

ON BROADENING THE PARTICIPATORY MEANINGS OF
"TRANSPERSONAL" PHENOMENA:
DISCUSSED IN RELATION TO TRANSPERSONAL THEORY AND
TO THE WORK OF KEN WILBER, JORGE FERRER, AND ROBERT NOZICK

By

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by

Wayne H. Williams

As the transpersonal field moves to an understanding of human spirituality as more profoundly encompassing and participatory, many have begun to see the very word "transpersonal" as needing to be addressed, and perhaps fundamentally redefined.

Richard Tarnas

I believe, that our most basic participation in reality needs to be understood, not so much in terms of a hermeneutics of discovery (of pre-given meanings and objects) or a hermeneutics of suspicion (of distorting and contaminating factors), but of a *hermeneutics of the heart* (of love, trust, and communion with reality).

Jorge Ferrer

You must develop your consciousness. You must grow and evolve in your capacity to perceive the deeper layers of your Self, which disclose higher levels of reality: the great within that is beyond: the greater the depth, the higher the reality.

Ken Wilber

Even if this notion of reality is not yet a completely precise one, we want to be patient with it and not dismiss it too soon. The history of thought contains many notions it took centuries to clarify and sharpen, or even to remove the contradictions from.

Robert Nozick

There is no doubt, then, that the participatory vision will be refined, modified, and eventually deconstructed and situated in due time. Were the participatory vision to be embraced at some point by transpersonal scholars, for example, it will surely be only a question of time before its limitations emerge.

Jorge Ferrer

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I must thank Dr. Gene Thursby and Dr. Sheldon Isenberg for their patience in allowing me to work on this project over an extended period of time. Dr. Isenberg's course on comparative mysticism is where I first encountered the work of Ken Wilber, and I was profoundly influenced by Wilber's aspiration toward grand theorizing. Dr. Thursby has worked with me through various stages of my writing. Most notably, Dr. Thursby introduced me to the work of Jorge Ferrer which brought about the next major-participative-turn in my focus and writing. Robert Nozick's work most certainly influenced my early interests in grand theorizing and metaphysics; but it was by means of Wilber, and then Ferrer, that I came to develop a voice as a transpersonal writer.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the incredible value of my parents' love and support, which created a positive atmosphere for me to develop as a thinker and a writer. The process of developing this thesis, however, was so drawn out that my mother would often say that I'm taking too long and that she would be dead before I got my thesis done. Tragically, she was correct, and my mother died

unexpectedly months before the completion of this work. My accomplishment is somewhat hollow due to this fact, but in remembrance of my mother, I am aware that significant aspects of who I am are a result of who she was. I thank my mother and father for all that they have given me.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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This thesis seeks to examine several issues that are argued to be important to the project of framing a participative, pluralistic, and broadly inclusive understanding of the nature of transpersonal phenomena. Discussions of our subject matter are thus constructed from discussions taken from the work of Jorge Ferrer, Ken Wilber, and Robert Nozick regarding the participative nature of human consciousness, an assumed spectrum of transpersonal consciousness (differently interpreted by our thinkers), an implicit transpersonal depth-dimension within the individual. In addition, a critical approach is taken towards the idea of a map or model of Reality. Also

noteworthy, the author attempts a development of our thinkers' work by suggesting a broad definition of transpersonal phenomena which he ultimately attempts to situate in relation to the work of our three thinkers.

CHAPTER 1
SITUATING THE PROJECT OF OUR STUDY AND OVERVIEW
OF SOME TECHNICAL ASPECTS ABOUT OUR POSITION

**The Potential Broadness of a Participatory View
of Transpersonal Phenomena**

Our study is interested in exploring the idea that transpersonal phenomena may be largely defined by their *participatory* nature, and this we suggest may imply that transpersonal phenomena are largely defined by the nature and the *degree* of the participatory relations that manifest when an individual connects with others and with realities greater than the individual self.

In lieu of what we have said, an important goal of our study is to identify and explore the participatory elements that we believe are elaborated on in different contexts in the transpersonal philosophies of Ken Wilber and Jorge Ferrer. In addition, we will further suggest that whether transpersonal participation is described as taking place largely within the spiritual depths of the human consciousness (Wilber), or as taking place within a metaphysical space of connecting *events* among individuals (Ferrer), the key idea that we keep coming back to is that of the relation of participation itself. Accordingly, we

believe that a key definitional issue--and perhaps *the* key metaphysical issue to address in our study--concerns the relation, or the correlation, of what is understood as an individual participating with others and with realities greater than the individual self and what is defined as transpersonal phenomena within certain transpersonal circles.

Stated again in other terms, we are interested in exploring how broadly "transpersonal phenomena" might be defined if they are principally defined in participatory terms. This is why we are particularly interested in the work of Jorge Ferrer, an important up-and-coming transpersonal philosopher and scholar who suggests a broadened understanding of transpersonal phenomena in his (2002) work, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory, A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality*.

As Ferrer lays out his position, he says, "It is quite probable that there are a number of genuine spiritual potentials whose emergence and expression may not be encouraged or cultivated in traditional spiritual practices....such as primary instincts, sexuality, interpersonal intimacy, conscious parenting, emotional intelligence, creative imagination, or spiritual potentials perhaps specific to race, gender, and sexual orientation"

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 152). Ferrer is suggesting a potentially broad view of transpersonal phenomena. And yet we will ultimately suggest there may be an even broader view of transpersonal phenomena which follows from the participatory foundations Ferrer is articulating and which will entail that the basic meanings of transpersonal phenomena should be expanded to include modes of individual experience which, according to some traditional accounts, may not be considered transpersonal modes of experience, and by the same token, may not be considered as "spiritual" modalities of experience either. So far this position sounds quite similar to the passage we cited in reference to Ferrer, but we will argue for an extending of Ferrer's basic list of unrecognized "spiritual potentials" to include what we will refer to as "mundane", and (in part, drawing from Robert Nozick's work) what we will describe as "negative" forms of participative consciousness as being valid modes of *transpersonal* phenomena as well.

"Positive" modalities of experience (such as happiness, love, relational intimacy, inner-peace, mystical transcendence, bliss, etc.) are, we suggest, the norm of what transpersonal experience is often associated with. But what we believe is needed is a development of the idea that there are negative transpersonal modalities (such as

negative empathetic identification, like suffering with another, wrestling with loss, anger, despair, tragedy, etc.). In addition, we want to develop the idea that there are mundane modalities of transpersonal phenomena as well (such as focused concentration, meaningful memories, dreams, continuing inner dialogues, social/relational interactions, reflective thought in general, etc.).

Certain aspects of our position entail a somewhat novel way of talking about transpersonal phenomena and conceptual broadness in relation to transpersonal theory. Thus we must work to show how that such a position as we have alluded to might serve as a critique that can plug into the work of relevant thinkers in transpersonal theory (in our case Ken Wilber and Jorge Ferrer). In addition, we want to explain how our position draws from the critical philosophical analysis of Robert Nozick, as we apply Nozick's analysis to certain transpersonal frameworks.

Some precursors to our work. In terms of a larger historical context, a broad understanding of transpersonal phenomena might be seen as following the work of those thinkers in the field of transpersonal studies who have argued for a broader understanding of transpersonal phenomena by, in part, arguing for a soft distinction between what are understood as personal or egoic structures

and what are understood as transpersonal or trans-egoic psychic structures within the individual. In other words, we are talking about such thinkers as have argued that transpersonal structures build on the same or similar structures that are already present in assumedly pre-transpersonal stages. I believe this would include such thinkers as Jung (1968), Bohm (1982), Washburn (1988), and Kelly (1998). In addition, we believe our work follows on the heels of those who have argued for a relational approach to the study of transpersonal phenomena such as Rothberg (1993), Achterberg (1998), Welwood (1990, 1996), and Haule (1992).

Our study, though, is not a treatment of the thinkers we have cited. We are interested in three unique thinkers whose work, we believe, addresses fundamental issues relevant to our project of broadening the participatory meanings of transpersonal phenomena. Accordingly, we want to put these various thinkers in relation to one another, forming a somewhat novel discussion in the process.

The Three Areas of Interest to Our Study

We will approach the work of each of our three thinkers in their own terms, as well as work through the issues each thinker cites as defining of their projects, and yet we will also argue that the work of each of our thinkers can

be seen as tying into three interrelated issues which we will identify as the three essential areas of interest to our particular study. These issues deal with 1) the nature of certain conceptualizations of metaphysical *depth* within both consciousness and "R/reality"¹ 2) the potential broadness and plurality of our participative transpersonal experiences, and 3) the subsequent challenge of conceptual inclusiveness of such a plurality of broad participative phenomena in terms of a representative *map* or *model* of consciousness, transpersonal phenomena, or Reality as a whole.

The primary motivation of our project follows from the assumption that it is the fundamental phenomena of transpersonal participation with others and with realities

¹ Even though none of our thinkers use the technical notation of "R/reality" or "Reality" capitalized as I do. I will use this notation whenever I believe one of our thinkers are denoting an all inclusive context of reference such as Ken Wilber utilizes in talking about "Spirit", "the Kosmos", or "Being"; or Jorge Ferrer utilizes in talking about "the Mystery out of which everything continually arises"; or which Robert Nozick utilizes in talking about "the Matrix of Being". Technically speaking, my particular notation of "R/reality" is redundant in that I assume there is a distinction between the ideas of "reality" and "Reality" with the first term denoting a particular kind of phenomena or reality such as an individual's life or particular situation. And the latter notion of Reality, I assume, denotes the idea of the abstract collection of all individual or particular realities. Thus, Reality always includes all realities. This idea can be seen as inspired by Robert Nozick's talk about Reality as the ultimate category of representation (see p. 173 of our discussion).

greater than the individual self which needs further clarification in relation to its broad psychological, pluralistic, and potentially transpersonal expressions within the individual.

Metaphysical maps have direction. Focusing on yet another aspect of our project, if we think about how a broad view of transpersonal depth within the individual and within Reality might be represented in terms of a critical map or model of Reality, I believe we should pay particular attention to how transpersonal depth is often conceptualized in the *orientational* terms of "depth" and "height" of being, such as, for instance, Ken Wilber most notably expresses within his spectrum model of consciousness.

Depth and Height of Being

We will suggest that the aforementioned conceptualization of transpersonal phenomena as an expression of both conscious *depth* within the individual as well as an expression of an ontological or spiritual feature of Reality--namely, that it entails *height*--brings up some interesting issues about how spiritual depth is understood in both psychological and metaphysical terms, as well as situated in the orientational terms of higher, lower, or deeper R/reality. Situating transpersonal

phenomena in such a subtle and often unconscious context of thought may, we argue, unwittingly shape or constrain the meanings which even a broad participatory view of transpersonal might take (But because of the novelty of this critique, it is better if we elaborate on this position after we have first worked through the nuances of Ken Wilber's paradigmatic articulation of a teleological vision of depth within consciousness and Reality which we believe is typical of the kind of teleological framework that is most commonly accepted among transpersonal theorists).

We will grant that certain aspects of our approach, such as our posing of certain questions which our thinkers don't explicitly pose, and our utilization of certain novel descriptions, may at times, step out side of the mainstream of contemporary transpersonal discussion. But we hope to show that our project is not only relevant to contemporary transpersonal theory, but it is a leading-edge discussion which aspires towards a grand level of integration, and most notably, cross-disciplinary integration of transpersonal theory, psychology, and critical philosophy. The point is that we are interested in testing certain conceptual boundaries which, in our case, are boundaries relevant to the very definition of transpersonal phenomena.

And again, we emphasize that clarification of this subject matter is an evolving conversation with our approach being just one way of critiquing what might be at stake here.

So concerning the thematic and topographical focus of our discussion, we will initially approach each of our thinkers by noting how participative relations in general, and transpersonal phenomena in particular, are discussed, mainly by Ken Wilber and Jorge Ferrer, as each talks about a developmental and spiritual journey of the individual into deeper spiritual R/reality. Robert Nozick also talks about the journey of the individual into greater depth within consciousness and Reality. But as we come to Nozick's work, we will be examining a different kind of framework for conceptualizing qualitative and metaphysical notions of depth within consciousness and Reality. Nozick's contribution to our study is primarily in articulating certain philosophical issues which Nozick suggests come up as we attempt to represent a spectrum of depth within consciousness and Reality. And accordingly, we will argue that Nozick's work should be seen as relevant to a treatment of transpersonal theory.

Certainly, bringing in Robert Nozick's work, which is not in the field of religious studies, is potentially problematic to a thesis in religion. But we argue that if

the spectrum of our human participative consciousness is the focus of our discussion, there are not two or three or four different spectrums of consciousness that are different for different peoples. We suggest that we need only assume that there is one spectrum of human consciousness, and an important task of transpersonal theory, psychology, and philosophy then must be that of clarifying how we might view the *transpersonal* part of our spectrum of consciousness (is all consciousness transpersonal to some extent?).

As I have laid the matter out, the very definition of "transpersonal phenomena" is what is up for discussion. And what I am trying to identify are the irreducible relations of human experience which seem to come up again and again, most notable of which is the relation of participation itself. As I have said, Jorge Ferrer's work most notably inspires our language of a participatory vision of transpersonal phenomena. But, in short, we suggest that our aspiration towards conceptual broadness is not only a development of Ferrer's work, but is a development of the work of all three of our thinkers. It will take time for us to work through this claim. Right now, allow me to continue elaborating about this idea of a participatory foundation for transpersonal theory and how this idea might be

approached in terms of an ideally broad and all-inclusive view of transpersonal phenomena.

**The Irreducible Relation of Participation
Transcends Predicative Boundaries**

In short, our thesis will argue that the phenomena of transpersonal participation with others and with realities greater than the individual self transcend disciplinary boundaries and, at points, even transcend predicative boundaries in that the relationship of participation is actually more essential than its predication. Think of this position as similar to the argument within religious studies, specifically within comparative mysticism, which argues for the existence of "pure conscious events" (PCE'S) which are conceptualized as "contentless" states of awareness encountered in deep meditation which are furthermore argued to be unqualifiable and universal before they are culturally interpreted and situated (see Robert Forman (1990) for the defining position of this viewpoint. See also Steven Katz (1978) for the defining position against the existence of such PCE'S).

We are sympathetic towards a view which suggests that there are at least some modalities of experience which are *universal* in that they are devoid of intelligible content and reflect something essentially mystical, unqualifiable,

and participative about the depth of our human nature and our consciousness. But in our study we are not particularly interested in this issue of *contentless* experience. We are more interested in the idea that there are "pure participative events" (our own term) which are psychological, metaphysical, transpersonal, and in a word, "*connecting*" of the individual to others and to realities greater than the individual self.

Certainly such transpersonal connections as we have alluded to can be contextually situated in cultural, spiritual, and humanistic terms. And as we have also broached the idea, we believe the phenomena of transpersonal participation can as well be situated in terms which talk about positive, negative, and mundane modalities of experience. But the significant point, again, is that we believe there is potentially a very broad phenomenon of connection or participation beyond the self, and exploring the potential implications of this position seems to be a relevant task.

The most general logic of our argument will suggest that a participatory vision of transpersonal phenomena implies a pluralistic vision of transpersonal phenomena, and a pluralistic vision, we believe, implies a broad view of what can count as transpersonal phenomena. So

elaborating further about what I earlier characterized as a central idea of our study, I will ultimately suggest that transpersonal theory should not define the meanings of transpersonal phenomena primarily in relation to so-called "extra-ordinary" or "altered" states of consciousness, such as mystical or "peak" experiences of ecstatic joy, dissolution of the self-sense, etc., because, our argument suggests, human consciousness is already *transpersonal* to the degree in which it is *participative* and connecting of the individual to others and to realities greater than the individual self. The spectrum of transpersonal phenomena is very broad. This is a relatively simple position and yet it may have far reaching implications towards an understanding of transpersonal phenomena which we will attempt to explore in relation to each of our thinkers.

New Paradigm Approaches and Ken Wilber

To further situate our study in relation to transpersonal studies, we might characterize the work we are doing as an expression of "new paradigm"² theorizing

²In evoking the language of "paradigms" the student of history will recall Thomas Kuhn's famous work, "*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*" (1962), in which Kuhn suggests that the essence of a paradigm shift is not that the questions and issues the "old" paradigm worked with were answered or resolved, but rather that new questions and issues come to be regarded as the new questions and issues of importance which need to be addressed. This

such as Ken Wilber's work has also been associated with (see Daniel Kortenkamp, 2000; Ken Wilber, 1996a; and Sean M. Kelley, "Transpersonal Psychology and the Paradigm of Complexity", n.d.). Ken Wilber is a highly respected and historically significant transpersonal theorist who has been called the most ambitious and formidable theoretician of the transpersonal movement, and as well, the first thinker to explicitly and intentionally overstep the disciplinary boundaries of scientific psychology by suggesting an expanded epistemology as well as an expanded model of the spectrum of consciousness and psychology (Kelly, n.d., p. 7).

What we believe is an essential aspect of this new paradigm approach as expressed in Ken Wilber's work is Wilber's emphasis upon integration and conceptual broadness, epitomized in Wilber's "All Quadrant All Level" (AQAL) approach to representing consciousness and transpersonal phenomena. Such an approach as aspires towards inclusiveness may be defining of new paradigm theorizing. And accordingly, we believe it is the goal of

constitutes a paradigm shift. This aspect of our intellectual evolution could be connected to a treatment of transpersonal theory as Wilber and Ferrer most notably present their positions, but for space considerations we are not going to address this approach to critiquing transpersonal theory.

framing an all inclusive framework for thinking about transpersonal phenomena which transpersonal theory, and as well our study, most prominently aspires towards (And along these lines we will ask what an all inclusive framework is supposed to look like: could there be a *single form* of a framework for thinking about depth within consciousness, or depth as transpersonal phenomena? Does Ken Wilber's model represent such a singular form?).

In one sense we might say that new paradigms are always emerging. Intellectual discussion is always evolving. And yet our study suggests that in terms of contemporary transpersonal theorizing, the *ideal* of an all inclusive framework for conceptualizing transpersonal phenomena has not yet been realized—and maybe not even in theory yet! Seeking to clarify the nature of such issues as we have broached is why we consider the work we are doing to be new paradigm theorizing.

A new paradigm as a historical occurrence. Historically speaking, we should note that transpersonal theory as a discipline of study itself arose as a new paradigm approach to psychology in relation to the reductionist and behaviorist psychology of the 1960's. So the idea of a new paradigm is, of course, relative to the context within which the idea is expressed. Following what we have said,

in his paper entitled, "Transpersonal Psychology and the Paradigm of Complexity" (n.d.), Sean Kelly, an established transpersonal theorist whom Donald Rothberg (another recognized transpersonal theorist) describes as most at home in the interface between religion, philosophy, psychology, and science, talks about the historical circumstances in which the "old" Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm which emphasized reductionism and materialism was being challenged by the critics of reductionism and simplification, who, in the form of transpersonal theory, appealed to notions of "holism" and integration, and accordingly, suggested that there are dimensions of human experience not scientifically verifiable which are also irreducible in their own right (in this light see Edgar Morin's theory of complexity in his (1977) translated work).

As Stanley Krippner, an established transpersonal thinker observes, pioneering work in transpersonal studies has been carried out in Europe, North America, South America, Asia and Africa by such thinkers as Roberto Assagioli (1965), Stanislav Grof (1975), Aldous Huxley (1945), Hiroshi Motoyama (1971), Abraham Maslow (1970), Frances Vaughan (1979), Alan Watts (1961), and Pierre Weil (1977), among many others. And as a post-script, Krippner

also observes that the word "transpersonal" appears to have been introduced by William James and Carl Jung (Vich, 1988), and later by Gardner Murphy (1949).

Sean Kelly summarizes the historical narrative of the development of transpersonal psychology as he says:

In many ways the herald of the new paradigm is the relatively new movement of transpersonal psychology. Responding to the revolution in consciousness associated with the 60's counterculture—which involved widespread interest in "altered" states of consciousness, oriental philosophies and spiritual disciplines, ecological awareness, social activism, and speculative or "fringe" science—Abraham Maslow, Stanislav Grof, Anthony Sutich, and James Fadiman proposed the term "transpersonal" to describe a new, "fourth force" psychology (the first three forces being behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and humanistic psychology). The prefix *trans* points to the concept of *transcendence* implied in a whole class of experiences involving "an extension of identity beyond both individuality and personality" (Walsh and Vaughan, p. 16).

(Kelly, n.d., p. 1)

So when transpersonal psychology first came on the scene it was regarded as a new paradigm, specifically as it was contrasted with materialistic and behaviorist psychology. And yet certain critiques of transpersonal psychology, such as Ken Wilber will present, suggests there is yet another new paradigm of transpersonal thought on the leading-edge of transpersonal theorizing. And this new paradigm of theorizing Ken Wilber refers to as "integral psychology".

Ken Wilber: the new paradigm is the Integral. In Ken Wilber's online paper entitled, "A Summary of My Psychological Model—Or, Outline of An Integral Psychology" (n.d.), Wilber critiques contemporary transpersonal psychology, calling it a dying discipline, and Wilber says that because of its current lack of integrative ability, loose quality standards, and its overly narrowed focus, transpersonal psychology has continually failed to achieve recognition by such reputable associations as the American Psychological Association (APA). So for these and other like reasons Wilber says the work he is doing should not be understood as "transpersonal psychology" but should rather be understood as integrative or "integral psychology" (Wilber, n.d., p. 1). As the predication implies, the essence of this integral approach is conceptual inclusiveness and integration. And in this light we should note that Wilber believes he is integrating the truths of the empirical scientific method (verification and communal confirmation), Eastern spiritual and mystical traditions, Western psychologies and philosophies (and particularly the idealistic variations of Western philosophy), cultural anthropology, ecology, and evolutionary theory, among other areas.

Our study likewise follows on the heels of Wilber's aspiration towards integration of diverse fields of thought, but our focus is more narrowed. We are interested in articulating how Wilber's assumption of plurality within R/reality, expressed, among other ways, in terms of the idea of a spectrum of consciousness and B/being which can be experientially explored, lends itself to pluralistic, participative, and psychological interpretations of the nature of transpersonal phenomena. Again, we claim that exploring and clarifying the nature and the extent of the potential broadness of an individual's participative consciousness is the key to expanding our understanding of (and so integrating the meanings of) transpersonal phenomena. And in this light let us briefly look at certain of the connections of our study to the psychology of religion, general psychology, and Jorge Ferrer's role in our study.

