves. These holding environments function like envelopes that have three functions: to hold (make safe), to release (to resource for the emergence of a new stage) and to challenge (when there is reluctance to move forward). The goal of life is not to stay enveloped, but rather to de-envelope (that is, to develop).

The explicit purpose of the myth of Adam and Eve is to keep the first couple enveloped. The Garden of Eden represents an inadequate holding environment. The act of "disobedience" (Eve's desire to reach out for greater beauty, truth, and goodness) results in banishment. In Kegan's research, this kind of shaming is the surest way to ensure that the self will regress under stress to precisely the point at which the holding environment failed. This creation story has functioned very effectively for two thousand years to keep Christianity and its subscribers from evolving. What is required for the future is a more nuanced theology of desire, one that honors and encourages the divine impulse to evolve.

Contrast this creation myth with the parable of the prodigal son. Here, the father honors the desire of the son to take his inheritance, leave home (de-velop), and discover for himself the path of sacred wisdom. There is no banishment, but only blessing, even though his request was shameful in first century Jewish culture. To my ears, this is a true creation story, one that celebrates the evolutionary impulse.

(A Language of the Heart continued from page 6)

experienced here. Even though we had never met them, we felt Anne's parents' sadness, and when we sang the blessing to them, they felt our love."

In the abundance of the Universe, another gift was given to this project. Inspired by Anne's work, we contacted peace activist Kathy Kelly who works with the Afghan youth group, *Afghan Peace Volunteers*. Their tagline is, "Why not Love?" These youth, who share our passion for unity, peace, and love, also participated in this project by sharing their hopes and dreams for the future. Copies of the book, which was launched on October 13, will be distributed in Afghanistan.

"Relationship is who we are and who we are becoming." Nothing exists outside of relationship. This is the reality of our Universe. As relationships were forged over the three days of our "Artists of Peace" program, the Universe Story was embodied, love was deepened, and a web of interconnectedness was extended. The web continues to expand and includes everyone who hears and enters into this story. Welcome to the web!




SpiritEarth

**The Well Spirituality Center
Congregation of St. Joseph
1515 West Ogden Avenue
La Grange Park, Illinois 60526-1721**

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1515 West Ogden Avenue, La Grange Park, IL 60526

Thank you for your support!



**Love is the most universal...
the most mysterious
of the cosmic forces.**

— Teilhard de Chardin

—Photo by Patricia Irr, osf