**The Psychology of Religion, Jorge Ferrer,
and Participatory Transpersonal Phenomena**

Work in the psychology of religion began most notably with William James' publication of *The Principles of Psychology* in (1878) (although there was certainly other

work being done germane to the field during James' time³). James also came to serve as the president of the American Psychological Association and his Gifford Lectures were published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1901), one of James most referenced works, still in print today after a century's time.

Assumedly, since James' time the field of the psychological study of religion has seen a rise, a fall, and a resurgence (Beit-Hallahmi, 1974). In addition, a variety of differing issues have come to the forefront of intellectual discussion among theorists in the field of study. But what our study is particularly interested in is what William James and other like minded thinkers have emphasized as the pluralistic nature of the individual's spiritual and transpersonal experiences. Accordingly, a century after William James' vision we turn our attention to Jorge Ferrer's universalist participatory vision of

³Work being done most notably germane to the field of the psychology of religion around William James' time was the work of Frederic Myers in his posthumous, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903) in which Myers suggested a transpersonal view of the psyche—that is, a subliminal Self—supposedly based on data collected by the British Society for Psychical Research. In speaking of Myers's work, and specifically his concept of the subliminal or "transmarginal" Self, James said this concept was "the most important step forward that occurred in psychology since I have been a student of that science" (James 1901, p. 234).

spirituality, which we believe is a cutting-edge articulation of spiritual pluralism following in the spirit of James' work and which emphasizes, most explicitly, the participatory relations that are implicit to both accounts.

Jorge Ferrer. In his (2002) work, Jorge Ferrer suggests that Reality contains a plurality of spiritual values, ultimates, and ways of knowing, and following this, Ferrer argues for a re-conceptualizing or a revisioning of the basic meanings of transpersonal phenomena in the broad and pluralistic terms of "*participatory knowing*" and "*transpersonal events*", which again, Ferrer argues is a view of transpersonal phenomena more in line with the true pluralistic and diverse nature of our spiritual paths, truths, and ways of knowing. And historically speaking, Ferrer further suggests that the adoption of such a participatory vision of spirituality is a liberating step towards the extricating of transpersonal studies from its supposed inward subjectivist and perennialist framework, the same which Ferrer believes have now become a constraining factor to the historical evolution of transpersonal studies into its more mature form.

Though Ferrer spends a considerable amount of time talking about the historical situating of his participatory vision in relation to modernity and modernity's so-called

experiential viewpoint, right now we are particularly interested in the participative components of Ferrer's philosophy and epistemology which we believe will provide the conceptual opening to our broadened participative approach to conceptualizing transpersonal phenomena (such as we will summarize most notably in the concluding material of our study). Particularly relevant to our subject matter are Ferrer's concepts of participatory knowing and transpersonal events (the latter concept which we will later argue is essentially of the same logical order as the first). As Ferrer defines the idea of participatory knowing he says,

Participatory knowing refers to a multidimensional access to reality that includes not only the intellectual knowing of the mind, but also the emotional and emphatic knowing of the heart, the sensual and somatic knowing of the body, the visionary and intuitive knowing of the soul, as well as any other way of knowing available to human beings.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 121)

Ferrer has said that any available modality of human knowing can be considered participatory knowing. This is obviously a very broad epistemology. But what we want to point out is that there appears to be an important connection between the idea of participatory knowing and Ferrer's understanding of what constitutes transpersonal

phenomena. In other words, Ferrer will ultimately say that transpersonal phenomena are participatory phenomena (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 120-121). And this, I believe, is a significant definitional issue.

I will suggest that what is most significant is that the act of participation is implicit to the very psychology of human interaction with others and with the world around us. And following this thought, we might suggest that Ferrer's idea of participatory knowing might potentially provide a conceptual opening to a psychological interpretation of transpersonal relations. But setting this point aside for now, let us talk more about the psychological approach to the study of religion, and what I believe can be interpreted as a related relational approach to understanding spirituality.

**Object-Relation Approaches to the Study of Religion,
and Relational Models of Spirituality**

In terms of the psychological approach to the study of religion there is a significant amount of developing literature which takes an *object-relations* approach to the study of transpersonal phenomena. One of the most notable early articulations of this approach can be found with A. M. Rizzuto's (1979) work, *The birth of the living god*. (see also Rizzuto, 1974, 1976). And since that time many other

thinkers have advanced the field with a variety of approaches (Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; and Kohut, 1977, 1984).

One of the most predominant themes of these object relations approaches to the study of transpersonal phenomena concerns how we *internalize* relationship patterns, beginning in early childhood (such as psychoanalysis elaborates upon) which then give rise to the basic psychic structures of our future relational patterns and experiences. Discussion along these lines are then carried out in various contexts having to do with how we reproduce god images from self-images, or how we transfer interpretations of god images and religion from interpretations of the nature of our own self-images, relationships and experiences.

Relational attachment. Yet another variation of this object-relations approach emphasizes the language of psychological *attachment* and talks about how we construct *relational* understandings of our spiritual experiences, or how we construct relational understandings of god images and religious experience (see L.A. Kirkpatrick, (1999); and Kirkpatrick and P. R. Shaver, (1990), which are most relevant in this vein of thought). Accordingly, our study is particularly interested in this relational language of

attachment which is situated in transpersonal contexts by Kirkpatrick and others. But in preface to further discussion of the spiritual interpretations of this concept, I want to cite the purely psychoanalytic definition of attachment theory which mainly emphasizes the psychological nature of our participative attachment.

Consider how Charles Rycroft's famous *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (1995) defines the concept of attachment theory:

Attachment theory '[A] new and illuminating way of conceptualizing the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others and of explaining the many forms of emotional distress and personality disturbance, including anxiety, anger, depression and emotional detachment, to which unwilling separation and loss give rise', hence *attachment behavior*. See Bowlby (1980).

(Rycroft, 1995, p. 10)

Certainly attachment theory as it is here defined by Rycroft is part of the study of psychoanalysis, cognitive development, and personality development, but we believe the application of such relational concepts to spiritual and transpersonal models may be part of the leading edge of transpersonal studies. Particularly germane in this vein of thought are so-called "relational models" of spirituality such as Jean Ackenburg (1998), John Welwood (1990, 1996), and John Haule (1992) are most notably working with.

Relational models of spirituality. Donald Rothberg, co-writing an article with Jean Ackenburg in Rothberg & Kelly, eds. (1998) work, *Ken Wilber in Dialogue, Conversations with Leading Transpersonal Thinkers*, characterizes the nature of a relational approach to transpersonal phenomena such as we have alluded to. As Rothberg summarizes,

Relational models of spirituality are based on the idea that spiritual growth and transformation may occur most basically through communion with and service to other beings, particularly other human beings. Hence, relational models involve a focus on one or more of many types of relationships: friendships, intimate relationships in couples, families, small groups, communities (human and ecological), societies, and global networks.

Regarding the work of Ken Wilber, Rothberg then goes on to say,

Relational models of spirituality are generally absent in transpersonal studies, including the work of Wilber. However, there are a number of signs of increasing attention to such models. Wilber himself has in his recent work created considerable conceptual space for relational approaches, although most of the practical and theoretical work remains to be done.

(Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 261)

We suggest that a key to doing the theoretical work Rothberg has alluded to will involve re-examining our understanding of attachment, relationships, and participative notions of transpersonal phenomena (such as in Ferrer's broad epistemology of participatory knowing) as to the transpersonal elements implicit to such

participative phenomena. And in this light our critique has most notably suggested that all *participative* activities of the mind or psyche which connect us in emotional and relational ways to others and to the world around us should be understood as *transpersonal* activities to some degree or another. The spectrum of transpersonal phenomena is very broad; so broad, we suggest, that there are modalities of transpersonal experience which in addition to the normal *positive* modalities (such as love, peace, happiness, harmony, transcendence, the end of suffering, etc.) which transpersonal phenomena are usually associated with take negative forms (such as negative empathetic identification, suffering, wrestling with loss, anger, despair, tragedy, etc.) and as well take mundane forms in addition (such as focused concentration, meaningful memories, dreams, continuing inner dialogues, social/relational interactions, reflective thought in general, etc.).

Certainly my talking about positive, negative, and mundane expressions of transpersonal phenomena is somewhat unusual and may draw immediate criticism from transpersonal thinkers who would say transpersonal phenomena can not, or should not, be qualified in such terms as I would use. But I want to argue that if participation is the privileged notion, and if conceptual inclusiveness is the goal we

aspire towards, bringing in the type of language I have suggested may be a relevant step in the direction of broadening an understanding of the participatory nature of transpersonal phenomena. So as this language of positive, negative, and mundane forms of transpersonal phenomena is, perhaps, the most novel aspect of our study, let us conclude our introductory discussion by briefly mentioning the connection of this terminology to Robert Nozick's work as such will be elaborated upon in our study.

Robert Nozick's Work and a Positive and Negative Axis of Distinction

Robert Nozick was a unique philosophical thinker who, in his work entitled, *The Examined Life, Philosophical Meditations* (1986), explored certain philosophical issues that we believe are relevant to our examination of the idea of a conceptually all-inclusive framework (such as Ken Wilber's "All Quadrant All Level" framework aspires towards). And as well, Nozick's work is relevant to our critical approach towards the idea of a *map* or *model* of consciousness and R/reality.

Nozick's problem. Following what we have said, we believe one of Nozick's most germane contributions to our study will come in the form of Nozick's suggestion that there is a problem regarding the relationship of *the*

negative aspects of Reality in relation to *the positive* aspects. In this light Nozick asks how we should place the negative dimension(s) of depth in relation to the positive dimension(s) (within his Matrix of Being model). Nozick asks, is "the negative" a dimension of depth in itself-- somehow in competition with the positive dimensions--or is the negative just a necessary obstacle on the road to realizing a deeper reality, to becoming more real as Nozick says (or as Ken Wilber might say, to achieving enlightenment)?

In developing Nozick's analysis in relation to transpersonal theory, we will suggest that Nozick's indecision over how to conceptualize a qualitative spectrum of depth reflects a metaphysical and conceptual problem relevant to transpersonal theory regarding how we might view the most basic and irreducible modalities of transpersonal depth within the individual.

Most notably, we believe we can suggest an answer to Nozick's quandary by granting an equality to both the positive and negative dimensions of depth in R/reality, but in relation to the work of Wilber and Ferrer, this may entail a radical re-interpretation of what "transpersonal phenomena" might represent as a predicative category of experience.

Laying aside, for now, the details of our concluding critique, let us work through the work of each of our thinkers paying particular attention to how each scholar approaches and contextually situates the three interrelated issues or areas of study our thesis deals with, which are, again 1) the nature of certain conceptualizations of metaphysical *depth* within both consciousness and Reality 2) the potential broadness and plurality of our participative transpersonal experiences, and 3) the subsequent challenge of conceptual inclusiveness of such a plurality of broad participative phenomena in terms of a representative *map* or *model* of consciousness, transpersonal phenomena, or "Reality" as a whole.

So let us begin with an examination of Ken Wilber's work and its relevance to the above issues of our study.

CHAPTER 2
KEN WILBER'S INTEGRAL PHILOSOPHY

The Historical Situating of Ken Wilber's Project

In our introduction to Ken Wilber's work we noted that Wilber is an incredibly prolific writer and a historically significant integrative transpersonal thinker who is considered by many as a leading figure in the field of transpersonal studies. Enough cannot be said about the many contributions and significant works Wilber has produced since his first published work, *The spectrum of consciousness*, in 1977. Since that starting point Wilber has gone on to produce some fourteen published works and multiple short papers and articles.

Historically, Wilber's work can be situated within a long established tradition of spiritual and consciousness studies which includes such historical expressions as Hinduism and Buddhism mainly, but as well includes the pre-Socratics, the Socratics, neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and esoterism, among others. As Donald Rothberg, a contemporary transpersonal scholar observes in Rothberg and Kelly, (1998), Wilber's philosophy is "continuous with both the best of modernity and what is arguably the core

philosophical and religious lineage of Western culture—what we might call a 'rational mysticism' (Findlay 1970)". And elaborating further about the lineage of this rational mysticism, Rothberg locates its origins within the work of Pythagoras, Parmenides, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; passing then through Augustine and Aquinas, Maimonides and Spinoza, Hegel and Heidegger. Rothberg also adds, this lineage in many ways echoes the lineages of the Buddha and Nagarjuna, Shankara and Aurobindo, Fa-Tsang and Chu Hsi, Ibn Sina and Ibn al-Arabi (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 2).

The Perennial Philosophy

In a more contemporary context, Wilber presents his work as a continuation of the perennial tradition, or we might say as a development of the perennial philosophy such as was articulated by Aldous Huxley (1945), and more recently by Frithjof Schuon (1984), Seyyed Nasr (1981), and Huston Smith (1976), all of whom have viewed physical evolution, human development, and history in general as moving towards the evolutionary realization of "Spirit"—differently articulated by the mystical traditions. Wilber's alignment with perennialist thought is seen most notably in such works by Wilber as (Wilber, 1977, 1982, 1984, 1990a, 1993a, 1995, 1996a, and 1997a).

Two elements of perennialism. In the most general sense we might say there are two main elements which appear to be foundational to the perennialist vision and which appear in Wilber's work. One element is the belief in an underlying divine reality implicit to human consciousness and to some degree implicit to all reality, and following from this, is the belief that R/reality is hierarchical or a "Great Chain of Being".

Regarding the historical situating of the first assumption we cited, consider how Huston Smith, in one his most defining works entitled, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (1982), characterizes an understanding of perennial philosophy as Smith recounts how he became acquainted with this particular philosophical movement of perennialism. As Smith recounts:

Early resonance to the writings of Gerald Heard had led me to his friend Aldous Huxley and the mosaic of mysticism the latter had put together under the title *The Perennial Philosophy*. In his introduction to that book Huxley notes that though it was Leibniz who coined the phrase *philosophia perennis*, the thing itself—"the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being—is immemorial and universal".

(Smith, 1982, p. 32)

In Ken Wilber's paper entitled, *The Pre/Trans Fallacy* (1980b), Wilber echoes Smith's words in saying, "The core insight of the *psychologia perennis* is that man's innermost consciousness is identical to the absolute and ultimate reality of the universe, known variously as Brahman, Tao, Dharma-kaya, Allah, and the Godhead" (Wilber, 1980b, p. 75-76)¹.

Levels of Reality, the Great Chain of Being, and Holarchy

What we suggest is most noteworthy about this perennialist conceptualization of an ultimate reality is that both R/reality and the human psyche are conceptualized in terms of *hierarchical* levels of reality and personal development in which the "higher" levels are regarded to be qualitatively and logically more complex and superior to the "lower" more basic levels. Wilber points out that similar hierarchical frameworks have been articulated in different contexts in the work of Hegel (in his concept of

¹ I like how Daniel Helminiak, a religious philosopher and scholar who has critiqued Wilber's work in *Religion and the Human Sciences* (1998), gives us a detailed list of many additional terms that Wilber uses to refer to these higher or ultimate states of Reality. As taken from Wilber's (1996) work, *Eye to Eye*, these terms include: "reality" (169), "reality as a whole" (175), "the absolutely real" (165), "Being" (61), "Hegel's Spirit" (60-61), "Brahman" (290-292), "God", "Buddha Nature" or "Tao" (34), "Godhead" or "the absolute" (162), the "deity-form" or "dhyani-buddha" or "one's own Self" or "highest Archetype" (Helminiak, 1998, p. 224).

Aufhebung), by Piaget (in his stages of cognitive development), and by Habermas (in his theory of the cultural evolution of worldviews), as well as in systems theory in which each succeeding level builds upon the skills or properties of the lower stages or levels, and as well, each successive level is assumed to reveal new emergent properties specific to its emergent level. These are ideas that constitute conceptual hierarchy or holarchy.

Holarchy. For Ken Wilber, though, the more accurate term to characterize the true nature of an incorporative view of the qualitative spectrum of Spirit's depth, and depth within consciousness and Reality, is that of "holarchy". As Wilber will elaborate, the idea of holarchy implies an *incorporative* view of Reality in which each succeeding *higher* or *deeper* level of Reality includes and incorporates (or transcends and includes) the skills and properties of its lower more simple structures or levels, thus bringing about a new whole at each succeeding level (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, pp. 307-308). Wilber says, "*holarchy*, as I use the term, includes a balance of both *hierarchy* (qualitatively ranked levels) and *heterarchy* (mutually linked dimensions) (Wilber, 2000, p. 32).

Such a continuous and incorporative view of reality may be found in more simple forms throughout history (in terms

of hierarchies of earth, sky, heaven, etc.), and we might locate the first comprehensive version of the Great Chain or Great Nest of Being with the Greek philosopher Plotinus, about whom St. Augustine said, "Plato lived again" (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 43). Over the centuries the idea of Reality as a Great Chain of Being has been elaborated upon by various thinkers, but the idea has taken on a notable integrative and contemporary sophistication within the philosophy of Ken Wilber.

As Michael Murphy, a transpersonal scholar and contemporary of Ken Wilber suggests, various thinkers said to be associated with such an evolutionary and spiritual conceptualization of Reality as a Great Chain of Being include Plato, Plotinus, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Henry James Sr., the father of William and Henry James, the French philosopher Bergson, the Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin, Asanga, and more recently, Jean Gebser, Alfred North Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, Sri Aurobindo, and Ken Wilber. Murphy suggests that Ken Wilber is the latest major philosopher articulating this temporalization of The Great Chain of Being (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, pp. 56-58).

For Ken Wilber the idea of *The Great Chain of Being* is the idea that Reality is composed of "several *different* but *continuous* dimensions...grades, or levels, reaching from

the lowest and most dense and least conscious to the highest and most subtle and most conscious" (Wilber, 1993, p. 214). Accordingly, the major links or terms in this chain are also described as being: Matter, Mind, and Spirit; or Body, Mind and Spirit. And in terms of the evolutionary or historical sequence, Wilber suggests these terms correspond with humanity's movement from nature to humanity, to divinity; or from subconscious to self-conscious to super-conscious; or from pre-personal to personal to transpersonal; or from gross to subtle to so-called causal consciousness, which is also thought to be an enlightened consciousness of the very ground of Being itself (Wilber, 1990a, p. 204, see also, Wilber, 1995, p. 485).

Integration and Inclusion of the Spectrum of Consciousness

For Wilber, there is a spectrum of human consciousness which contains a transpersonal domain or essence. But getting to the transpersonal realms requires a process of development within the individual. And in this light Wilber believes the challenge of integration is implicit to the nature of spiritual inquiry. As Wilber says, "The endeavor to honor and embrace every legitimate aspect of human consciousness is the goal of an *integral psychology*" (Wilber, 2000, p. 2).

Of course Wilber is not suggesting there is just one goal of integral theorizing. There are many generally phrased goals of spiritual practice that Wilber elaborates upon throughout the body of his work. These are goals of becoming more compassionate, morally wise, reflective, meditative, connected to the world and to others. All of these goals must assumedly be implicit to the goal of embracing every legitimate aspect of human consciousness and developing one's consciousness. For Wilber, one of the keys to an individual's spiritual development is the practice of meditative and the subsequent development of a capacity for attention, detachment from egocentric concerns, and thinking about multiple perspectives or multiple relationships among perspectives. This all brings us to Wilber's concept of "vision-logic" as a spiritual mode of being.

Vision-Logic

Perhaps one of the main notions of integration, and a key evidence that an individual has reached a level of mental and spiritual competence characteristic of the transpersonal domains (or transpersonal waves) of awareness is that an individual demonstrates the ability to take into account the diversity of human perspectives by means of what Wilber refers to as aperspectival "vision logic", also

called "network logic". Wilber says Jean Gebser coined the term "Aperspectival", meaning no single perspective is to be privileged. And following Gebser, Wilber adds, "*Integral-aperspectivism* means that as many perspectives as are humanly possible must be included in an integral embrace" (Wilber, 2000, p. 192). In addition, Wilber adds, "vision-logic *adds up all the perspectives*, privileging none, and thus attempts to grasp the integral, the whole, the multiple contexts within contexts that endlessly disclose the Kosmos²" (Wilber, 2000, p. 167).

Wilber says many psychologists such as Bruner, Flavell, Arieti, Cowan, Arlin, etc., have suggested that there is evidence for a stage of awareness that is spiritual, "dialectical", "integrative", "creative synthetic", and most significantly, beyond Piaget's formal operational stage of awareness. Based on contemporary psychological research such as the psychological development of the individual, and also drawing from ideas of dialectical thinking associated with both Greek and German

² The term "Kosmos" is one of Wilber's unique terms which he uses in several of his works to denote the collective domains of matter, or the physical universe (the physiosphere), life (the biosphere), mind (the noosphere), and the spiritual domains (the theosphere) this later item which is in some sense thought to be implicit to all the aforementioned domains. (see pp. 45-46 of our study for further discussion).

philosophical traditions, Wilber assumes there is a stage of vision-logic which is ideally integrative. Moreover, this capacity of vision-logic is regarded as an essential pre-requisite to a higher-transpersonal-mode of being. As Wilber declares, "Everything from the golden rule to the bodhisattva vow is impossible to comprehend without vision-logic. You cannot simply vow to liberate all beings if you cannot take the perspective of all beings in the first place, and, researchers agree, that is a vision-logic capacity" (Wilber, 2000, p. 258 n.27). It is interesting to note that Wilber's notion of vision logic is both rational in the sense of mentally integrating of a plurality of perspectives, and inasmuch as Wilber talks about the individual taking the perspective of another, we suggest there is also a strong empathetic or participative element attached to Wilber's articulation of vision-logic. Discussing the implications of this participative element, particularly in its relationship to Jorge Ferrer's philosophy, is a point we will pursue further later in our study.

The Historical Problem of Integration: Modernity's Dissociation

Speaking further about the integrative aspect of vision-logic, Wilber argues that the adoption and

implementation of vision-logic is part of the natural evolutionary unfolding of "Spirit-in-Action" whereby realms of experience which have become historically disassociated from each other--via modernity--might become re-integrated in a new and evolved, unified manner. In this light Wilber talks about what he and other philosophers such as Jurgen Habermas have described as modernity's dissociation of three irreducible domains of Reality, what Wilber refers to as "the big three of modernity": the subjective, objective, and social dimensions of R/reality. In addition, Wilber cites several other historical thinkers who have used a similar conceptual framework for talking about three irreducible domains of Existence: Plato talked about the Good (which are morals within the social-collective realm), the True (propositional and objective truth), and the Beautiful (the aesthetic dimension perceived by the individual). Karl Popper also spoke of "three worlds": the objective subjective and cultural worlds. Jurgen Habermas also spoke of three validity claims: objective truth, subjective sincerity, and intrasubjective justness. And finally, Immanuel Kant spoke of a trilogy: *The Critique of Pure Reason* (objective science), *The Critique of Practical Reason* (morals), and, *The Critique of Judgment* (aesthetic judgment and art) (Wilber, 1996a, pp. 122-123).

In interpreting history within his spiritual framework, Wilber suggests that it is the initial differentiation of these domains of the subjective, objective, and social dimensions which are actually part of the process of Spirit's natural evolutionary unfolding (or *involutionary*-turning within, also spoken of by Wilber as the unfolding of *Spirit-in-Action*). As Wilber will elaborate, the unfolding of Spirit, and historically, the manifestation of Spirit, results in a differentiation of the basic domains of Reality, followed by an, admittedly difficult, re-integration of these domains in a new higher historical form. For Wilber, Spirit thus transcends via differentiation and then includes via integration. Hence, dissociation is not the manner in which Spirit manifests or unfolds through evolutionary time. And where such dissociation within life and within thought does manifest, the task of an integral philosophy or integral psychology must be to integrate Reality's three irreducible dimensions (and assumedly *all* conceivable dimensions of Reality), both conceptually and practically-in theory and practice-within the psyche or consciousness of the individual. The individual can thus come to internalize a transpersonal mode of being by means of expanding one's mode of consciousness and so by, assumedly, taking the depth of the

universe into account. This, again, requires the implementation of vision-logic.

The Four Forces of Psychology, and Wilber's "AQAL" Model

Elaborating further about Wilber's idea of the historical unfolding of integrative spiritual evolution, this time in relation to the history of psychology, Wilber speaks about four forces or four historical stages of psychology: behaviorist, psychoanalytic, humanistic, and transpersonal. And most significantly, Wilber suggests that at this present time in history what we are dealing with is the death of psychology and the birth of the "integral" (Wilber, n.d., p. 1). Particularly germane to our present discussion, Wilber suggests that "the only interior psychologies that will survive this new sociocultural selection pressure are those that adapt by recognizing an 'all-quadrant, all-level' framework, for only that framework (or something equally integral) can embrace *both* the Right-and Left-hand realities" (Wilber, n.d., p. 3). A framework of "Right-and Left-hand realities" is Wilber's most general axis of distinction between our subjective or experiential (left-hand) realities and our objective or physical (right-hand) realities (see Wilber's model, figures 1 & 2, on p. 56 & 57 of our study).

The definition of spirituality. For Wilber, the goal of spiritual development is to reach a point at which one can move beyond one's situated perspective or "egocentrism" as Wilber uses the term. And in the most general terms, we might say that how Wilber understands the goal of integral psychology is also how he defines the meaning of spirituality. Accordingly, Wilber says that in following Paul Tillich he will define "spirituality", or what Wilber also calls the spiritual line of development, as "the developmental line of ultimate concern, regardless of its content" (Rothberg and Kelly, 1998, p. 331).

Wilber's ultimate concern is unquestionably the whole of Being, or as Wilber might also say the whole Kosmos. This is why Wilber will describe his conceptual framework as an "All Quadrant All Level" Model of consciousness or psychology: the (AQAL) model. As the name implies, the assumption is that *all* quadrants, levels, or dimensions of Existence must be included within an integral framework, whatever this will come to mean within Wilber's work.

Frameworks as maps. Certainly Wilber's project is quite ambitious with its goal of conceptual inclusiveness, and in its desire to take spiritual dimension(s) of reality into existence. And for purposes of our study, what is particularly relevant here is the fact that Wilber will

ultimately suggest that to truly take our spiritual dimension of existence into account may entail a radical re-organization of our spiritual, psychological, and metaphysical conceptual maps according to the basic *integral* truth that Wilber believes his all quadrant all level model of Reality represents. So in light of this language of an all-encompassing framework, I would like to focus more prominently upon the idea of a map or model of Reality, and particularly upon the ambitious nature of an ideally all-encompassing conceptual framework.

**The Focus on an All-Encompassing Framework:
The Big Picture and a Theory of Everything**

In focusing more specifically upon the idea of a metaphysical *map* or a conceptual model of Reality, let us again turn our attention to Wilber's elaboration of vision-logic or network-logic which Wilber here discusses in a context more germane to our upcoming consideration of the framing of an encompassing conceptual framework. As Wilber summarizes:

Network-logic is a dialectic of whole and part. As many details as possible are checked; then a tentative big picture is assembled; it is checked against further details, and that big picture readjusted. And so on indefinitely, with ever more details constantly altering the big picture—and vice versa. For the secret of contextual thinking is that the whole discloses new meanings not available to the parts, and thus the big pictures we build will give new meaning to the details

that compose it. Because human beings are condemned to meaning, they are condemned to creating big pictures.

(Wilber, 2000, p. 2)

Our study is particularly interested in Wilber's allusion to the idea of a "big picture" because we believe this idea is connected to what we have alluded to as an all-encompassing context which seeks to recognize the spectrum of our transpersonal consciousness as well as any irreducible categories that might be associated with transpersonal phenomena. So the idea of an all-encompassing context which seeks to represent--at a minimum--the basic transpersonal categories is what our study is interested in. And we are thus drawn to Ken Wilber's aspiration towards inclusiveness such as is epitomized in the title of Wilber's work, "*A Theory of Everything*" (see Wilber, 2000b). Such an inclusive framework is what Wilber believes intellectual history is moving towards.

In talking about his own research agenda and the study of, as Wilber says, the various levels, lines, and higher states of consciousness, Wilber suggests an optimistic picture of the possibility that there can be such an all inclusive framework of conceptualization such as we have characterized. As Wilber says,

The time is now ripe to (1) begin detailed correlation of these events [the higher states of consciousness

Wilber had previously alluded to] with each other, and thus (2) move toward a more integral theory, not only of consciousness, but of the Kosmos at large; a theory that (3) would begin to show us the how and the why of the intrinsic connections between all things in existence. This would truly be a "theory of everything," at least in outline, even if all of the details remain beyond our grasp.

(Wilber, n.d., p. 27, brackets mine)

Certainly the idea of a theory of everything is intrinsically appealing to all intellectuals. In the physical sciences, the search is for a theory of everything which could unify the phenomena of macro-physics with that of micro-physics. More succinctly put, science is looking for a theory which can unite the phenomena of quantum physics with that of gravity and general relativity. And this would be to say science is looking for a theory of everything which would entail a theory of quantum gravity³.

In the social sciences (sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, history, etc.), the ideal of a theory of everything would be to find a theory which would explain the nature of mental and behavioral "laws" (and collectively social laws), assuming there are such laws to

³ In terms of present discussions, this idea of a theory of everything such as we have alluded to is oftentimes discussed within the context of so-called "superstring theory" (see Stephen Hawking's "Is the End in Sight for Theoretical Physics" , in J. Stephen Boslough's "Hawking's Universe" (1985). See also S. Weinberg's "Dreams of a Final Theory", Pantheon Books, New York).

talk about (see Donald Davidson, 1980; Harold Kincaid, 1988; and Carl G. Hempel, 1969, for philosophical discussions of this subject matter). Such concerns about the nature of theoretical *laws* in general and *causal relationships* within the mind or psyche in particular are what a host of psychologists and psycho-analysts have tried to outline in their theories of personality for decades, that is, ever since the father of modern psychiatry, Sigmund Freud, first suggested a basic model of mental-causal interaction within his model of the "Id", "Ego", and "Superego" early in the twentieth century.

Irreducible transpersonal realities. What our study is interested in, however, is the idea of a theory of everything such as will speak to the most basic and irreducible categories or modalities which transpersonal phenomena can take. More specifically, we want to try to crystallize the idea of a spectrum of transpersonal phenomena. And we want to ask what the assumption of plurality in relation to transpersonal phenomena might imply about how this spectrum of the transpersonal might be represented. Our study suggests there may be a subtle issue of structuralism which needs to be explored here. And this is what our study is attempting to flush out.

The linear nature of certain transpersonal frameworks of depth. A key aspect of our analysis of certain transpersonal frameworks such as Ken Wilber's philosophy utilizes points out that although Wilber emphasizes the diversity of spiritual realities, Wilber's idea of a spectrum of human consciousness may ultimately be seen as taking on a linear form to the extent that deeper (more qualitative) transpersonal depth always seems to be situated within the positive predications of *higher* reality. This may initially seem like an odd critique of Wilber's transpersonal framework (for what else could the notion of a qualitative spectrum imply other than the idea of a spectrum of *higher* realities?), but if I can deviate for a moment from our focus on Wilber's philosophy I will explain a basic point about our position by citing some work which has inspired our way of thinking about the linear nature of certain frameworks of transpersonal depth. A starting point, I believe, is that we think about the metaphorical and orientational nature of our teleological predications of metaphysical depth within the individual and within Reality.

The Metaphorical and "Orientational" Nature of our Frameworks of Depth

As we initially suggested, our study is particularly interested in the metaphor of *depth* within consciousness equating to the idea of height of being such as, for instance, Ken Wilber epitomizes when he says, "You must develop your consciousness. You must grow and evolve in your capacity to perceive the deeper layers of your Self, which disclose higher levels of reality: the great within that is beyond: the greater the depth, the higher the reality" (Wilber, 2000, p. 189). Wilber's conceptualization of the nature of depth within consciousness and R/reality obviously takes on a metaphorical form in the passage cited. And we are, again, interested in exploring the subtleties of this particular metaphorical conceptualization which is, arguably, a linear conceptualization of depth in that the qualitative nature of depth is always described in terms of a positive--higher--state of affairs. Hence, the more the individual turns within one's self, or the more spiritual a person becomes, the *higher* the reality the individual experiences. This may be a very subtle--and yet quite significant--metaphorical and orientational framework which takes on a linear form in the most general sense of the idea.

The metaphors we live by. In terms of some background context which has inspired our analysis of the so-called metaphorical arrangement of our frameworks of depth, Mark Johnson and George Lakoff wrote an important work entitled, *Metaphors we live by* (1980), in which Johnson and Lakoff point out that there are certain physical cases encountered in our experiences in the world which we utilize as reference paradigms to express our most meaningful subjective relations. For instance, we say a relationship is like a journey; or an argument is like a war; or time is money; or the mind is like a machine; or he is down on his luck; or he is on top of his game; or Reality is deep, and so on.

Many of these metaphors we have cited touch on subjective aspects of our human experience, metaphorically expressed via reference to physical cases. But what we are particularly interested in is the conceptual space that Johnson and Lakoff have located in talking about "*orientational metaphors*" such as, for instance, in saying health, life, and happiness are "up", and sickness and death are "down", or consciousness is "up", and unconsciousness is "down".

We suggest that when a conceptualization of depth within consciousness and Reality is presented in which the

"extreme ordering" (Nozick's term) of depth always implies height, and height always seems to imply something positive then this may actually entail a narrowing of the pluralistic possibilities of transpersonal phenomena. In other words, if participative transpersonal depth is only conceptualized in positive terms, and negative participative modalities of depth are not considered as equally valid modes of transpersonal phenomena then this may entail a narrowing of the polar directions in which transpersonal phenomena may take the individual.

Of course everything depends on whether it makes any sense to talk about transpersonal phenomena as taking on negative forms as we are suggesting. And we will talk more about this possibility as well as our subsequent re-conceptualization of this basic metaphor of, "the greater the depth, the higher the reality", after we have worked through the philosophies of our thinkers. So having pointed in the direction our analysis will be going, let us return to our discussion of Ken Wilber's work and how Wilber talks about the exploration of depth within the individual. This material will all fit in to our latter discussion of how our spectrum of transpersonal phenomena is oftentimes structured in certain fixed terms.

Our Interior Castles

In Wilber's (1995) work entitled, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, The Spirit of Evolution* (one of Wilber's most dense volumes to date, containing some 763 pages of material), Wilber suggests some important context for understanding how we might view the nature of depth within the individual consciousness. In chapter 7 of his work, in the chapter entitled, "the further reaches of Human Nature", Wilber argues that the development of transpersonal depth within the individual is, as we have already noted, part of the historical unfolding of "Spirit-in-Action". And this idea is interpreted as, in part, implying that humanity is slowly moving away from egocentric modes of being. Yet despite Wilber's emphasis on the movement away from egocentric modes of being, Wilber's philosophy is, at times, criticized as being an inward, subjectivist spiritual vision in that the meditative lifestyle (which is to say, the lone individual doing personal meditative work) seems to be central in Wilber's work.

Responding to the charge that meditation is somehow "escapist", "egocentric", and "narcissistic", Wilber says, "Far from being some sort of narcissistic withdrawal or inward isolation, meditation (and transpersonal development

in general) is a simple and natural continuation of the evolutionary process, where every going within is also a going beyond to a wider embrace" (Wilber, 1995, p. 255). Wilber further situates his position in saying that according to developmental psychology, "increasing growth and development always involves *increasing internalization*". Thus, the more interior a person is in terms of living the meditative lifestyle, the less egocentric that person will become. And in this light Wilber cites the work of Jean Piaget, a pioneering developmental psychologist, who characterized the entire developmental process as a development of the capacity to transcend one's situated and subjective point of view and to take the point of view of another—what Piaget referred to as "decentering".

Translating into his own terms, Wilber says, "In short, the more one goes *within*, the more one goes *beyond*, and the more one can thus embrace a *deeper identity* with a *wider perspective*...every *within* turns us *out* into more of the Kosmos...the *more* the depths of the self are disclosed, the *more* the corresponding depth of the Kosmos reveal themselves (Wilber, 1995, p. 257). Wilber says the Pythagoreans of ancient Greece introduced the term "Kosmos" which today is usually translated in materialistic terms as

the "Cosmos". The original meaning of the Kosmos, however, was one which took account of all domains of existence, from the physical to the mental to the spiritual.

Accordingly, Wilber says he would like to reintroduce this term of the Kosmos which in Wilber's philosophy means the inclusion of the physical world (or what Wilber calls the physiosphere), the biological life world (the biosphere), the psychological or mental dimensions (the noosphere), and the theological or metaphysical dimensions (the theosphere) (Wilber, 1996a, p. 19). For Wilber, all of these domains are equally important expressions of Spirit's evolutionary unfolding. As Wilber says, "the Kosmos hangs together, unified by a single process. It is a uni-verse, one song" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 24).

This idea of Reality as harmonious in Its deepest aspects is a theme carried out in different contexts in Wilber's work. Right now, however, what I want to focus on are the specifics of how Wilber conceptualizes his model of depth, and as well, how Wilber articulates inclusiveness within that model. Foremost along these lines, we should first look at Wilber's illustrative model of an integral all quadrant all level framework (the AQAL framework) which is on the following page, and which we will next discuss more in-depth.

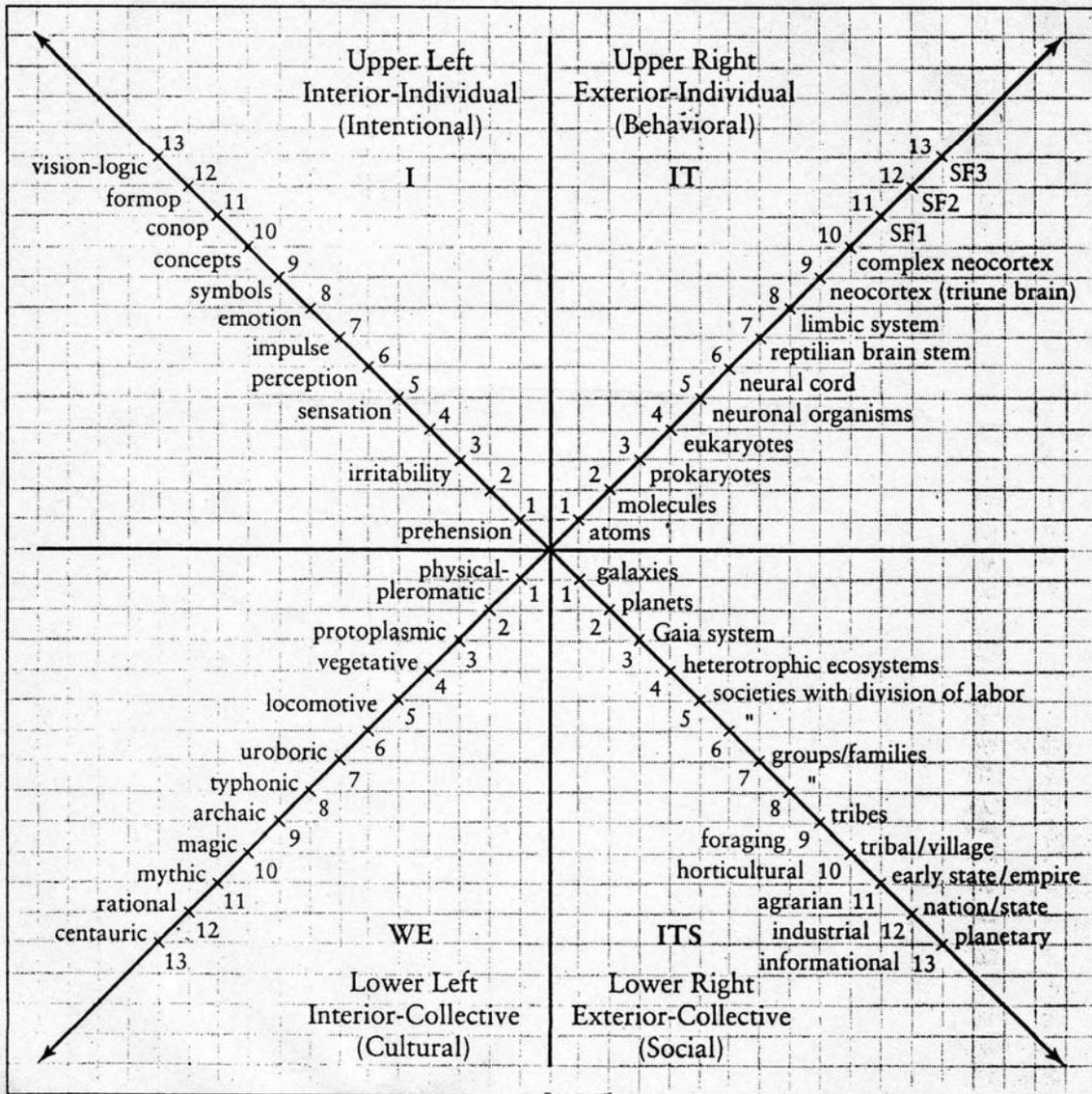


Figure 1. Ken Wilber's four quadrant model of consciousness and Being. Also called the All Quadrant All Level model. (Wilber, 2000, p. 62).

INTERIOR Left Hand Paths	EXTERIOR Right Hand Paths
SUBJECTIVE <i>truthfulness</i> sincerity integrity trustworthiness	OBJECTIVE <i>truth</i> correspondence representational propositional
I	it
we	it
<i>justness</i> cultural fit mutual understanding rightness	<i>functional fit</i> systems theory web structural-functionalism social systems mesh
INTERSUBJECTIVE	INTEROBJECTIVE

Figure 2. Examples of different validity claims or types of truth associated with the four quadrant model. (Wilber, 1997, p. 13).

Reality as a Holon

Wilber's AQAL model obviously represents the idea that there is a spectrum of consciousness and Reality, and most notably, this spectrum is interconnected in a "holarchical" fashion, which, as we noted, assumes that each higher or deeper level of R/reality represents an increase in complexity and integration in general, and on the left hand

side of Wilber's model each level represents an increase in spiritual consciousness or awareness, mental skills, meditative ability, wisdom, in short, a movement away from egocentrism and a situated perspective to a more transpersonal mode of being. Additionally, Wilber notes that the idea of "holarchy" is itself a derivative of the term "holon" which, Wilber says, was a term Arthur Koestler's used meaning, "that which, being a *whole* in one context, is simultaneously a *part* in another" (Wilber, 1995, p. 18).

In Wilber's model, all four of Reality's territories or holarchies are assumed to be interrelated in the sense that they are each thought to represent the inside or experiential (subjective) domains of Reality as well as the outside or physical (objective) domains of Being, in both their *individual* and *collective* forms. Anything can be located on the four domains—except when we come to the transpersonal realms, they are associated with the upper left-hand quadrant of Wilber's model.

So if we think about the idea of Reality—or the idea of a framework representative of Reality—in terms of It having an inside and outside, as well as both individual and collective expressions, Wilber says, this gives us four quadrants. So when, for instance, we talk about Wilber's

core narrative of the spiritual development of the individual, as placed in Wilber's framework, we would be talking about phenomena specific to Wilber's upper left-hand quadrant of Being: the "interior-individual" domain. This will include such phenomena as consciousness, perceptions, mental images, feelings, emotions, in short, individual experiences. And the collective or social expression of these individual experiences along with their historically accompanying worldviews, Wilber refers to as the "interior-collective" or the intra-subjective domain which constitutes Wilber's bottom left-hand quadrant.

On the other right-hand side of Wilber's model of Reality we have the "exterior-individual" domain. This would be those things about the person that are objective or physical, like the physical components of the body, a limbic system, or a brain. Finally, at the bottom right we have the "exterior-collective" domain which Wilber correlates with our collective or social modes of organization, like ethnic tribes, industrial manufacturing, or nation states.

Having sketched out a very crude overview of Wilber's basic framework, and having mentioned the connection of this map to the idea of irreducible domains of Reality, the same which modernity has supposedly differentiated but not

been able to successfully re-integrate, let us focus now upon the upper left-hand quadrant of Wilber's narrative of the individual's transpersonal development which is of particular interest to our study.

Wilber's Upper Left-Hand Quadrant of Reality

In reference to Wilber's upper left-hand quadrant of development, Wilber wants us to understand that his narrative of the spiritual development of the individual is arranged by virtue of three main components that make up his model of consciousness. These components are 1) permanent or enduring structures 2) temporary and transition structures, and 3) the "self-system" as the locus of identification.

In lieu of trying to restate Wilber's characterization of his upper left-hand quadrant of development, and because I don't think a more dense and concise summary can be given than Wilber himself offers, I would like to present an extended statement from Wilber himself of the three components that Wilber suggests make up his narrative of the individual's psychological and spiritual development within the interior-subjective quadrant of Wilber's four quadrant model. As Wilber states:

The overall consciousness system (the upper left quadrant) has, I believe, at least *three main components*. First, there are the relatively permanent

or *enduring structures* and competences—those features that, once they emerge in development, tend to remain in existence, such as linguistic competence, cognitive capacities, spatial coordination, motor skills, and so forth. The most important of these enduring structures I call the *basic structures*, which are the basic holons of consciousness itself (e.g., sensation, perception, impulse, image, symbol, concept, rule, meta-rule, vision-logic, psychic, subtle, causal). *The basic structures of consciousness are essentially the traditional holarchy of Being* (as presented by, say, Plotinus or Asanga or Aurobindo).

Second, there are those features that are relatively *transitional* or temporary; they come into existence but subsequently are phased out or replaced. The stages of moral development (according to Kohlberg and Gilligan) are prime examples. When moral stage 2 emerges, it does not so much incorporate moral stage 1 as replace it. Some of the more important *transitional structures* include *worldviews* (e.g., archaic, magical, mythic, mental, existential, psychic, and so on; cf. Gebser); *self-needs* (e.g., safety, belongingness, self-esteem, self-actualization, self-transcendence; cf. Maslow); *self-identity* (e.g., uroboros, typhon, persona, ego, centaur, soul; cf. Loevinger); and *moral stages* (e.g., preconventional, conventional, postconventional, post-postconventional; cf. Nucci, Kohlberg, Gilligan). Of course, once a particular transition structure is present, it is important and as real as any enduring structure; it's just that transitional structures are destined mostly to pass, enduring structures mostly to remain.

Now, mediating between the basic structures and the transitional structures is the *self-system* (or just the *self*), which is the third major component...the self is the locus of identification, each time the self identifies with a developmentally-unfolding basic structure, that exclusive identification generates (or is the support of) the corresponding set of transitional structures. Thus, for example, when the self identifies with preoperational thought (symbols and concepts), this supports a preconventional moral stance (Kohlberg), a set of safety needs (Maslow), and a protective self-sense (Loevinger). When higher basic structures emerge (say, concrete operational rules),

then the self (barring arrest) will eventually switch its central identity to this higher and wider organization, and this will generate a new moral stance (conventional), a new set of self-needs (belongingness), and a new self-sense (conformist persona)-and so forth.

At this new and higher stage, the self will have free and perfect access to the previous basic structures, such as symbols and concepts, but not to the previous transitional structures, for those were generated precisely when the self was exclusively identified with the lower stages, an identification now outgrown. Thus, basic structures are preserved, transition structures are negated, precisely because consciousness and identity are expanding and shedding their lesser and shallower orbits.

As the self-system negotiates each unfolding basic structure and switches from the narrower to the wider identity, it undergoes a *fulcrum* or switch-point in its development. That is, each time the self steps up to a new level of consciousness (each time it identifies with a new and wider basic structure), it will go through a process of 1) merger or fusion or embeddedness, 2) differentiation or transcendence or disembedding, and 3) incorporation or integration. This 1-2-3 process is a fulcrum or self-development, and there are as many fulcrums of self-development as there are basic structures to negotiate.

(Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, pp. 307-308)

What a wonderful summary of Wilber's upper left-hand quadrant of development and the negotiating principles that Wilber believes are involved in the individual's journey towards a deeper transpersonal mode of being. Pursuing Wilber's discussion further, however, we now want to briefly look at Wilber's lower left-hand quadrant (the individual collective quadrant), which is a descriptive category in Wilber's thought that is particularly relevant

to our suggestion of the possibility of broadening the participatory meanings of spirituality.

The Lower Left-Hand Quadrant of Wilber's Model

In looking at Wilber's lower left-hand quadrant of development we can note that the theme of spiritual development is conceptualized principally in terms of the development of cultural world-views and in terms of achieving a more integrative consciousness. Notice how Wilber places "centauric" consciousness at the high end of his lower left quadrant. This must certainly be related to, in not a correlate to the idea of vision-logic which is placed at the high end of Wilber's upper left (subjective) quadrant. In short, we can recognize that integration appears to be *the* key notion in Wilber's philosophy. And this is why we applaud Wilber's work.

A problem with Wilber. What we find somewhat curious, however, about Wilber's lower left, cultural quadrant, is the fact that the notion of spiritual development and the development of spiritual depth within the individual is not explicitly associated with the development of social and personal interaction or relationships. The relational approach to spirituality does not appear to be developed by Wilber.

As we noted in the introduction to our study, relational and participative notions of spirituality—logically associated with Wilber’s lower left-hand quadrant of Reality—may be an undeveloped area in Wilber’s work. On a positive note though, Wilber does appear to provide the conceptual space to develop relational approaches to spirituality even if such approaches are not particularly developed in his work. As Donald Rothberg notes in reference to Wilber’s work and its Hindu and Buddhist roots, “In Hinduism and Buddhism, there’s often an emphasis on relating *universally* to all beings, with loving-kindness, wisdom, and compassion. There’s often a downplaying of the centrality of one’s *particular* relationships, at least for those who are most spirituality ambitious (that is, yogis, monks, and nuns) (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 262).

Inasmuch as we have identified an important concern we have that is relevant to Wilber’s framework, we should, again, put this issue on hold as we work through more of the details of Wilber’s framework. More specifically, we want to work through Wilber’s stages of development which Wilber lays out as defining of the upper left-hand quadrant of the individual’s transpersonal development. And our hope is that as we explore these ten major fulcrums, stages,

levels, or waves of development we will be able to find at least a partial answer to our question about how certain relational or participative elements might be located in Wilber's work and potentially developed therein.

Ken Wilber's Ten Fulcrums, Levels, or Waves of Development

In the extended quote we cited from Wilber we saw that Wilber used the language of a fulcrum of development to characterize how an individual travels or progresses through the various levels of B/being in the context of one's spiritual development. Accordingly, Wilber says these levels or fulcrums of development represent "a few of the major milestones in consciousness development" on the way towards a higher and deeper transpersonal mode of being (Wilber, 1996a, p. 141).

Wilber's idea of a fulcrum comes from the research of theorists and clinicians such as Margaret Mahler, Otto Kernberg, Heinz Kohut, and others who have chronicled the process of "differentiation" and "integration" as it occurs in human growth and development (Wilber, 1996a, p. 144). This was the 1-2-3 process of 1) fusion/identification 2) differentiation/transcendence, and 3) integration/inclusion, that Wilber talked about previously. In addition, we should note that Wilber makes a distinction between the idea of the self which climbs the ladder of

consciousness and the ladder or spectrum of consciousness itself, which Wilber says, "is basically selfless—there is no inherent self-sense in any of its rungs" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 142).

A more fluid ladder of consciousness. The image of a ladder of consciousness was one of the early metaphors that Wilber worked with in explaining his spectrum model of consciousness. But Wilber is very clear that he is not presenting a rigid model. Wilber says that his idea of levels of consciousness should not be understood like "rungs in a ladder each piled on top of the other, but holons in a holarchy like atoms/molecules/cells/organisms, with each senior enfolding its juniors" (Wilber, 2000, p. 12).

Wilber also uses various terms to characterize the basic levels or basic holons of the Great Nest of Being.

Wilber says:

I use all three terms—basic *levels*, basic *structures*, and basic *waves*—interchangeably, as referring to essentially the same phenomena; but each has a slightly different connotation that conveys important information. "Level" emphasizes the fact that these are *qualitatively* distinct levels of organization, arranged in a nested hierarchy (or holarchy) of increasing holistic embrace... "Structure" emphasizes the fact that these are enduring *holistic patterns* of being and consciousness (each is a holon, a whole that is part of other wholes). And "wave" emphasizes the fact that these levels are not rigidly separate and isolated,

but, like the colors of a rainbow, infinitely shade and grade into each other.

(Wilber, 2000, p. 7)

For Wilber there is a very fluid nature to the basic levels of consciousness and B/being. And yet there are still objective structures and fulcrums of development to talk about. Wilber says that the idea of "structures" in both psychology and sociology are simply *stable patterns* of events (Wilber, 2000, p. 13). And Wilber further characterizes these patterns or structures as "Kosmic habits" (Wilber, 2000, p. 12). So for Wilber there are basic levels or basic waves of being which are the structures through which different developmental lines or streams of development such as emotions, needs, self-identity, relationships, morals, empathy, spiritual realizations, etc., unfold (Wilber, 2000, p. 212). But how the self negotiates one's way along the spectrum of B/being is not linear or fixed in Wilber's framework. There are potentially a myriad of versions of these self streams of development such as we have cited.

Spiral Dynamics. One such version of the self stream of development that receives particular attention in Wilber's work is the model of Spiral Dynamics first articulated by Clare Graves and further developed by Don Beck and

Christopher Cowan. Spiral Dynamics sees human development as proceeding through eight general value MEMES or deep structures which are each correlated with different colors forming a spectrum. Wilber says, "A MEME is at once a psychological structure, value system, and mode of adaptation, which can express itself in numerous different ways, from worldviews to clothing styles to governmental forms" (Wilber, 2000, p. 47). Wilber goes on to say the various MEMEs are, in a sense, "different worlds" available to the self as it develops along the great spiral of existence. Here is a brief description of the eight self-world levels as Wilber characterizes them in pp. 47-53 of *Integral Psychology* (2000). The first six levels are said to reflect "first-tier" thinking, and the latter two levels represent a quantum leap into "second-tier" thinking, which is a more integrative thought process sharing similarities to Wilber's idea of vision-logic.

1) Beige: archaic-instinctual & tribalistic. The level of basic survival; food, water, warmth, sex, and safety have priority. Distinct self is barely awakened or sustained.

Where Seen: first human societies, newborn infants, senile elderly, starving masses, etc.

2) Purple: magical & mythic. Thinking is animistic; magical spirits swarm the earth leaving blessing, spells, and curses that determine events. Spirits exists in ancestors and bond the tribe. Kinship and lineage establish political links.

Where seen: Magical ethnic beliefs and superstitions, third world setting, gangs, etc.

3) Red: power gods. First emergence of a self distinct from the tribe; powerful, impulsive, egocentric, heroic. The world is a jungle full of threats and predators. Conquers enjoy self to the fullest without regret or remorse.

Where seen: "terrible twos", rebellious youth, frontier mentality, epic heroes, etc.

4) Blue: conformist rule, absolutist-religious. Life has meaning, direction, and purpose, with outcomes determined by an all-powerful Other or Order. This righteous Order enforces a code of conduct based on absolutist and unvarying principles of "right" and "wrong." Violating the code or rules serve and perhaps everlasting repercussions. There are rigid social hierarchies; only one right way to think about everything. Law and order dominate often via religious systems, but can be secular or atheistic.

Where seen: Puritan America, Confucianist China, Dickensian England. Islamic fundamentalism.

5) Orange: scientific & individualistic achievement. Wilber says, at this wave the self "escapes" from the "herd mentality" of the blue level and seeks truth and meaning in individualistic and materialistic terms. The world can be mastered and manipulated for one's own purposes. Marketplace alliances; manipulate earth's resources for one's strategic gains. Basis of *corporate states*.

Where seen: The Enlightenment, Wall street, the Riviera, cosmetics industry, liberal self-interest.

6) Green: the sensitive & relativistic self (early vision-logic). Communitarian, human bonding, ecological sensitivity, networking. The human spirit must be freed from greed, dogma, and divisiveness. Feelings and caring supersede cold rationality; cherishing of the earth, Gaia, life. Emphasis is on dialogue and relationships; strongly egalitarian, antihierarchy, pluralistic values, social construction of reality. This worldview is often called *pluralistic relativism*.

Where seen: Deep ecology, postmodernism, Netherlands idealism, Rogerian counseling, Canadian health care, humanistic psychology, liberation theology, Greenpeace, human rights issues.

7) Yellow: systematic-integrative (middle vision-logic).

Life is a kaleidoscope of natural holarchies, systems, and forms. Flexibility, spontaneity, and functionality have the highest priority. Differences and pluralities can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows. Knowledge and competency should supersede rank, power, status, or group. Good governance facilitates the emergence of entities through the levels of increasing complexity (nested hierarchy).

8) Turquoise: global-holistic (late vision-logic). This thinking evidences holons or waves of integrative energies; unites feeling with knowledge (centauric) and sees multiple levels interwoven into one conscious system. There is universal order at this level, but in a living conscious fashion, not based on external rules (blue) or group bonds (green). A "grand unification" is possible as turquoise thinking sees multiple levels of interaction.

In short, Wilber says the spiral dynamics model does not include the higher, transpersonal waves of consciousness, but the model is still useful to show how the self journeys through different waves of consciousness.

What our study is mainly interested in is Wilber's narrative of how the individual comes to develop a sense of self or ego and eventually comes to challenge this sense of self in the context of identifying with a larger and deeper spiritual identity and reality

So I would like us now to take a summary look at Wilber's six stages of pre-personal and personal development followed by Wilber's four stages of transpersonal development or awareness, all of which are implicit to Wilber's spectrum model of consciousness. And

as we look at these stages, fulcrums of development, or waves of consciousness we should pay particular attention to Wilber's articulation of the development of *the ego* and of *the self*, which is essentially the catalyst or action character in Wilber's narrative of spiritual development.

We began this chapter on Ken Wilber by noting that Wilber suggests that the internalization of an integrative transpersonal mode of being is what the individual should aspire towards. But now we are laying out Wilber's narrative of how the individual literally develops physically, mentally, emotionally, rationally, and spirituality, to accomplish this internalization of an integrative transpersonal mode of awareness.

Fulcrum Zero (F-0): The Primary Matrix

Ken Wilber's philosophy, in agreement with standard psychoanalytic theory, suggests that during infancy the infant is largely identified with the sensorimotor world, so much so that the infant cannot even distinguish between inside and outside (Wilber, 1996a, p 158). Wilber says the infant is *fused* with the outside world and there is not yet differentiation. We might suggest this is the first form of nondualism which the individual experiences. But Wilber sees nothing spiritual about this form of nonduality because it is in its most undeveloped stage and is no where

near its mature--transpersonal--state. Further speaking of this primary stage, Wilber says, "This is the shallowest and most cramped consciousness you can imagine!...this fusion state is the complete antithesis of genuine spiritual awareness and compassion and love" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 159). But around 4 months of age the infant is then said to begin to differentiate between physical sensations in the body and those in its environment and thus begins the process which will result in the eventual emergence of an ego proper.

The three phases of Wilber's thought: Wilber's pre-trans fallacy and Wilber I, II, & III. It is interesting to note that Wilber's view of the nature of "pre-egoistic" and egoistic states of the individual as being antithetical to our true spiritual and transpersonal structures is not a view Wilber has always espoused. More specifically, Wilber says we should understand that his thought has gone through three major phases of development which he refers to as the phases of Wilber-I, Wilber-II, and Wilber-III. Let us elaborate further on these phases of Wilber's development and what is supposedly at issue here by pulling out some discussion from Rothberg & Kelly's (1998) work in which Michael Washburn, who is a transpersonal philosopher, characterizes what he feels is at issue regarding Wilber's

understanding of pre-egoic (lower, primitive, or infantile) structures verses trans-egoic (higher, psychic, or spiritual) structures. We will, of course, give Wilber's response to Washburn. Later in our study, we will then come back to this issue of the nature of our psychic structures (and what we initially talked about as a transpersonal depth dimension implicit within the individual) as we extend our discussion of the relevance of this subject matter to our discussion of broadening the participative meanings of transpersonal phenomena.

As Michael Washburn characterizes the matter in Rothberg and Kelly's (1998) work, Washburn says Ken Wilber's paper, "The Pre/Trans Fallacy" (1980b) poses what is perhaps the most important question for transpersonal psychology: Do apparent similarities between preegoic and transegoic states imply that these states are expressions of the same or similar psychic structures (Wilber, 1998, p. 65)? Again, the question transpersonal theory faces here is whether spiritual development should be viewed as a spiraling progression of development in which higher spiritual structures are in some important sense a recouping or a re-building upon structures from which we have been formally dissociated, but which were present, as Washburn says, "as nonegoic potentials" in us all (Rothberg

& Kelly, 1998, p 79). Or is spiritual development more of a linear/ascending progression such that the higher spiritual structures are in some important sense *different* structures than the pre-egoic?

Washburn claims that Wilber, in rejecting the Jungian view that preegoic and transegoic states have a common basis, is forced to posit "three distinct levels of psychic structures: preegoic, egoic, and transegoic" (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 68). Washburn's point is that Wilber's dividing of the person's experience in the way that we have cited is an artificial construct which is ultimately problematic. Washburn's claim is that there is a middle ground between the view that transpersonal structures are only realized in the latter stages of spiritual development and a view which tries to claim that such experiences of adualism or symbiosis of the infant with the mother are of the same class of transpersonal experience that the mystic encounters. Washburn says, "It is entirely possible that many nonegoic structures—or, to use a term I prefer, nonegoic *potentials*—have both pre and trans developmental expressions" (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 68).

Even though Washburn claims a middle of the road position as regards preegoic and transegoic structures, Wilber still sees Washburn's position as endorsing what

Wilber refers to as the "Romantic model". Wilber explains in saying, "I myself was once an advocate of the Romantic model...I postulated that the infant begins in a state of almost pure adualism, fully in touch with the primal Ground and the true Self (Atman), so that subject and object are one; the self and the 'whole world' are united" (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 311). Assuming this picture of the nature and relation of preegoic and transegoic psychic structure is what Wilber calls his "Wilber-I" phase of thought. And elaborating further regarding this phase of his thought Wilber says, "I mistakenly believed that the drive to unity was a drive to recapture that infantile structure, but of course in a mature form" (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 312).

The "crucial difference", Wilber then says, between his early and later thought is that the "Romantic/Wilber-I *must* see the infantile preegoic structure as being, in some sense, a primal Ground, a perfect wholeness, a direct God-union, a complete immersion in Self...since the perfection of enlightenment is a *recontacting* of something present in the infantile structure," (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 313). Wilber claims that he tried to make the Romantic model work, but ultimately he couldn't do it. And in 1980 Wilber wrote, "The Pre/Trans Fallacy", in which he says, "I was in effect cataloging all of the errors that I myself had made

in this regard" (Wilber, 1990a, p. 312). So Wilber-II assumedly represents a more mature version of Wilber's thought.

Regarding both the Wilber-I and Wilber-II model, Wilber says both models "see development ultimately driven by the attempt to regain Spirit" (Wilber, 1990, p. 153). Wilber-II, though, holds that the "the state of unity that is desired is not that of the infant at the mother's breast, but of the self at primordial Emptiness" (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998, p. 312). Wilber is not denying the possibility of some kind of "spiritual" union in infancy. But as we will later see, Wilber holds that there is an important distinction between a conscious verses an unconscious union.

Despite the accomplishments of Wilber-II, Wilber says there were still problems that needed to be worked out. For instance:

The Wade/Wilber-II model does tend toward a unilinear development, which is exactly why I abandoned it (or rather, refined it into Wilber-III)...what the Wade/Wilber-II model cannot handle is the fact that a person in the *same* setting has components of his or her consciousness each existing at a different level...The Wade/Wilber-II model fails dramatically in accounting for those facts—because it fails, in general, to distinguish carefully enough between levels and lines, and further, to account for just what is preserved, and what is negated, in evolution.

(Wilber, 1990a, pp. 213-214)

Wilber thus claims that the Wilber-III model is the same model he has consistently presented since its first publication in 1981 (Wilber, 1990a, p. 213).

As we have noted, our study is particularly interested in this area of thought regarding how transpersonal structures are defined—whether there are sharp distinctions between preegoic structures and transegoic structures; or even more generally phrased, whether there are sharp distinctions between participative structures of the individual's psyche and what are understood as transpersonal structures. We will thus come back to this discussion most notably in the latter chapters of our study as we talk about Jorge Ferrer's participatory vision of spirituality and Robert Nozick's suggestion of a potential negative dimension of depth, followed by our summary conclusions. But right now let us pick up where we left off with our summary discussion of Wilber's fulcrums of development.

Fulcrum One (F-1): The Hatching of the Physical Self

In Wilber's ladder climber model of consciousness the stage of Fulcrum-1 is most notably characterized by Wilber as a time of the self breaking away from its fusion with the sensorimotor world. In this light Wilber cites the developmental psychologist Margaret Mahler who talks about

a "hatching" phase of development (around 4 months of age) in which the physical self hatches out of its fusion with the primary matrix of fulcrum-0 (Wilber, 1996a, p. 162). If, however, the self fails to accomplish healthy differentiation at this stage, the infant may be open to what is called *adualism*, which, Wilber says, is one of the primary characteristics of *psychosis*.

Again, there is not a lot of significance in terms of spirituality in relation to these two early stages that Wilber speaks of as "pre-personal" or "pre-egoic" stages of development (before the formal emergence of an ego), yet development is still marching on.

Fulcrum Two (F-2): The Birth of the Emotional Self

Wilber says the next fulcrum of growth (around 15-24 months of age) differentiates the emotional self from its emotional environment, particularly, from its fusion or strong attachment with the mother. This is what Margaret Mahler calls "the psychological birth of the infant" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 165). And Wilber says, "just as there was nothing 'deep' or 'profound' about the previous physical fusion state, there is nothing deep or profound about this emotional fusion state, even though it, too, sounds like a nice 'holistic' oneness with the world" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 163). Wilber says that at this stage of

development the infant self treats the world as an *extension of itself*—which is the technical meaning of “narcissism”. The infant thinks that what it is feeling is what the world is feeling. Its own perspective is the only perspective in existence. When the infant comes out of this aforementioned deluded state, it can then be said to be approaching the status of a separate self. As Wilber says:

With fulcrum-2, a truly separate-self sense awakens, with all the joy and all the terror that involves...Differentiation is an absolutely necessary and unavoidable part of all evolutionary growth and development, the counterpart to reaching higher integration”

(Wilber, 1996a, p. 166)

Fulcrum Three (F-3): The Birth of the Conceptual Self

Wilber says that as the self comes out of its exclusive identification with the emotional self or with its emotional fusion with others and the world around it (F-2), the infant will begin to identify with the mental or conceptual self. This is the beginning of Fulcrum-3 and of what Wilber calls, *the representational mind* (Wilber, 1996a, p. 168). Wilber says this stage is similar to what Piaget called pre-operational cognition. And as Wilber uses the concept, this refers to the development of the mental capacity to form *images, symbols, and concepts* in the mind (Wilber, 1996a, p. 168). Such images begin to emerge with the infant around 7 months, and then expand to include

symbols which Wilber defines as representing a single object. Symbols are said to dominate awareness from 2 to 4 years, roughly. Next, we come to *concepts* which, Wilber says, represent an entire class of objects, and concepts dominate awareness from 4 to 7 years of age, according to Wilber (Wilber, 1996a, p. 169).

In short, with the self's ability to identify with symbols and concepts one is assumed to enter the linguistic world. Wilber also calls this the "noospheric world", the world of the mind, and as Wilber says, this development changes everything. So "mind", in Wilber's most formal sense of the term, seems to begin with the formation and use of words. Accordingly, Wilber points out that one of the most significant words we discover around this time period is the negation--"No"! Here a kind of boundary is established and the self makes a claim of independence. Put in different terms, a concept of the self (and thus the person or ego) is beginning to form. "Identity", to use the term loosely right now, is changing. Wilber will say the self is moving up the developmental ladder of consciousness. And "at each rung you get a different type of self-identity, a different type of self-need, and a different type of moral stance" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 145). In addition, Wilber says at each rung in the developmental

ladder the World looks different and is different (Wilber, 1996a, p. 146).

As I have noted, our study is particularly interested in the participative aspects of our thinkers' philosophies, and Wilber's suggestion that identity is to some degree tied into the phenomena of identification, such that identification is "the locus of self-identity" (Wilber, 1998, p. 308), is germane in this vein of thought.

We talked about the infant being identified with the mother and with its emotional world. But as the ego or self is thought to become more mature, Wilber suggests that we begin to identify with larger identities beyond our individual selves, such as, for example, social identities. And this brings us to Wilber's next fulcrum of development.

Fulcrum Four (F-4): Socio-Centric Identity, Taking the Role of the Other, Decentering, and Group Membership

Following the course of the development of the infant, Wilber says that in correlation with what Piaget called "concrete operational cognition" (around the age of 6-7 years old) a child develops the capacity to form mental rules and to take mental roles, specifically, the role of the other. A child no longer thinks only in terms of his perspective, but realizes that there are other perspectives and that others may have an opinion different from one's

own. This development is the first step to what Wilber, in citing Piaget's work, talks about as decentering (Wilber, 1995, p. 230, 256).

A paradigmatic example of decentering Wilber cites from Piaget's work involves the use of a colored ball. If you take a colored ball which is red on one side and green on the other, and you place the ball between yourself and a preoperational child, and ask the child what he or she sees, and what I see, the answer a preoperational child will give will be that we both see the same. But with cognitive development the child will understand that there are other perspectives than just his own. And Wilber describes this cognitive development as "a huge step *on the way to global*, on the way to being able to take a worldcentric perspective" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 175).

So Wilber says that as the child matures his concern will go from an egocentric kind of concern (the world revolves around me) to a more other-oriented (though not yet a very "spiritual") concern for others. Personal identity at this sociocentric stage thus becomes tied into the group. Wilber says, "The fundamental locus of self-identity thus switches from *egocentric* to *sociocentric*" (Wilber, 1995, p. 225). Wilber also speaks of this sociocentric stage as a "mythic-membership" stage. As

Wilber says, "Mythic-membership is sociocentric and thus *ethnocentric*: one is in the culture (a member of the culture) if one accepts the prevailing mythology" (Wilber, 1995, p. 226). Wilber also describes this stage as a "law and order" stage (Wilber, 1996a, p. 175). Wilber also says that at this stage the child is coming to a "conventional stance", where he or she begins to think in terms of their identity within the group. And most notably, this conventional stance is also a conformist stance, such as to say, "My country, right or wrong".

Wilber has certainly hit onto an important fact about human development, namely, that we often think about and define our identity in reference to our relations to groups and social status in general, and in doing so we oftentimes operate from a moral stance that is in certain ways conformist in accepting the values of our groups. But as we come to Wilber's fifth fulcrum of human and spiritual development, Wilber describes a movement away from just this sort of social criteria as being the defining standard of our true identity. With stage five the maturing of the ego is most notably taking place.

Fulcrum Five (F-5): The World-Centric or Mature Ego and the emergence of Rationality

In the level designated as fulcrum five in Wilber's model of consciousness Wilber cites the emergence of what Piaget referred to as "cognitive formal operational ability", understood as the ability to imagine various scenarios of possibilities. And with the emergence of this ability there is said to be a birth of a new level of consciousness and transpersonal possibilities within the individual. Cognitively, this is assumed to take place around the age of (11-14). Wilber says, "Whereas the concrete operational child can indeed operate upon the concrete world, the child at that stage ultimately remains tied to the obvious and the given and the phenomenal, whereas the formal operational adolescent will *mentally see* various and different possible arrangements of the given" (Wilber, 1995, p 232).

Wilber also cites the philosopher Jurgen Habermas as referring to the "transcendence" from a concrete operational to a formal operational cognition as a transformation from a role identity to an ego identity. As Wilber says, " 'Ego' here doesn't mean 'egocentric'; on the contrary, it means moving from a *sociocentric* to a *worldcentric* capacity, a capacity to distance oneself from

one's egocentric and ethnocentric embeddedness and consider what would be fair for all peoples and not merely one's own" (Wilber, 1995, p. 227). In addition, Wilber calls this new reasoning a "very relational type of awareness: all the possible relations that things can have with each other need to be held in awareness—and this is radically new" (Wilber, 1995, p. 232). Moreover, with this new world of "operational awareness" or "rationality" comes a new world of feelings, dreams, wild passions and idealistic strivings.

We are not going to focus on the nuances of Wilber's understanding of rationality, but rather on certain aspects of Wilber's narrative of the development of the *ego*, which, Wilber says, first truly emerges in this formal operational period. Wilber claims, "it is only at the level of formal operational thought...that a truly strong and differentiated self or ego emerges from its embeddedness in bodily impulses and pre-given social roles; and that, indeed, is what Habermas refers to as an *ego identity*, a fully separated-individuated sense of self" (Wilber, 1995, p. 229). For Wilber, the "ego" means the "self" or the "subject" (Wilber, 1995, p. 228).

The nature of the ego. Wilber says there are different conceptual uses of the term "ego". For instance, "In most

psychoanalytically oriented writers, the ego has come to mean the process of organizing the psyche...the principle that gives unity to the mind...a crucial and fundamental organizing pattern" (Wilber, 1995, p. 227). But such meanings as these, Wilber insists, are not his intended use of the term ego. Accordingly, Wilber lays out his intended use of the concept in the following passage:

In philosophy a general distinction is made between the empirical ego, which is the self insofar as it can be an object of awareness and introspection, and the Pure Ego or transcendental Ego (Kant, Fichte, Husserl), which is pure subjectivity (or the observing Self), which can never be seen as an object of any sort. In this regard, the pure Ego or pure Self is virtually identical with what the Hindus call Atman (or the pure Witness that itself is never witnessed—is never an object—but contains all objects in itself).

(Wilber, 1995, p. 227)

Wilber further explains his use of the term ego in saying, "I will most often use the term ego in this narrower sense, similar to Freud, Piaget, Habermas, and others—a rational, individuated sense of self, differentiated from the external world, from its social roles (and the superego), and from its internal nature (id)" (Wilber, 1995, p. 229). Wilber's emphasis on differentiation and detachment from all roles, identities, and in the most general sense, all objects of human awareness, is implicit to Wilber's use of the term ego and

as well serves as a reoccurring theme developed throughout the course of Wilber's elaboration of spiritual development. More specifically, Wilber regards the narrative of his fifth fulcrum of development as one in which the self is becoming more reflective and questioning of its identity within the group. So the individual is progressing up the ladder of spiritual or transpersonal development by turning attention within the self. As Wilber says, "the individual at this stage, who can no longer rely on society's given roles in order to establish an identity, is thus thrown back on his or her own inner resources" (Wilber, 1995, p. 235).

Wilber's emphasis is, again, on strengthening our mental independence and reflective capacities through meditative exploration. And the important point, Wilber suggests, is that our development is taking us closer to the true transpersonal states of awareness. According to Wilber's account, we have not arrived at the transpersonal levels of awareness but we are getting closer. As Wilber will say, the individual is most notably beginning to think about deeper issues of life. For instance, the individual will begin asking about things like universal principles: is my group's moral system right, or are my country's values right? (Wilber, 1995, p. 234). In short, one is now

beginning to discover One's self as a thinking self, engaged in post-conformist questioning and seeking a deeper identity, no longer content to think in terms of "my group" and "my values". We begin judging our roles and rules from a more universal and detached perspective. "You want to know what is right and fair, not just for you and your people, but for all peoples...you are getting very close to a genuinely spiritual or transpersonal opening" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 187).

Wilber says once we reach this stage of thinking in terms of universal values and perspective, we will never go back to the previous ethnocentric concerns. In addition all further, higher (transpersonal) development will have this worldcentric platform as its base (Wilber, 1996a, p. 187). Wilber says this is quite a remarkable turn of events in terms of development. As Wilber summarizes:

Once you see the world in global perspectives, you cannot prevent yourself from doing so. You can never go back. And thus Spirit has, for the first time in evolution, looked through your eyes and seen a global world, a world that is decentered from the me and the mine, a world that demands care and concern and compassion and conviction—a Spirit that is unfolding its own intrinsic value and worth.

(Wilber 1996a, p. 187)

At fulcrum 5 the self is moving away or decentering from egocentrism, socio-centric identity, ethno-centrism,

and the individual is developing a greater compassion and concern for others by adopting a global perspective. Yet there is still a deeper level of awareness and subsequent detachment from our situated perspectives to come. And this level of awareness is encapsulated in what Wilber talks about as the stage of vision-logic, which we earlier talked about in our discussion.

Fulcrum Six (F-6): Vision-Logic and our Existential Crises

Wilber says that even with the emergence of rationality, defined as (among other things) the ability to imagine and calculate "as if" possibilities, and as well, characterized by an increased capacity for introspection and reflective thinking, the self must still emerge to a higher level of development. Wilber says the formal operational awareness of fulcrum five "is synthesizing and integrating in many important and impressive ways, but it still tends to possess a kind of dichotomizing logic, a logic of either/or, rather like Aristotelian logic" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 191). But with fulcrum-6 (the last or highest "orthodox" stage most conventional researchers tend to recognize) Wilber says the self becomes more integrative by means of taking up a visionary mode of thought Wilber calls vision-logic. We have already characterized the integrative nature of vision-logic, defined as the capacity

to perceive multiple inter-relationships among various possibilities (see pp. 38-39 of our discussion).

But as we talk about the ideal or mature phase of this sixth stage of development, Wilber says that self will not just be mouthing a global perspective but living it. Moreover, Wilber also calls this stage the stage of *the centaur*, representing the integration of the mind and the body or the noosphere and the biosphere. The essence of Wilber's idea of integration here is that the self is becoming aware of both the mind and the body *as experiences* or *as events* that arise and then pass away. As Wilber summarizes, "the *observing self* is beginning to *transcend* both the mind and the body and thus can be aware of them as objects in awareness, as experiences. It is not just the mind looking at the world; it is the observing self looking at both the mind and the world. This is a very powerful transcendence, which we will see intensify in the higher stages" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 191).

This idea of an observing self is what we earlier talked about as "witness consciousness". But, before we come to focus on the nature of this phenomena I would like us to back up somewhat, for Wilber's narrative of the individual's development says that on the road towards a true transpersonal state of awareness the individual must

encounter *an existential crisis* of sorts. This is why Wilber's sixth stage of development is also called the existentialist stage, because it is characterized by what Wilber calls "aperspectival madness". Let us turn now to this idea.

Aperspectival Madness

According to Wilber, the course of the individual's spiritual development follows on the heels of one's realization of the arbitrariness of our conventional rules and roles in society and of our fleeting definitions of identity in relation to such arbitrary standards. The individual is then said to come to a point of an existential crisis as to what values should take precedence in one's life. Wilber says Vision-logic takes account of the multiplicity of different perspectives but does not automatically privilege any of these perspectives. Wilber explains:

As you begin to take all the different perspectives into account, it gets very dizzifying, very aperspectival, very disorienting. And you can get very lost in this new aperspectival awareness of vision-logic, because all perspectives start to become relative and interdependent; there is nothing absolutely foundational; no final place to rest your head and say, I've got it!

(Wilber, 1996a, pp. 192-193)

It might sound as if Wilber is suggesting that truth and meaning are relative to a certain degree. But Wilber

adds that the assumption that "all perspectives are relative does not prevent some from still being relatively better than others all the time" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 193). Wilber suggests that what we don't want to do is to focus on the relativity of perspectives because this will throw us into "aperspectival madness". And most significantly, in Wilber's framework, consciousness can go beyond this existential crisis.

Further in relation to this idea of an existentialist outlook, Wilber suggests that there are important truths that the existentialist thinkers such as Kierkegaard talked about. These are, namely, concerns which deal with the acceptance of our own mortality and finitude, taking responsibility for our choices and for the ways in which we lie to ourselves as we construct false identities. Overcoming such "lies" is thus the challenge of fulcrum six. As Wilber says, "The emergence of this more authentic or existential self is the primary task of fulcrum-6" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 193).

The problem as Wilber sees it is that existentialist philosophy does not recognize a sphere of consciousness beyond the dread, despair, angst, fear and trembling, and sickness unto death which this thought is said to encapsulate. And, Wilber adds, according to the

existentialists, to suggest that there are "any modes of awareness that go beyond existential angst, then you *must* be lapsing into death-denial, immortality projects, inauthenticity, bad faith" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 194).

For Wilber, vision-logic and its accompanying consciousness which Wilber will refer to as the consciousness of the centaur have both positive and negative aspects. As Wilber summarizes, "Stuck in the centaur, identified with the centaur and its existential worldview—that's the fusion phase of fulcrum-6" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 195). Regarding this idea of "the centaur", Wilber explains that the "... 'Centaur' is the mythic beast, half human and half horse, which I (and others such as Hubert Benoit and Erik Erikson) have taken as a symbol of the integration of body and mind" (Wilber, 1995, p. 186). So on a positive note, Wilber sees the time of fulcrum six as a time in which the individual is working towards the ideal of integration, and yet one has not quite accomplished complete integration. As Wilber goes on to say, "The whole point of the existential level is that you are not yet in the transpersonal, but you are no longer totally anchored in the personal" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 195). In addition, Wilber says this realm of the personal with all its relativism and despair is essentially losing its

flavor, and the individual is now on the brink of the transpersonal. Accordingly, in Wilber's spectrum of consciousness model, the realm of the transpersonal begins most notably with fulcrum-7.

The transpersonal realms. In a terse, but wonderfully poetic passage speaking to the reality of the transpersonal realms, Wilber declares, "in the ultimate depth of your own awareness, you intersect infinity" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 197). And the infinity which Wilber says the individual may ultimately encounter is represented in many capitalized terms such as the Observing Self, Witness Consciousness, Pure Presence, or Pure Awareness, Consciousness as such, the living Divine, the Ultimate I, Christ, Buddha, and Emptiness itself (Wilber, 1996a, pp. 197-198).

Particularly significant, Wilber wants us to understand that the ultimate transpersonal reality we can encounter is not an emergent phenomenon that suddenly comes into being. Wilber says this spiritual aspect of consciousness, or really this ground of consciousness, has been present all along the way within the basic forms of awareness itself. Yet we don't truly come to a realization of the reality of Witness consciousness until we attain a certain level of mental and meditative capacity. For Wilber, following in the tradition of Hindu and Buddhist thought, the ever

present awareness of Witness consciousness is a universal of transpersonal phenomena. Accordingly, Wilber emphasizes those ways in which an individual detaches from all forms of individual and social identities on the way to a merger with the universal all-encompassing ground of Awareness.

Our study acknowledges the possibility that there is an aspect of consciousness that is ubiquitous to all human consciousness and possibly to all reality itself. This is a valid metaphysical possibility, we suggest. And what we find particularly interesting as regards Ken Wilber's philosophy are the many participative notions that we believe lead up to Wilber's articulation of an assumed ultimate state of nonduality of consciousness. We suggest Wilber's elaboration of nonduality may be the culmination of the participative relations which Wilber has identified throughout his previous stages. And this is somewhat of a different take on the critique of Wilber's work.

So we believe participative notions are subtly present throughout Wilber's stages of development. But when Wilber starts talking about the transpersonal realms, proper, we suggest he begins to focus more prominently on our mystical participative relations. Following in this vein of thought, let us look at how Wilber talks about the various

modalities of transpersonal phenomena associated with his four fulcrums of transpersonal experience.

Fulcrum Seven (F-7): The Psychic Realm and Nature Mysticism

Wilber claims that after we get past the stage of our existential crises (F-6) we come to enter into the transpersonal domains. And in Wilber's model, the first level of such transpersonal experience will take the form of an individual's consciousness no longer feeling confined to the individual ego. Accordingly, Wilber suggests an individual might temporarily identify with the entire gross sensorimotor world of nature--organic life--in what Wilber refers to as "nature mysticism". Here Wilber says the duality between self and world may become temporarily dissolved and one may become a "nature mystic". One may experience the "World Soul" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 203). Wilber's idea here is obviously very participative in its nature. And this theme of participation may be seen as carried on in Wilber's following transpersonal stages.

Fulcrum Eight (F-8): The Subtle Realm and Deity Mysticism

As we come to fulcrum eight in Wilber's model this level of transpersonal experience is characterized by what Wilber calls the subtle realm of transpersonal phenomena, and this also manifests in terms of so-called Deity mysticism.

In terms of this idea of a subtle realm of
transpersonal Wilber says:

"Subtle" simply means processes that are subtler than gross, ordinary, waking consciousness. These include interior luminosities and sounds, archetypal forms and patterns, extremely subtle bliss currents and cognitions (shabd, nada), expansive affective states of love and compassion, as well as subtler *pathological* states of what can only be called Kosmic terror, Kosmic evil, Kosmic horror.

(Wilber, 1996a, p. 211)

At this subtle level of consciousness Wilber is talking about Wilber suggests a variety of transpersonal forms of experience: interior sounds, archetypal forms⁴, patterns, subtle bliss currents and affective states of love, compassion, as well as the encounter with states of terror, evil, and horror. And all of these modalities, we again emphasize, are participative modalities which might be viewed as having a universal basis which is, namely, the relation of participation itself.

⁴ Particular to fulcrum eight, Wilber talks about our mergence with "archetypal forms" and Deities however they are individually conceived. And Wilber further emphasizes that we can't capture the essence of these archetypal forms philosophically--in the sense of representing their true nature conceptually and analytically. As Wilber explains, "These archetypes, the true archetypes, are a meditative experience, and you cannot understand these archetypes without performing the experiment. They are *not* images existing in the mythic worldspace, they are *not* philosophical concepts existing in the rational worldspaces; they are meditative phenomena existing in the subtle worldspace" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 217).

In short, it appears that fulcrum eight in Wilber's model is the apex of a very specific--content specific--form of participation. In other words, Wilber's participative descriptions take on very specific forms (and I must add, the phenomena also seem to manifest in a polarity of positive and negative forms--the negative side which is called pathological in Wilber's framework). But as we proceed to fulcrum nine, and the emergence of Witness consciousness, the participative notions of our experience are temporarily replaced by discussion of the idea of a Witness consciousness. Let us revisit this Hindu and Buddhist idea Wilber elaborates upon within his philosophy.

Fulcrum Nine (F-9): The Causal Domain and Witness Consciousness

Wilber says that the subtle or archetypal Forms that we identified in association with fulcrum eight actually issue from "Emptiness" which is also synonymous with Witness consciousness and the causal domain of fulcrum nine.

Consider the narrative Wilber lays out:

When, as a specific type of meditation, you pursue the observing Self, the Witness, to its very source in pure Emptiness, then no objects arise in consciousness at all. This is a discrete, identifiable state of awareness--namely, *unmanifest absorption* or *cessation*, variously known as *nirvikalpa*, *Samadhi*, *jnana Samadhi*, *ayin*, *vergezzen*, *nirodh*, *classical nirvana*.

This is the causal state, a discrete state, which is often likened to the state of deep dreamless sleep,

except that this state is not a mere blank but rather an utter fullness, and it is experienced as such—as infinitely drenched in the fullness of Being, so full that no manifestation can even begin to contain it. Because it can never be seen as an object, this pure Self is pure Emptiness.

(Wilber, 1996a, p. 220)

The experience of this pure state of awareness is the goal that Wilber believes the individual should aspire toward, not of course just for the experience's sake alone, but for all the qualitative, life changing effects Wilber believes are associated with such transpersonal experiences as are said to be implicit to encountering this deep level of Witness consciousness and causal reality.

Coming at our previous thought again, it is important to note the ways in which Wilber ties the narrative of the discovery of Witness consciousness--the pure Self or pure Emptiness--in relation to the discovery of *the true nature* of our individual identity. Wilber says the ways in which we are aware of our selves, and all the things that we claim to know about ourselves and describe ourselves by, like I'm a father, mother, husband, wife, a lawyer, a teacher, I like certain foods, and have certain impulses, etc., all of these things are actually just "objects" in our awareness. They are all ideas, concepts, desires, and feelings that, as Wilber says, parade in front of our

awareness. And most significantly, the awareness that is prior to these objects in our awareness is metaphysically greater than the objects we mentioned.

Wilber suggests that "the real Seer" of all those *objects* or things about the person we cited is actually the observing Self who cannot be seen as an object in awareness because this Witness consciousness is prior to any content of consciousness. Thus, when an individual can come to the point of abiding in this object-less (though "full", as Wilber describes it) level of awareness, one will come to discover a clearing of metaphysical Emptiness, a vast spaciousness in which objects may arise and pass away but our abiding awareness still remains. Wilber describes this state or this level of consciousness and Reality as utter freedom, release, and Liberation from the constrictions of identifying our self with the "small self", the one defined by all the objects or predications we earlier listed. In this light Wilber says the Eastern philosopher and mystic "Patanjali gave the classic description of bondage as 'the identification of the Seer with the instruments of seeing'—with the little subjects and objects, instead of the opening or clearing or Emptiness in which they all arise" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 233).

Most notably Wilber claims that our experiences and the objects in our awareness arise in space and pass away in time, and in distinction of this aspect of the self,

The Witness is aware of space, aware of time—and is therefore itself free of space, free of time. It is timeless and spaceless—the purest Emptiness through which time and space parade.

So this pure Seer is prior to life and death, prior to time and turmoil, prior to space and movement, prior to manifestation—prior even to the Big Bang itself. This doesn't mean that the pure Self existed in a time before the Big Bang, but that it exists prior to time, period.

(Wilber, 1996a, p. 224)

Wilber suggests that there is something eternal that we mortals can tap into via the meditative experience and by internalizing a transpersonal mode of thought. We can thus gain access to the eternal essence of the ground of Being Itself by means of the human mind, but the reality that is discovered is not a product of the physical mind's activity. The Emptiness and pure awareness that we discover in meditation is a result of the nature of Being itself. Consciousness in some form exists throughout the whole of Reality. As Wilber says, "Emptiness, as Consciousness, was present all along as the interior depth of every holon, a depth that increasingly shed its lesser forms until it shed forms altogether" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 226).

In Wilber's framework, when the individual has come to fully abide in Witness consciousness, one has essentially accomplished enlightenment, that is, in the sense that one has come to realize that the true self is not the particulars of our experience or the particulars of our personality, but is an eternal, essential, abiding consciousness eminent throughout the spectrum of Being. And as we next look at fulcrum ten in Wilber's model of consciousness, this experience and knowledge of our true metaphysical nature is said to take on an even fuller form as we now emphasize the language and relation of nonduality.

Fulcrum Ten (F-10): The Level of Non-Duality

Wilber suggests that many spiritual traditions have said that the state of pure Witnessing is equated with full enlightenment, pure release, and pure nirvana, but Wilber says, according to the Nondual traditions this is not the final story. According to Wilber, at some point within meditation one will come to inquire into the nature of the Witness and one will then come to realize that "the sense of being a Witness... 'In here' completely vanishes itself, and the witness turns out to be everything that is witnessed" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 226). Technically, at this stage of fulcrum ten the individual has dis-identified with

even the Witness itself. Wilber says these truths make up the second profound meaning of "Emptiness" (the first was the realization that the observing Self is the true self and that it derives its source from pure Emptiness). Now we come to realize that the "Suchness" of all states is one of nonduality.

Wilber elaborates upon the experience of this nondual Suchness as being similar to the unity experience and fusion of the "nature mysticism" of fulcrum seven. But now the unity and the fusion is, in Buddhist terms, with the Nirmanakaya--nature mysticism (F-7), the Sambhogakaya--Deity mysticism (F-8), and with the Dharmakaya--causal or formless mysticism (F-9). So Wilber claims that at this level of nonduality there is an embracing of the entire spectrum of consciousness, and thus an inclusion of all (Wilber, 1996a, p. 227). Most notably, Wilber characterizes this level of nondual awareness as an experience of the dissolution of the duality of subject and object. As Wilber says, "awareness is no longer split into a seeing subject in here and a seen object out there. There is just pure seeing. Consciousness and its display are not two" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 228). In this state "you will suddenly become all experience". For instance, Wilber suggest, when one looks

at the mountain one becomes the mountain; the separate self sense is no where to be found.

Elaborating upon the idea of the assumed duality between subject and object which Wilber argues can be transcended and negated, Wilber says the ordinary self is a battered self—battered by the two hands of the subject and object smashing together and bruising in what is called “duhkha”, the suffering of humanity. In short, Wilber suggests that when we slice up our experiences into subject and object that we alter the truth of the nondual Suchness of Being.

Historically, Wilber says such an emphasis on nonduality is associated most prominently with Vedanta Hinduism and Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism (Wilber, 1996a, p. 237). And while Wilber makes it clear that he is in sympathy with these nondual traditions, Wilber emphasizes that we must embrace the entire spectrum of Spirit’s manifestation. As Wilber summarizes:

Spirit—the pure immediate Suchness of reality—manifests as a subject and an object, and in both singular and plural forms—in other words, Spirit manifests as all four quadrants. And we aren’t supposed to simply evaporate those quadrants—they are the radiant glory of Spirit’s manifestation.

(Wilber, 1996a, p. 236)

The spectrum of description?

It is clear that Wilber's philosophy aspires towards a conceptually inclusive description of spiritual and transpersonal realities. And most notably in this vein of thought, Wilber suggests that there are four irreducible quadrants of description, which, as we have noted, Wilber associates with the idea of modernity's three encompassing domains of experience and description: the subjective, objective, and social domains (Wilber adds a collective expression to the objective domain in the form of a social and political *institutions* category). So again, Wilber is certainly aspiring to integrate as much phenomena and as many perspectives as possible under the umbrella of his integral vision. And yet because of his emphasis on individual meditative experience and because of his teleological framework which celebrates nonduality as the culmination of the spiritual quest, Wilber's work is criticized by such thinkers as Jorge Ferrer who charges that Wilber is to some degree espousing an inward, subjectivist, and perennial absolutist philosophy.

So challenging Wilber's claims of integration and conceptual inclusion implicit to Wilber's all quadrant all level model, Jorge Ferrer will suggest that Ken Wilber's philosophy contains certain "perennialist", "structuralist"

and "absolutist" elements demonstrated in Wilber's teleology which posits nonduality as the highest form of spiritual experience. Ferrer's critique, however, is not only directed towards Wilber's philosophy, rather, Ferrer's critique of Wilber is only part of Ferrer's larger critique of the perennialism and experientialism that Ferrer believes is endemic to much of transpersonal studies—epitomized in *the experiential viewpoint* which we touched on in the introduction to our study. Wilber's philosophy is, according to Ferrer, just one important example of this supposed conceptual holdover of modernity and subjectivist Cartesianism within contemporary transpersonal studies.

Following what we have said, we will now turn to Jorge Ferrer's project of revisioning transpersonal theory along with his critique of Ken Wilber's work. We will then follow this discussion with an important rejoinder to Wilber. And finally, we will bring in Robert Nozick's work which we believe will enable us to examine the idea of a spectrum of participative transpersonal phenomena and its requirement of conceptual inclusiveness in a novel light.

Having again stated the goals of our study let us now turn our attention to the work Jorge Ferrer.

CHAPTER 3
JORGE FERRER'S PROJECT OF REVISIONING TRANSPERSONAL THEORY

Plurality and Ferrer

As our thesis initially suggested, we are interested in exploring what might ultimately be at stake relevant to the assumption that transpersonal phenomena are fundamentally participative in nature, and as well, manifest in a pluralistic spectrum of forms. These assumptions must certainly be implicit to a pluralistic transpersonal philosophy. And yet what a *pluralistic* transpersonal philosophy actually entails is a fundamental issue we are trying to clarify.

In looking at Ken Wilber's work, we last talked about Wilber's idea of a diverse spectrum of consciousness and in this light we talked about Wilber's all quadrant all level framework which aspires towards a transpersonal theory of everything. In addition, we talked about an existential crisis of pluralism and relativism which Wilber suggests can be overcome via our ascension to the higher-transpersonal-realms of R/reality. This is all entailed in the idea of enlightenment.

In this chapter we want to focus more prominently upon how Jorge Ferrer will argue for a participatory understanding of transpersonal phenomena which Ferrer will suggest is a view of spirituality and transpersonal phenomena more reflective of the true diversity of spiritual aims, values, paths, and ultimates, and accordingly, more in line with the true nature and diversity of spiritual traditions and inquiry (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 130-131). We will focus on both the pluralistic and the participative components present in Ferrer's work.

Historically, Ferrer situates his vision in relation to supposed subjectivist views of spirituality, what Ferrer talks about as inward subjectivism or Cartesianism, and empiricism (mainly in terms of the desire to "verify" transpersonal phenomena), as well as so-called perennialist absolutism, or a fixed view of spiritual reality. Let us start our discussion in an introductory manner.

Jorge Ferrer's Participatory Vision

Jorge Ferrer is an emerging scholar whose work is quickly coming to be regarded as leading-edge transpersonal theorizing, that is, in the sense that Ferrer is articulating a participative vision of spirituality geared towards the recognition of spiritual plurality within Reality. Ferrer's first major work with which we will be

dealing is entitled, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (2002). And this particular work of Ferrer's has been described as brilliant and mature by such thinkers as Stanislav Grof, one of the intellectual founders of transpersonal theory, among others. At present, Ferrer is an associate Professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

In his work Ferrer presents what he refers to as a "universalist" and "participatory" vision of spirituality. And one of the guiding assumptions of this participatory vision is the belief that transpersonal theory should not build its metaphysical foundations upon perennial philosophy which supposedly utilizes an inward or subjectivist view of spirituality—again, epitomized in the philosophical stance Ferrer calls the experiential viewpoint. As Ferrer characterizes the matter, transpersonal studies have made a premature commitment to the experientialist and absolutist metaphysic of perennial philosophy and this conceptual commitment has now become a constraining factor to the historical progression of transpersonal theory into its more mature form, that is, a form which recognizes a plurality of spiritual values, ultimates, and ways of knowing. And which also recognize these not only as inner-subjective experiences, but as

Ferrer will say, as "multi-local phenomena" and as "transpersonal events".

Ferrer's Critique of the Three Assumptions of "Experientialism"

In terms of some historical context, Ferrer says the experientialist outlook he uncovers has certain of its philosophical roots planted in modernity. And most succinctly put, this viewpoint consists of three interrelated presuppositions which are 1) Cartesianism or experientialism, the assumption that transpersonal and spiritual phenomena are fundamentally individual inner experiences. 2) Inner empiricism, the assumption that the proper method of study for such inner experiences needs to be in some way empirically grounded. And, 3) Perennialism, the assumption that spiritual knowledge, liberation, and spiritual ultimates are most basically universal, or that they reflect different aspects or dimensions of what is regarded to be a single or fixed ultimate reality (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 22-33, 87-91, 183).

In relation to this third issue of perennialism which we have cited Ferrer suggests that the problem here is that perennial philosophy utilizes a fixed view of metaphysical depth and value by positing nonduality as the deepest or most ultimate spiritual reality. And within this context

Ferrer argues for a relaxed spiritual universalism which assumedly takes a more pluralistic view of the nature of spiritual values, ultimates, and ways of knowing.

Ferrer speaks of a "relaxed" spiritual universalism because, he argues, there is no *singular* reality, value, or teleology, etc., which can be regarded as *the* universal ultimate value, or the ultimate teleology of the evolution of human consciousness, etc. A memorable citation Ferrer gives in this light is found where Ferrer, having addressed the nature of so-called perennialist absolutism, declares, "spiritual truth is perhaps not a pathless land, but a goalless path" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 157).

Ferrer's statement reveals his teleology and metaphysic of what depth within consciousness and R/reality implies; there is no singular "goal" or singular nature to spiritual inquiry (and so maybe there no singular goal to our participative transpersonal phenomena?). There is, instead, exploration and participation via transpersonal events within "*an indeterminate spiritual power or Mystery*". As Ferrer summarizes, "*no pre-given ultimate reality exists...different spiritual ultimates can be enacted through intentional or spontaneous creative participation in an indeterminate spiritual power or Mystery*" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 151). Again, Ferrer argues that his

conceptualization of transpersonal phenomena as participative is more in line with the true nature and diversity of spiritual traditions, paths, aims, and inquiries (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 130-131). To best present Ferrer's participative vision, however, it is necessary that we start with what Ferrer identifies as the *originating context* which gave rise to his present project of revisioning transpersonal theory in participatory terms. So in this light let us now look more closely at the evolution of Jorge Ferrer's project of revisioning transpersonal theory, and particularly, how Ferrer traces the development of his participatory vision.

**The Intellectual Evolution of Jorge Ferrer's Philosophy:
The Foundations of Ferrer's Original Project**

Jorge Ferrer says that his project of revisioning transpersonal theory began with a concern that arose over the nature of knowledge claims that were being made within transpersonal studies, both past and present. In chapter one of Ferrer's (2002) work Ferrer introduces us to the initial context of thought from which his concerns arose about both the epistemic value of spiritual knowledge claims and the metaphysical context against which such phenomena are situated. Discussing his own experience and interaction with the literature of transpersonal studies,

and what Ferrer claims is a confusion concerning how transpersonal theory understands and situates its own knowledge claims. Ferrer says,

Despite the centrality of knowledge in transpersonal phenomena, discussions about its nature and justification were virtually absent in the literature. And with a few exceptions, the discussion I found struck me as unsatisfactory. On the one hand, there was much confusion about the epistemological framework within which transpersonal knowledge claims were to be understood and evaluated. The lack of criteria for determining what could be considered valid transpersonal knowledge was rendering transpersonal theory a free-for-all open to any form of metaphysical speculation. On the other hand, most transpersonal authors were working upon unexamined and outdated objectivist epistemological assumptions which, I gradually came to see, severely undermined the very transpersonal orientation they championed.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 9)

In short, Ferrer felt that, "Transpersonal theory lacked an adequate epistemology, and the consequences were disastrous" (*Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, p. 10). Ferrer thus set out to articulate a more clarified and mature transpersonal epistemology and framework that 1) would understand the nature and possibilities of transpersonal knowledge, and 2) would provide a criterion for the acceptance and rejection of transpersonal claims. Ferrer then indicates that his plan was to analyze the nature of transpersonal knowledge along four interrelated axes: objective/constructed, immediate/mediate,

universal/contextual, and absolute/relative. But it wasn't long before Ferrer says he began to encounter difficulties.

Ferrer rethinks his project

Ferrer says that although he believed in the relevance of what he was doing in attempting to construct a transpersonal epistemology, a vague but insidious feeling of discontentment concerning his project soon began to grow inside of him. And Ferrer first thought that the source of his angst might be due to the very ambitious nature of the project itself, along with his associated self-doubts about his own knowledge and whether he actually had the intellectual skills to sufficiently accomplish his goals. Following this, Ferrer says he found himself in a period of intellectual stagnation in which he could not write or work on his project for a year. But then, following much meditation and reflection Ferrer determined that he had discovered the solution he was seeking: "My discontent was not rooted in lacking the answers to my questions, but in the very questions I was asking" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 11).

Ferrer concluded that his questions about knowledge claims and epistemic justification were actually associated with modes of discourse characteristic of "the Cartesian ego" and its epistemology that focuses on both explaining and justifying the gap between subject and object, and

which furthermore conceives of spiritual experience primarily as individual (inner) experiences which are to be understood in intrasubjective terms (that is, within a group of devotees who report having the same or similar kinds of inner experiences). Ferrer then says that he repeatedly observed that these Cartesian problems would collapse (or essentially become unimportant or irrelevant) when they were approached through contemplative modes of cognition. And so a shift in Ferrer's direction of research was taking place.

Yet as Ferrer felt there was a lack of satisfactory scholarship to draw from in relation to his attempt to develop a critical understanding of transpersonal phenomena and epistemology, Ferrer says, "unsatisfied with the current definitions of transpersonal experience, I tried to elaborate my own". Accordingly, Ferrer concluded, "I had to start from scratch and find a different voice to talk about transpersonal phenomena....Transpersonal phenomena, I thought, are not individual inner experiences, but epistemic events" (Ferrer, 2002, pgs. 11-12). As Ferrer understood this distinction between the language of experiences and events, an *epistemic event* was a shift in focus away from the subjective experiential aspects of transpersonal phenomena to the *participative* aspects of

transpersonal phenomena. But still Ferrer had not yet adopted what would come to be known as his "participative" or "participatory" descriptive framework for conceptualizing transpersonal experience.

Ferrer's epistemic turn

Ferrer's first articulation of his project would thus be conceptualized in terms of an "epistemic approach" with this approach calling for, as Ferrer said, "an epistemic turn". And this epistemic turn would represent,

a radical shift from experience to knowledge in our understanding of human spirituality that would free transpersonal studies from their limiting Cartesian moorings. The epistemic turn led the way out of Cartesianism, as well as from its associated epistemological dilemmas, by conceiving of human spirituality not as intrasubjective experiences, but as multilocal epistemic events that can emerge not only in the locus of an individual, but also in a relationship, a community, a collective identity, or a place

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 12)

Ferrer felt that he was now articulating a more accurate picture of the nature of transpersonal phenomena, that is, by putting things in terms of "multi-local epistemic events". But still, Ferrer had not yet reached the final descriptive stage his project would adopt. Ferrer claims that the final turn in his exploration occurred when he realized that his distinction between the experiential and the epistemic was ultimately artificial and arbitrary, and this, because both experience and knowledge can be

conceptualized in Cartesian and non-Cartesian terms. Ferrer then said, it became obvious that the revision he was proposing could be more accurately represented not so much in terms of an epistemic turn, but in terms of a *participatory turn*, "a shift from intrasubjective experiences to participatory events which can be equally understood in both experiential and epistemic terms" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 12).

Participatory Relations are Primary: Spirituality Takes us out into the World

Recognizing that experience can be represented as a form of knowledge and knowledge can be represented as a form of experience so that both entail the same relations (put in Cartesian or non-Cartesian terms), Ferrer realized the position he says was implicit to his philosophy all along: inward experience is not the primary locus of spirituality, but rather our multi-local participatory relations or connections¹ with others are equally constitutive of spiritual meaning and value. Spirituality is multi-local and participative, not individualistic. We are not detached Cartesian subjects creating meaning in a

¹ My use of the term "connection" is my own reading into Ferrer's concept of "participation" and as such reflects my assumption that there is a correlation between the meanings of participation and connection (see pp. 211-222 for our main discussion of the idea of connection and its ideally broad predicative framework).

solipsistic universe within our own minds. Ferrer has thus given us a metaphysic which takes spirituality out into the world, beyond the particular individual, and possibly even breaking down the categories of such spatial metaphors as inward and outward, via the relation of participation.

Ferrer's metaphysic is one which explicitly works towards re-conceptualizing and re-describing what we have been calling participative transpersonal phenomena or transpersonal experiences in terms which Ferrer believes are more appropriate to the true nature of the transpersonal. Accordingly, Ferrer suggests that what he calls "transpersonal events" should be understood as ontologically greater than mere individual experiences taking place within an individual's mind because these events are actually taking place within a larger ontological realm of the transpersonal, that is, per its definition, beyond the individual person. The conceptual language of transpersonal events is thus thought to be superior to the supposed experiential or subjectively grounded (Cartesian) language of "transpersonal experience" which, again, supposedly assumes an individual ego speaking out from a point of inner experience, creating meaning within the solipsistic universe within one's own mind.

Ferrer's participatory vision thus attempts to *invert* the way transpersonal phenomena are often conceived as originating solely in the mind of the individual and then being projected out onto a waiting and detached--objective--Reality, to a metaphysic in which meaning is conceived to be multi-locally located between an underlying ontological dimension: posited as the ground of Being or Spirit, and one's individual experience of that dimension which is, again, deemed to be more of a secondary relation, a result of the more fundamental ontological reality. As Ferrer summarizes what we are describing he says:

The emergence of a transpersonal event precipitates in the individual what has been called a transpersonal experience. Thus understood, the ontological dimension of transpersonal phenomena is primary and results in the experiential one. Transpersonal experiences do not lead to transpersonal knowledge, but rather transpersonal participatory events elicit in the individual what have been commonly called transpersonal experiences.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 116)

Spirituality is not just an extension of our consciousness

Ferrer believes that his metaphysic of transpersonal events is an alternative to what Ferrer says is an overemphasis on the inward (subjectivist) aspects of spirituality, such as, for instance, Ferrer attributes to Ken Wilber's work, referring to Wilber's philosophy as paradigmatic of the conceptual holdover of modernity and

the inner empiricist view (Ferrer, 2002, p. 51). In the most general terms, Ferrer is concerned with the language according to which certain transpersonal philosophies have traditionally described spiritual experience as being an extension of an individual's consciousness such as goes beyond the individual centered body-ego.

Ferrer wants to distinguish his position from such conceptualizations which he feels are paradigmatic of the experiential vision Ferrer rejects, and which Ferrer says, certain influential definitions of transpersonal phenomena epitomize. Arguing his point, Ferrer cites Stanislav Grof, Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan, whom Ferrer says are important philosophers within the field of transpersonal studies, but whose work in some respects also represents the experiential view Ferrer is trying to deconstruct. As Ferrer elaborates:

According to Grof (1988), "transpersonal experiences can be defined as experiential expansion or extensions of consciousness beyond the usual boundaries of the body-ego and beyond the limitations of time and space" (p. 38). In a similar vein, Walsh and Vaughan (1993a) define transpersonal phenomena as "experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos" (p.203).

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 16)

The term "transpersonal experience" automatically configures transpersonal phenomena in a certain way?

In short, Ferrer claims that within the context of transpersonal studies, the very expression of "transpersonal experience" automatically configures transpersonal phenomena in terms of an individual's inner experience (which is subjective reductionism) and in addition, "creates a further division, this time between an experiencing subject and experienced objects of transpersonal cognition" (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 33-34). This is what Ferrer calls "subtle Cartesianism"². And Ferrer's point, again, is that individual transpersonal experiences are better understood as "events" with many participants

² I don't agree that use of the term "transpersonal experience" necessarily implies (or configures) a certain relational meaning, such as a subject/object mode of experience. In addition, it seems implicit to the logic of Ferrer's philosophy, to argue for a re-appropriation of the meaning of certain descriptions like "transpersonal experience". And according to this idea, I believe that dissociating ourselves from the Cartesian meanings Ferrer says have come to be connected with the term is a goal that we can accomplish. So while I understand Ferrer's argument in terms of his referencing of the historical context of Cartesian dualism (the dualism of subject and object), I think the logic of Ferrer's philosophy also allows for a re-appropriating of old meanings with new understandings. Accordingly, I will sometimes use the terms "spiritual experience" and "transpersonal experience" in my analysis, aware of Ferrer's viewpoint, but not accepting of the associations Ferrer says are "automatically configured" with such terms.

and many locations because there is no single locus of transpersonal phenomena.

So in terms of the language that Ferrer finds most appropriate to his re-conceptualization of transpersonal experience, Ferrer concludes that transpersonal experiences can be more correctly described in terms of transpersonal phenomena. And transpersonal phenomena can even be more accurately described in terms of "multi-local participatory events". As Ferrer says, such events are, "*emergences of transpersonal being that can occur not only in the locus of an individual, but also in a relationship, a community, a collective identity, or in a place*" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 116).

In summary. Ferrer's narrative of descriptive has thus evolved from a critique against "experience" as paramount to an endorsement of the language of "epistemic events" and "knowledge" as paramount, to then concluding that both experience and knowledge are essentially participative in nature.

Having introduced some context regarding Ferrer's originating project of revisioning transpersonal theory, let us now again return to this focus upon the participative elements that are present in Ferrer's work.

The Foundations of Participation (Again)

Thus far in our discussion of Ferrer's project we have talked about a view of transpersonal phenomena which Ferrer believes is timely because it recognizes an ontological truth, namely, that spiritual experiences do not originate in, nor are they fundamentally a product of the human mind—transpersonal phenomena takes place, assumedly, both within an individual's mind (although Ferrer does not even explicitly acknowledge this point), and as well, transpersonal phenomena take place within a mystical ontological realm that is the space of the connection between individuals as well as a space where individuals connect with others and with realities greater than their individual selves. Moreover, this participative relationship which we human beings have with others and with the world around us is assumed to be part of our human condition. We are all in a participatory predicament which Ferrer describes as "the fundamental ontological predicament of human beings in relation to spiritual energies and realities" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 121).

Participatory knowing. As we noted in the introduction to our study, Ferrer's philosophy may be principally defined by its broad epistemology of participatory knowing.

And in this light consider how Ferrer defined his seminal idea of participatory knowing.

Participatory knowing refers to a multidimensional access to reality that includes not only the intellectual knowing of the mind, but also the emotional and emphatic knowing of the heart, the sensual and somatic knowing of the body, the visionary and intuitive knowing of the soul, as well as any other way of knowing available to human beings.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 121)

As Ferrer points out, there are many ways in which we connect intellectually, emotionally, emphatically and spiritually with others and with realities greater than or beyond our individual selves. And the most general form of this participation is what Ferrer refers to as participatory knowing.

What we are particularly interested in, though, is the relationship between Ferrer's understanding of participatory knowing and what Ferrer calls transpersonal events which appears to be somewhat of an unclear area in Ferrer's thought. For instance, Ferrer says,

Transpersonal events engage human beings in a participatory, connected, and often passionate knowing that can involve not only the opening of the mind, but also of the body, the heart, and the soul.

But then, in seeming opposition to what he has just said, Ferrer goes on to say,

Although transpersonal events may involve only certain dimensions of human nature, all dimensions can potentially come into play in the act of *participatory*

knowing, from somatic transfiguration to the awakening of the heart, from erotic communion to visionary cocreation, and from contemplative knowing to moral insight, to mention only a few.

(Ferrer, 2002, p 121)

What seems unclear is that Ferrer says only certain dimensions of human nature are involved in transpersonal events, and yet we recall that Ferrer cites the dimensions of the mind, the body, the heart, and the soul, as coming into play in transpersonal events. So the question seems to come up as to what other dimensions exists which the language of transpersonal events does not evoke—what else is left?

In short, it seems that Ferrer wants to hold that all transpersonal events are participatory, and this is why Ferrer says, "The most important feature of transpersonal events is that they are participatory" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 120). And yet despite the broadness of his idea of our participatory relations, Ferrer also appears to want to hold that all participatory knowing is not transpersonal in the sense of being a *transpersonal event*. (At least this issue seems somewhat of an unclear area to me regarding Ferrer's work).

But right now, as regards Ferrer's philosophy, we can at least say that Ferrer is working towards a conceptually

inclusive understanding of transpersonal phenomena and this, we believe, is leading-edge of transpersonal theorizing.

Wilber and participation. We can also, I believe, be confident that Ken Wilber is in agreement with Ferrer's emphasis on the participation nature of our spiritual experience as contextual to the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena. Recall how Wilber said the self is located within the locus of one's identification (Wilber, 1998, p. 308). For Wilber, transpersonal participation-- primarily via meditative work, and potentially within relationships as well (Wilber, 1998, p. 359) implies an encounter with the depth of Spirit and spiritual reality.

And if we try to connect Ferrer and Wilber, we will suggest that Ferrer's idea of participation can probably be viewed as a correlate to Wilber's talk about identification, for we know that the notion of an individual's participation with realities greater than the individual self is a key notion implicit to both Wilber's and Ferrer's philosophies. The point, however, is that transpersonal participation implies a qualitative alteration in the life of the individual. And we can talk about this as the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena.

The Quality and Liberating Nature of Transpersonal Knowledge

Certainly what is most important for both Ferrer and Wilber are the qualitative, life changing effects that transpersonal phenomena engender. As Ferrer summarizes, "What makes transpersonal phenomena distinctly 'transpersonal' (as well as interesting, provocative, and transforming) is not their nonordinary or occasional ecstatic character, but the character of the knowledge they provide during an expansion of individual consciousness" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 9)³. Ferrer further elaborates about the nature and character of transpersonal knowledge in saying, "The validity of spiritual knowing can be more adequately established, I have proposed, by assessing its emancipatory power for self, relationships, and world" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 221). And this emancipatory power, Ferrer says, deals with the "capability to free individuals, communities, and societies from egocentric understandings of reality and associated ways of life" (Ferrer, 2002, p.3).

³ It is interesting to note that Ferrer here characterizes transpersonal phenomena as an expansion of an individual's consciousness. And yet we recall that Ferrer also critiqued transpersonal theorists such as Grof, Walsh, and Vaughn for characterizing transpersonal experience as an expansion of an individual's consciousness or ego (see pp. 117-118 of our discussion). This seems to be somewhat of an inconsistency in Ferrer's position.

The common river and the movement away from egocentrism. For both Jorge Ferrer and Ken Wilber, transpersonal experiences or transpersonal knowledge bring about the movement of an individual's consciousness away from egocentric modes of being. And one of the famous metaphors that Ferrer cites in this vein of thought is what Ferrer identifies as a perennialist metaphor which conceives of the diversity of spiritual traditions and the assumed universality of at least a certain aspects of transpersonal phenomena in term of the metaphor of different rivers running into the same common ocean to which all religious traditions flow.

Identifying, however, what he believes is a central problem regarding the way in which the movement away from egocentrism is characterized as a journey towards an enlightened understanding of the nondual nature of Reality, Ferrer offers his own reinterpretation of the metaphor:

Perennialism postulates a single spiritual ultimate which can be directly known through a transconceptual, and presumable ineffable, metaphysical intuition. This insight, so the account goes, provides us with a direct access to "things as they really are", that is, the ultimate nature of reality and our innermost identity. Central to this view is the idea that once we lift the manifold veils of cultural distortions, doctrinal beliefs, and egoic projections, the sense of separate existence, and so forth, the doors of perception are unlocked and the true nature of self and reality is revealed to us in a flashing, liberating insight. From a classic perennialist perspective, every spiritual

tradition leads, in practice, to this identical, single vision. Or to use one of the most popular perennialist metaphors, spiritual traditions are like rivers leading to the same ocean.

Here, however, I would like to suggest that, although distorted, there is a hidden truth abiding in this metaphor. I propose that most traditions do lead to the same ocean, but not the one portrayed on the perennialist canvas. The ocean shared by most traditions does not correspond to a single spiritual referent or to "things as they really are," but, perhaps more humbly, to *the overcoming of self-centeredness*, and thus a liberation from corresponding limiting perspectives and understandings

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 144)

Against absolutism. In the most general sense, Ferrer is claiming that he is against any absolutist view of Reality such as would say Reality is a certain fixed way. And Ferrer is clear that it is the positing of "the single spiritual ultimate" of perennial philosophy that he is particularly concerned with inasmuch as this metaphysic assumes that the state of nonduality is a correlate to the highest spiritual reality. In a larger context, Ferrer believes that transpersonal theory has, throughout its relatively short history, been committed to such a perennialist metaphysic. And to this issue we will now turn.

The Adhesion of Transpersonal Theory to a Perennialist Metaphysic

In relation to his discussion of what is problematic within contemporary transpersonal theory, Ferrer most

notably talks about "the adhesion of transpersonal theory to a perennialist metaphysic" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 72). As Ferrer most explicitly says, "If I had to identify the most implicit belief, the most unexamined pre-supposition, the most tacitly extended metaphysical doctrine of contemporary transpersonal theory, it would doubtless be the so-called perennial philosophy (*philosophia perennis*) (Ferrer, 2002, p. 71).

Ferrer's point is that although transpersonal studies have oftentimes been characterized as independent of any particular philosophical or religious commitments, schools of thought, or worldviews (e.g., Walsh & Vaughan, 1993a), "the philosophical foundations of transpersonal theory have generally been associated with the perennial philosophy (e.g., Hutchins 1987; Rothberg 1986; Valle 1989; Wilber 1990a, 1995)" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 71). And concerning this relationship between so-called perennial philosophy and the conceptual foundations of transpersonal theory I would like to speak further now.

In chapter four of his (2002) work, in the chapter entitled, "Trouble in Paradise: The Perennial Philosophy Revisited", Ferrer argues that there is in fact an assumed connection between perennial philosophy and the framework of transpersonal theory. In this light on (p. 72) of his

work Ferrer cites Wilber's foreword for J. E. Nelson's (1994), *Healing the split: Integrating spirit into our understanding of the mentally ill*. Here Ferrer cites Wilber as saying, "the aim of transpersonal psychology...is to give a psychological presentation of the perennial philosophy and the Great Chain of Being" (p. x). In addition, Ferrer cites Frances Vaughan (1982), asserting that the transpersonal perspective "has its roots in the ancient perennial philosophy" (p. 38), and that this transpersonal perspective "recognizes the transcendental unity of all religions and sees the unity in the mystical core of every spiritual tradition" (p.37). Also, R. Hutchins (1987) presents transpersonal psychology as a contemporary exploration of the perennial philosophy. And B. Wittine (1989) characterizes transpersonal psychotherapy as "an approach to healing/growth that aims to bridge the Western psychological tradition...and the world's perennial philosophy" (p. 269). Somewhat more cautiously, Ferrer says, Walsh (1993a) after a review of the achievements of the transpersonal movement during its first twenty-five years concludes that: "we have even begun to suspect that the most profound and radical claims of the perennial philosophy may be correct" (p. 135). Finally, Ferrer cites Stanislav Grof's (1998) work, *The Cosmic Game: Explorations*

of the Frontiers of human consciousness, in which Grof argues that "modern consciousness research has generated important data that support the basic tenets of the perennial philosophy" (p. 3). Ferrer rightly says such examples as he has given could be multiplied indefinitely. Accordingly, let us elaborate further on this historical movement known as perennial philosophy.

The Perennial Philosophy

Assuming Ferrer's previous point, that there is an intimate connection between the metaphysics of perennial philosophy and their articulation within transpersonal theory, we should now speak more specifically to the nature of the perennialist metaphysic which Ferrer finds problematic due to its supposed absolutist and structuralist framings. Consider how Ferrer summarizes the essence of his general critique against perennialism:

I want to point out that perennialism: (1) is an a priori philosophical stance, (2) privileges a nondual monistic metaphysic, (3) is geared to an objectivist epistemology, (4) leans towards essentialism, and, consequently, (5) tends to fall into religious dogmatism and intolerance in spite of its avowed inclusivist stance

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 87)

Right now we are particularly interested in Ferrer's elaboration of perennialism's nondual, monistic, metaphysic and its supposed leaning towards essentialism. In the

introduction to our study we quoted Huston Smith drawing from Aldous Huxley's (1945) work⁴, *The Perennial Philosophy*, in which Huxley talks about the recognition of "a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being" (Huxley, 1945, p. 7). Ferrer says that what characterizes this perennialism of Huxley, as well as the perennialism of so-called traditionalists such as Rene Guenon, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, or Frithjof Schuon (see Borella, 1995, and Quinn, 1997), is the assumption that there is a single ultimate reality which exists and which can be apprehended by the human intellect given certain special conditions. In addition, this single ultimate reality which perennialism speaks of is assumed to constitute a single Truth which can theoretically unify doctrinal pluralism (Ferrer, 2002, p. 74).

If perennialism really does assume there is a single ultimate Truth that subsumes all others this is certainly a

⁴ Ferrer says Huxley's work represented a significant historical time in which perennialist ideas were finally becoming accessible by the masses and not just the esoteric and academic elite. This was thus an important time in the budding of transpersonal theory.

large claim. We pointed out that this single Truth perennialists assume has to do with the idea that nonduality is the highest or deepest spiritual state, and contextual to this perennialist elaboration of nonduality is the idea that Spirit is the guiding teleological force leading both history and the individual's development towards the encounter with nonduality. Let us look at how Ferrer critiques what he will ultimately suggest is a philosophical structuralism inherent to this perennialist articulation of Spirit's unfolding.

In somewhat of a rhetorical manner Ferrer inquires of the nature of the single Truth of Spirit which we have been talking about. Ferrer asks,

What is this single Truth about which all contemplative traditions supposedly converge? According to modern defenders of the mystical version of the perennial Philosophy, such as Nasr (1989, 1993), Schuon (1984a), and Smith (1976, 1987, 1989), the doctrinal core of the perennial philosophy is the belief that Spirit, Pure Consciousness, or the Universal Mind, is the fundamental essence of both human nature and the totality of reality. Although there may be some descriptive or interpretative divergences, all contemplative traditions regard reality as originated by, and ontologically the same as, a simultaneously immanent and transcending Spirit which is identical in essence to human innermost consciousness. This Spirit constitutes the ultimate referent for what can be regarded as real, true, and valuable. In the perennialist view, then, Spirit is the primary ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundation of the cosmos.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 75)

Two ideas. There are certainly many complexities to the above passage. But I think we can identify the two broadest ideas that are contained in the previous quotation. These two ideas appear to be 1) that all reality is part of Spirit or equates to Spirit. Ferrer says all reality is regarded as "ontologically the same" as Spirit, and 2) a human being's innermost consciousness equates to Spirit in another, equally essential manner. It is in our innermost consciousness that the purest form of Spirit as nonduality will be encountered. Consider how Ferrer talks about structuralist principles which he believes are frequently derived from this perennialist metaphysic we have identified.

Structuralist Principles Derived from the Idea of Spirit

The way Ferrer seems to make the logical transition from his discussion of the idea of Spirit as an all encompassing Truth to the assumedly problematic correlation of a singular fixed framework as representative of that Truth is to say that there are certain principles frequently derived from the assumption of a primordial Truth which perennialism suggests which include "involutionary cosmology, hierarchical ontology and axiology, and hierarchical epistemology (e.g., Nasr, 1989, 1993; Quinn, 1997; Rothberg, 1986; H. Smith, 1976; 1989;

Wilber, 1977, 1990a, 1993a)" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 75). Let us briefly look at each of these principles in turn as Ferrer lays them out.

1) Involutionary cosmology. This is said to be the idea that the physical universe is the result of a process of emanation, restriction, or involution of Spirit whereby all matter and life is regarded to have evolved from this process. Spirit is thus the primary ontological term of evolution and existence.

2) Hierarchical ontology and axiology. This refers to the view of Reality as composed of different layers or levels of being that are hierarchically organized, such as in terms of matter, mind, spirit—the so-called Great Chain of Being. And according to this framework, the higher or deeper levels are those closer to Spirit, and accordingly, are regarded as more real, causally effective, and Ferrer says, more valued than the lower.

3) Hierarchical epistemology. This is the theory of knowledge following from the assumption of hierarchical ontology in which knowledge of the higher realms or levels of Reality is regarded to be more authoritative and revealing of Reality's nature than is knowledge of the mental (rational) and physical (empirical) realms. Ferrer says hierarchical epistemology is the version of perennial philosophy that Ken Wilber has expanded and popularized in transpersonal circles.

For Ferrer there is a foundational core to perennialist thought which Ferrer is critiquing, but there are also varieties of perennialism which we want to, again, briefly speak to in summary fashion.

Varieties of Perennialism

Ferrer says there are five basic varieties of perennialism which represent "a family of interpretive models", and which, as we will see, have commonalities

running through them. The five varieties of perennialism are 1) Basic 2) Esotericist 3) Perspectivist 4) Typological, and 5) Structuralist. Let us look at each of these varieties in turn as Ferrer characterizes them.

1) Basic perennialism. This is said to be the simplest form of perennialism which maintains that there is only one path and one goal of spiritual development. Spiritual paths, goals, and phenomenology are everywhere the same, but cultural backgrounds, language, religious doctrines, and non-experiential variables may affect interpretations and descriptions (e.g., Huxley, 1945; Smart, 1980).

2) Esotericist perennialism. This is very similar to basic perennialism in that, Ferrer says, both hold there is just one goal of spiritual inquiry. Esotericist perennialism, though, claims that there are many paths that one can take in the journey towards this singular goal of the spiritual quest. Additionally, this form of perennialism is said to be most notably associated with such thinkers as Schuon (1984a), and Smith (1976, 1989), who emphasized that spiritual unity could only be found in the mystical and experiential core of religious traditions. Esotericist mysticism is also guided by the type of metaphor that Ferrer referenced in talking about different rivers running into the same ocean.

3) Perspectivist perennialism. This version of perennialism is said to concede that there are many paths and many goals in spiritual practice, but that these are, ultimately, just different perspectives, dimensions or manifestations of the same Ground of Being. Ferrer cites Grof (1998) as claiming that the diversity of spiritual ultimates (a personal God, an impersonal Brahman, sunyata, the Void, the Tao, Pure Consciousness, etc.) are different ways to experience the same cosmic principle (p. 26). Ferrer also cites the title of a (1993) essay by Nasr, "One is the Spirit and Many its Human Reflections" as characteristic of this Perspectivist framework.

4) Typological perennialism. This version of perennialism is said to be closely aligned to perspectivist perennialism in the positing of a limited number of types of paths and goals which run across different mystical traditions. In this light Ferrer cites Otto's (1932) outward and inward

predication, Stace's (1960) extrovertive and introvertive, and Zaehner's (1970) nature, monistic and theistic predications. In addition, Ferrer suggests that these different types of mysticism cited are perennialist insofar as they assume that the nature of our experiences are independent of time, place, culture, and religion, and that they are therefore different manifestations of a single ultimate Reality.

5) Structuralist perennialism. This philosophy places the idea of different spiritual paths and goals in terms of such being contextual (surface) manifestations of underlying universal (deep) structures and patterns which ultimately constitute one path and one goal for spiritual traditions. Ferrer elaborates:

Already implicit in Jung's distinction between noumenal and phenomenal archetypes, and in Eliade's studies on myth, a two-level structuralist account of universal religion and mysticism was first explicitly proposed by Anthony and Robbins (Anthony, 1982; Anthony & Robbins, 1975). The structuralist approach to perennialism took a developmental and evolutionary turn in transpersonal studies in the hands of Wilber. According to Wilber (1984, 1995, 1996b, 1996c), although historical and cultural factors determine the surface manifestations of spiritual forms, human spirituality is ultimately universal, as constituted by an evolutionary hierarchy of invariant deep structures or levels of spiritual insight: psychic, subtle, causal, and non-dual.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 78)

To reiterate, Ferrer has suggested that regarding the five different versions of perennialism, there will be some overlap among the models. And the primary overlap seems to be the idea of a single spiritual Ground of Being or a singular ultimate teleological reality which runs as a common thread throughout these positions.

In turning his focus towards Ken Wilber's work, we see that Ferrer cites Wilber's distinction of surface and deep

structures as an instance and an occasion to talk about the perennialist structuralism which Ferrer associates with Wilber's philosophy, and what Ferrer refers to as Wilber's "neo-perennialism". Consider how Ferrer understands Ken Wilber's version of perennialism as we now begin our rejoinder to Wilber's work.

The Rejoinder to Ken Wilber: Wilber's Neo-Perennialism

Ferrer says that although Wilber has identified himself as a modern translator of the perennial philosophy (Ferrer, 2002, p. 83) there are some fundamental differences between his neo-perennialism and traditional versions of perennial philosophy. Foremost among Wilber's differences, Ferrer claims, is that Wilber believes an adequate description of the perennial truth should incorporate the idea of evolution. Ferrer thus says:

Following thinkers like Hegel, Sri-Aurobindo, or Teilhard de Chardin, then, Wilber (1997a) proposes an *evolutionary perennialism* that holds that:

There is still That One, or the timeless and absolute Spirit of which the entire universe is but a manifestation, but that world of manifestation is not now devolving away from Spirit, it is evolving towards Spirit. God does not lie in our collective past, God lies in our collective future; the Garden of Eden is tomorrow, not yesterday; the Golden Age lies down the road, not up to it. (p. 63).

What Wilber is claiming is that the involutory cosmology of the traditional perennial philosophy should be complemented with a special type of *teleological evolutionism*. Teleological evolutionism is the view that cosmological, phylogenetic, and

ontogenic processes are ultimately directed towards a predetermined goal.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 84)

Ferrer critiques Wilber in saying that while Wilber has both softened and crystallized the perennialist vision allowing for more diversity, variety, and creative novelty than most traditional perennialist accounts offer, the subtle objectivist core of Wilber's narrative of surface and deep structures ultimately sabotages the nature of *the enactive⁵ paradigm* Wilber is trying to present (Ferrer, 2002, p. 86). Wilber's idea of surface and deep structures is further explained by Ferrer in the following passage where Ferrer says, "According to Wilber (1984, 1995, 1996b, and, 1996c), although historical and cultural factors determine the surface manifestations of spiritual forms, human spirituality is ultimately universal as constituted by an evolutionary hierarchy of invariant deep structures

⁵ Regarding this language of an "enactive paradigm", Ferrer says that following the ground breaking Work of Maturana and Varela (1987), and Varela, Thompson, and Rosh (1991), the enactive paradigm represents a participatory notion which rejects the Cartesian idea of a subject or knower taking cognition of an independent objective Reality. Participatory knowing is thus regarded as "presential" (knowing by presence or identity), "enactive" (knowing via an event of co-creative interaction of the self and others), and "transformative" (knowing that brings about a transformation of self and world). These ideas mainly constitute what Ferrer means by an enactive paradigm (Ferrer, 2002, p. 123).

or levels of spiritual insight: psychic, subtle, causal, and non-dual" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 78).

Structures and levels of insight. Further focusing upon this language of deep structures or levels of insight, although these concepts seem to be equated in the quotation I cited from Ferrer, I want to suggest that there may be a distinction between these two predications that bears mentioning. Namely, the idea of a structure might be interpreted as more of a contentless (not content specific) notion of skill acquisition, while the idea of a level of insight may be interpreted as entailing a specific content, like what a nondual level of insight is like. The point is the idea of a structure as a structure may not be a problematic notion if it is not equated with a corresponding level of insight. For example, Ferrer suggests that according to Wilber (1993b) a level can be said to be higher or more valuable than another, not in a moralistic way, but in the sense of being more holistic, inclusive, and encompassing. As Wilber summarizes, "as used by the perennial philosophy...hierarchy is simply a ranking of orders of events *according to their holistic capacity*" (Wilber, 1993b, p. 215). Additionally, on page (104) of *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, Ferrer cites Wilber (1982) in which Wilber offers three criteria for the

hierarchical arrangement of deep structures 1) access: a higher level has access to the lower level and its capacities 2) development: a higher level emerges later than the lower ones; and 3) Chinese box: a higher level has extra capacities than the previous level. This notion of a level here seems to be contentless, more of a skill acquisition notion.

Ferrer is very clear, however, that when it comes to the privileging of a certain spiritual tradition based on their utilization of a nondual metaphysic, he is against this as a matter of principle. So implicit to Ferrer's presentation of a participatory (or enactive) notion of transpersonal phenomena is the rejection of all pre-given or fixed notions of spiritual value and meaning such as Ferrer attributes to Ken Wilber's work. For Ferrer, transpersonal participation doesn't culminate in an enlightenment or awareness of the ultimate nonduality of all Reality. As Ferrer again summarizes:

The spiritual universalism of the participatory vision, then, does not establish any a priori hierarchy of positive attributes of the divine: Nondual insights are not necessarily higher than dual, nor are dual higher than nondual. Personal enactions are not necessarily higher than impersonal, nor impersonal higher than personal. And so forth.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 190)

Ferrer's concern is, again, that in the name of spiritual enlightenment perennialism may be ranking the metaphysic of nondual spiritual traditions over the metaphysic of dual traditions, monistic traditions over theistic ones, impersonal over personal, etc. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 133). In this light Ferrer explicitly declares, "the Absolute of perennial philosophy, far from being a neutral⁶ and unqualifiable ground, is represented as supporting a nondual monistic metaphysic" (Ferrer, 2002, p.89). Ferrer's claim suggests that we need a framework which can accommodate a pluralistic view of spirituality and transpersonal phenomena or what Ferrer, at points, talks about as "a radical plurality of spiritual values and ultimates" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 134).

⁶ The fact that Ferrer has brought in this language of *neutrality* is of interest to our critique, for it seems that Ferrer is suggesting that we would like a neutral framework for conceiving of transpersonal phenomena. Extending this thought about neutrality is something we will do in our upcoming discussion as we talk more about an ideally all encompassing framework for situating the meanings of transpersonal phenomena. Right now, though, we want to point out that one of the ways in which we believe Ferrer might be interpreted as philosophizing about a sort of neutrality is in the sense of his emphasis on spiritual plurality and a relaxed spiritual universalism which Ferrer says paves a middle way between the extremes of absolutism and vulgar relativism, and which, again, recognizes the radical plurality of spiritual paths, goals, and ultimates (see Ferrer, 2002, chs. 6-8).

In short, Ferrer and Wilber both assume that there is some creative spiritual dynamic implicit to the nature of R/reality. But Ferrer essentially sets his philosophy at odds with perennialism, and particularly, Ken Wilber's version of perennialism, over the issue of what spiritual plurality must necessarily imply. The issue here is one of teleology. Ferrer adamantly rejects the characterization of an underlying spiritual dynamic in R/reality as implying a hierarchical spectrum of consciousness, value, and meaning which is leading humanity towards a spiritual or enlightened nondual awareness. Ferrer is thus presuppositionally opposed to such a teleological and hierarchical view of Reality.

No Singular Predicative Framework Captures Reality's Essence

So in one sense Ferrer's critique of transpersonal theory might be viewed as following from a general critique about metaphysical predications, which is to say, Ferrer suggests that due to the dynamic and indeterminate nature of Reality no particular conceptual framework—pluralist or nondual—is sufficient to fully capture the dynamic nature of Reality. Ferrer summarizes, "Neither the indeterminate nature of Spirit nor the dynamic quality of spiritual unfolding can be fully captured by any conceptual

framework" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 187). The reason Ferrer suggests that there is an inadequacy of our conceptual frameworks is because Reality is ultimately a polarity of two diverse realities—a unified One and a pluralistic Many—which cannot be put in relation to one another in any linear or hierarchical sense. Consider how Ferrer lays out this metaphysical position in the following passage:

The dialectic between universalism and pluralism, between the One and the Many, displays what may well be the deepest dynamics of the self-disclosing of Spirit. From the rigid universalism of rational consciousness to the pluralistic relativism of some postmodern approaches, from perennialist universalisms to the emerging spiritual pluralism of the interfaith dialogue, Spirit seems to swing from one to the other pole, from the One to the Many and from the Many to the One, endlessly striving to more fully manifest, embody, and embrace love and wisdom in all its forms. Newer and more embracing universalist and pluralistic visions will continue to emerge, but the everlasting dialectical movement between the One and the Many in the self-disclosing of Spirit makes any abstract or absolute hierarchical arrangement between them misleading. If I am right about the generative power of the dialectical relationship between the One and the Many, then to get stuck in or freeze either of the two poles as the Truth cannot but hinder the natural unfolding of Spirit's creative urges. This is why, although originally offered in a different context, the following remark by Habermas (1992) seems pertinent here: "The metaphysical priority of unity above plurality and the contextualist priority of pluralism above unity are secret accomplices" (p.116-117).

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 191)

Ferrer's point is that Reality is not arranged in terms of an absolute hierarchy that reveals the deepest depth

within consciousness and Reality to be of a singular, i.e., nondual, nature. In other words, Ferrer is against a fixed view of Reality, particularly when that view of Reality privileges the predication of nonduality as metaphysically superior and more encompassing than any other predicative or conceptual framework.

The simplicity of Ferrer's critique of Wilber's philosophy suggests that inasmuch as Wilber argues there is a progressive valuing of certain transpersonal modes, specifically in terms of Wilber's four stages of psychic, subtle, causal, and non-dual dimensions, this represents a deep structuralism at work. Ferrer is clear, however, that he does not consider Ken Wilber's philosophy as a whole to be in the structuralist⁷ tradition, but rather, Ferrer says, there are certain structuralist elements at work in Wilber's philosophy which ultimately work against the very enactive paradigm that Wilber is working towards (Ferrer, 2002, p. 99).

⁷ Regarding the language of structuralism, Ferrer does spend some time talking about the abstract nature of structuralism and various expressions of its intellectual history (*Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, p. 96-98). But in our case this discussion of the different forms of structuralism is not of particular relevance to our study. Our focus is more simplistic in that we are concerned with Wilber's four transpersonal stages of spirituality which, again, Ferrer says represent a deep structuralism at work in that they privilege certain nondual spiritual traditions.

The Ranking of Traditions

What is most problematic from Ferrer's perspective is Wilber's supposed ranking of spiritual traditions according to the four levels of transpersonal phenomena that Wilber outlines and which culminate in a nonduality of awareness and experience. And as a point of criticism, Ferrer suggests that Wilber's own Buddhist framework does not conform to the hierarchical criteria that Wilber himself outlines. As Ferrer elaborates:

First, Buddhist contemplatives in general do not seem to have ever accessed or reported visions or unions with a personal God, or with any deep structural equivalent (failure of the access criterion). Second, Buddhists' nondual insight does not emerge after having seen or gone through a *unio mystica* with a personal God (failure of the development criterion). And third, Buddhist emptiness (*sunyata*) has no "extra" capacities than the Christian *unio mystica*, or at least no more than the Christian *unio mystica* has in relation to Buddhist emptiness (*Sunyata*). But all this should not come as a surprise: After all, there is not room for a creature like a personal God in the Buddhist cosmology.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 104)

While we agree with Ferrer's critique that Buddhism in general, and Ken Wilber's own version of Buddhism in particular does not go through the hierarchical stages of an encounter with a personal God (on the way to the encounter with nonduality), we suggest that we can be benefited by coming again at this issue of Wilber's

sequence of transpersonal dimensions in a slightly more charitable fashion.

A slightly more charitable interpretation of Wilber's work. The first step, I believe, to approaching Wilber's nondualism in a more charitable fashion requires that we point out that for Wilber the issue of the truth of our ultimate nondual connection to the very ground of our B/being--the "Suchness" of Reality itself--is what is at stake. So Wilber is not afraid to judge other religious traditions based upon their utilization of a nondual metaphysic because Wilber sees this idea is a sort of standard of what is true about our reality or Reality as a whole.

Wilber's endorsing of a Eastern metaphysical interpretative framework and the rejection of certain Western Judeo-Christian frameworks is made clear when Wilber, in citing some general positions of existentialist thought (which Wilber says he fully agrees with as far as their views go) says that as regards the emergence of a more authentic or existential self (defining of fulcrum six in Wilber's model), "The finite self is going to die--magic will not save it, mythic gods will not save it", and the problem, Wilber says, is that we often lie to ourselves. "We lie about our mortality and finitude by constructing

immortality symbols—vain attempts to beat time and exist everlastingly in some mythic heaven" (Wilber, 1996a, pp. 193-194). To Western religious traditions such as Judaism and Christianity, immortality and Heaven are not myths. But Wilber is of course free to present his views. We are merely suggesting that Wilber is indeed privileging a nondual tradition as "the Truth", and this seems to be Ferrer's charge against Wilber's nondual philosophy.

But on the other hand, Ferrer's philosophy might as well be viewed as going to its own extreme in rejecting the predication of nonduality altogether. Consider again Ferrer's rejection of perennial philosophy and Ferrer's associated rejection of the predication of nonduality which subsequently follows.

Ferrer rejects the possibilities of nonduality. In Ferrer's view transpersonal theory does not need perennialism and its metaphysic of nonduality. As Ferrer elaborates:

If there is a perennial philosophy, this needs to be established on the basis of interreligious inquiry and dialogue, and not presumed as an unassailable axiom from which inquiry must depart and to which dialogue must lead. And if there is not a perennial philosophy, this is no reason to despair...once we give up the Cartesian assumptions of the experiential vision, alternatives to perennialism naturally emerge...transpersonal theory does not need the perennial philosophy as its fundamental metaphysical framework.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 111)

Critiquing, again, Ferrer's arguments against perennialism, we suggest that Ferrer's critique against this idea of a fixed perennialist framework that assumes a single vision of spiritual ultimates and values--infused with nondual hierarchies--is perhaps itself an oversimplified conceptual model of perennialism's teleology. In other words, while Ferrer does offer various definitions of how the idea of perennial philosophy has come to be defined in terms of certain core beliefs about the immanence of Spirit within consciousness and Reality leading to a state of assumed nondual ultimate reality, Ferrer does not seem to explore any conceptual possibilities that would endorse the predication of nonduality. Ferrer appears to want to get away from the language of nonduality all together (but is Ferrer throwing the baby away with the bathwater?). Recall where Ferrer said that in relation the motivations of his project, "unsatisfied with the current definitions of transpersonal experience, I tried to elaborate my own" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 11). Ferrer's subsequent definition of transpersonal experience was one that emphasized the participative or connective elements of our transpersonal relations. And all we are suggesting is that Ferrer should acknowledge the

participative elements present in Ken Wilber's work. Moreover we suggest that the idea of nonduality and a universal participative vision of spirituality are not at odds, but rather are just different attempts to characterize how human beings are connected to others and to realities greater than the individual self.

Participation in Wilber's work (again). Recall that in chapter two on Ken Wilber's philosophy we looked for the participative elements that appear to be present in Ken Wilber's work. The first participative element, we suggest, was that of the infant with the mother. Our critique suggests that this may be a transpersonal relation even though it lacks a whole lot of mental, linguistic, and spiritual complexities that can only come with the development of the sense of self and other.

The next most notable articulation of transpersonal participation, I suggest, seems to come where Wilber talks about the individual's movement away from egocentric modes of being and what Wilber described as "taking up the perspective of another". Wilber, though, doesn't explicitly suggest that such "decentering" in the early and teenage years of an individual's life is a transpersonal relation, and we believe this is ultimately a non-recognition of the true broadness of transpersonal phenomena. Empathy, we

suggest, is a transpersonal relation! Regardless, though, of our point, as we come to Ken Wilber's articulation of the transpersonal realms, proper: fulcrums (7-10) in Wilber's model, the notion of participation is most pronounced.

Recall that in Wilber's psychic level of consciousness (fulcrum seven of Wilber's model), Wilber suggests that the duality between self and the world may become temporarily dissolved and an individual might temporarily identify with the entire gross sensorimotor world of nature in what Wilber calls nature mysticism. When we then come to fulcrum eight (the subtle realm) Wilber says we are now merging most prominently with archetypal forms and Deities however they are individually conceived or interpreted. With fulcrum nine (causal mysticism) Wilber emphasizes the emergence of witness consciousness, and this may be somewhat of a break in our present analysis of the participative aspects of transpersonal phenomena. But when we come to fulcrum ten (the level of nonduality) the element of participation may be most pronounced in that Wilber claims "the sense of being a Witness... 'In here' completely vanishes itself, and the witness turns out to be everything that is witnessed" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 226). In addition, Wilber claims this stage of consciousness entails

an embracing of the entire spectrum of consciousness (Wilber, 1996a, p. 227). And again, we believe Wilber is talking about what we and Ferrer are calling participation in his own terms.

As Ferrer notes, it is the most fundamental concepts within transpersonal theory that are up for debate. For instance, consider how Ferrer talks about conceptual disagreements in the field of transpersonal studies:

When I talk of transpersonal theory as a vision, I don't mean to suggest that there is a unified transpersonal paradigm. There is not. Disagreements among transpersonalists are the norm rather than the exception. And these divergences are not merely about minor theoretical issues, but often about the central philosophical and metaphysical foundations of the field, for example, the understanding of transpersonal phenomena, the meaning of spirituality, or the very nature of reality (e.g., see Funk, 1994; Rothberg & Kelly, 1998). The lack of consensus on fundamental matters in the transpersonal movement is so pronounced that rather than talk about a transpersonal paradigm, it may be more accurate to talk about different transpersonal paradigms under the roof of one transpersonal vision.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 7)

The positive note to what Ferrer has said is that there is still, potentially, *one* transpersonal vision, although important issues need to be worked out. One such issue we have suggested concerns the definition of transpersonal phenomena in relation to the idea of participation. We suggest if we can view the relation of participation as

essential to both Wilber's and Ferrer's work then this may be a way of connecting Wilber's neo-perennialism and Ferrer's participatory vision in a rather unexpected way.⁸

The broadness of participation (recap). Our emphasis on the participative aspects or the participative relations of an individual's experience has certainly been the centerpiece of our study. Initially, as we began our thesis, we said that we were interested in what we suggest may be participative *transpersonal* phenomena that do not fit into traditional predicative categories of spiritual experience (see pp. 2-4 of our study). And we pointed to the conclusion of our critique as we said that one of the most controversial claims of our study is likely going to be contained within our suggestion that human consciousness is already transpersonal to the degree in which it is

⁸ I think it is particularly interesting to note that when Ferrer talks about the metaphysics of his position there are certain elements about his position that sound conceptually similar to the idea of a ground of Being as utilized by perennialists. For example, Ferrer talks about transpersonal events as happening in an ontological space of participation (Ferrer, 2002, p. 116). And Ferrer also talks about our connection to the source of our being (Ferrer, 2002, p. 156). In addition, Ferrer, citing Evans (1993) and Needleman (1982), alludes to a capitalized "Mystery" out of which everything continually arises (Ferrer, 2002, p. 34, 174). All of these ideas, we suggest, appear to deal with a sort of ground of Being. And attributing nondual elements to this pluralistic participative space may or may not be a large conceptual step.

participative and connecting of the individual to others and to realities greater than the individual self.

Suggesting then that participation should be the privileged notion, we looked for the participative elements that we believe are present within the work of Ken Wilber, and particularly within Wilber's spiritual narrative of the developmental journey of the individual. Such participative elements, we suggested, are first most notably contained within Wilber's talk about how the individual takes up the perspective of the other, and later we believe such participation is further developed in Wilber's work in all those related concepts which suggest different modalities in which we connect with realities greater than the individual self (in fulcrums (7-10) in Wilber's model). Unfortunately, though, we feel Wilber's elaboration of greater identification may not be a seamlessly logical development of this basic idea of taking up the perspective of another in that Wilber does not talk about increasing identification in terms of increasing identification with others, such as in emphatic suffering with another's suffering, etc. Instead, Wilber's narrative of identification is somewhat more abstract in that Wilber talks about how the separate self-sense is dissolved as the individual identifies with the ground of B/being Itself,

the Kosmos, Spirit, etc. Attempting a charitable interpretation of Wilber's work, though, we have ultimately suggested that the essential truth that Wilber is working with is that of the relation of participation itself.

Continuing our recap of the participative focus of our study, in this chapter we looked at the work of Jorge Ferrer, and particularly his idea of participatory knowing (in addition to his clearly participative concept of "transpersonal events") and we suggested that Ferrer's concept of participatory knowing should itself be understood as a transpersonal concept. Finally, then, we suggested that by appealing to the broadness of a participatory vision of transpersonal phenomena (articulated most notably in Ferrer's work) and by coming to recognize the participative elements present within so-called nondual phenomena (most notably expressed within Wilber's work) that we could connect Wilber and Ferrer at some level.

Our next step is to suggest that we can take our discussion of the plurality of our participative transpersonal relations to another level by focusing on how we might represent the depth dimension of transpersonal phenomena in a more critical manner. And to this subject matter I would like to turn.

The representation of transpersonal phenomena. The issue we want to now focus on concerns the details of how we might think about the representation of the broadness of transpersonal phenomena in more critical terms. In other words, what would an ideally broad framework for conceptualizing transpersonal phenomena look like in terms of its construction as a map or model of consciousness and Reality? How should transpersonal depth be represented in terms of, first, its irreducible categories, and ideally, in terms of the spectrum of possibilities in which transpersonal phenomena manifest?

In order to answer the questions I have posed I would like to switch gears and temporarily step outside of the field of transpersonal studies to consider the work of Robert Nozick. As odd as it may seem, we suggest that Nozick can give us some analytical insight into certain conceptual issues that seem to come up relative to the framing of a teleological notion of depth within consciousness and Reality. Accordingly, we suggest Nozick's analysis is relevant to how we might view the challenge of conceptual inclusiveness such as Wilber alludes to when he says, "as many perspectives as are humanly possible must be included in an integral embrace" (Wilber, 2000, p. 192)

So following what we have said, let us now turn our attention to Robert Nozick's discussion of his Matrix of Being model which we suggest will anchor our somewhat novel critique of how our spectrum of consciousness and transpersonal phenomena might be conceptualized in very broad and pluralistic terms. We will then come to our final summary and conclusions.

CHAPTER 4
ROBERT NOZICK'S MATRIX OF BEING MODEL AND ITS POSITING OF
NEGATIVE DIMENSIONS OF DEPTH

**Nozick's Relevance to our Discussion of
Transpersonal Depth within the Individual**

Robert Nozick was a highly regarded professor of philosophy¹ and an original thinker of diverse interests who is most well known among scholars for his work in political and rational moral theory (see Nozick, 1974, 1995). But in relation to our study we are interested in a unique work of Nozick's entitled, *The Examined Life, Philosophical Meditations* (1989), which came after Nozick's philosophical study, *Philosophical Explanations* (1981), and from which we will draw from exclusively.

The uniqueness of Nozick's work in *The Examined Life* bears attention and can be initially outlined in an overview fashion by considering the various titles of the short chapters that make up Nozick's (1989) work. These chapters in the order of their appearance are: "dying",

¹ Tragically, Robert Nozick died on the morning of January 23, 2001 after a prolonged battle with stomach cancer which Nozick had been diagnosed with in 1994. Nozick was only 63 years old. Nozick will certainly be regarded as an important intellectual figure of the twentieth century. And I must acknowledge Nozick's significant influence upon the development of my present voice in writing.

"parents and children", "creating", "the nature of God, the nature of faith", "the holiness of everyday life", "sexuality", "love's bond", "emotions", "happiness", "focus", "being more real", "selflessness", "stances", "value and meaning", "importance and weight", "the matrix of reality", "darkness and light", "theological explanations", "the holocaust", "enlightenment", "giving everything its due", "what is wisdom and why do philosophers love it so?", "the ideal and the actual", "the zig zag of politics", and, "philosophy's life".

In short, we suggest that certain issues discussed in Nozick's (1989) work can be interpreted as germane to 1) both Wilber's and Ferrer's talk about the meditative exploration of our consciousness and the assumed subsequent encounter with transpersonal and mystical phenomena. And 2) following from this previous issue, we suggest Nozick's work is particularly relevant to highlighting certain philosophical issues relating to the nature of the teleological frameworks and the teleological aspects that we suggest are implicit to the layout of many transpersonal frameworks of depth in general, and Ken Wilber's all quadrant all level model of consciousness and Reality in particular.

Working our way towards the two aforementioned issues, let us first start with Nozick's articulation of the most conceptually basic picture of how depth within the individual should be understood. We will then build upon this contextual foundation.

How Nozick Talks about Depth in Terms of a Reflective Journey of the Individual

In the most general terms of how Nozick articulates his understanding of the cultivation of depth within the individual, Nozick writes that one of the fundamental challenges facing an individual in terms of one's mental, moral, and spiritual development, is to become more keenly aware of, and so deeply reflective on, one's life experiences and beliefs, so as to not go through life living, as Nozick says, on "automatic pilot", thinking only in the terms that we have grown up with or that we feel most comfortable with (Nozick, 1989, p. 11). Accordingly, Nozick holds that through the sharpening of our reflective capacities we will become more deeply conscious of our lives and our metaphysical and spiritual connections to R/reality and to others as we also come to discover, as Nozick says, "the holiness of everyday life"--becoming "more real" in the process.

Stated in more explicitly teleological terms, Nozick conceptualizes the reflective journey of the individual in the metaphorical terms of an individual *traveling* along a particular dimension in Reality (Nozick, 1989, pp. 182-199). And according to Nozick's idea here, in order to "increase one's reality", which is, again, the ideal goal of developing our self-reflective consciousness, the individual is conceptualized as going further and deeper along a particular dimension within Reality-encountering more of Reality's light, intensity, value, etc., all the predicative categories Nozick associates with the conceptualization of teleological depth, ideal completion, and limitlessness within his Matrix of Being model (see figures 3-6 on pp. 164-167). So for Nozick, the cultivation of depth within an individual's consciousness is situated within a teleological context that correlates depth within consciousness with the idea of depth within Reality. This is a common metaphysical correlation that we saw represented in reference *the Great Chain of Being* which we discussed mainly in reference to Ken Wilber's spectrum of consciousness model where Wilber said that the deeper layers of the self disclose the higher levels of reality. As Wilber put the matter, "the greater the depth, the higher the reality" (Wilber, 2000, p. 189). Nozick, though,

is not a transpersonal theorist, nor does he really work in the field of religious studies. Nozick is more of a Western philosopher. And yet in regards to the idea of Reality as a hierarchy of Being such as we looked at within the context of Eastern philosophy and Ken Wilber's work, there appears to be an interesting parallel of the framing of this idea of levels of reality, a spectrum of reality, or degrees of depth within consciousness and Reality between Eastern philosophy, Wilber's work, and Nozick's work.

Degrees of Depth within Reality

Speaking about the idea of an all-inclusive context of Reality, Nozick says, "reality does lend itself to being spoken of in terms of *degrees*" (Nozick, 1989, p. 138). And echoing a viewpoint seemingly similar to Wilber's hierarchical understanding of a qualitative spectrum of increasing complexity, depth, and value, Nozick remarks, "greater depth also brings greater reality" (Nozick, 1989, p. 132). Consider how Nozick illustrates these two aforementioned ideas within his "Matrix of Being" model which I have reproduced in the following figures (3-6).

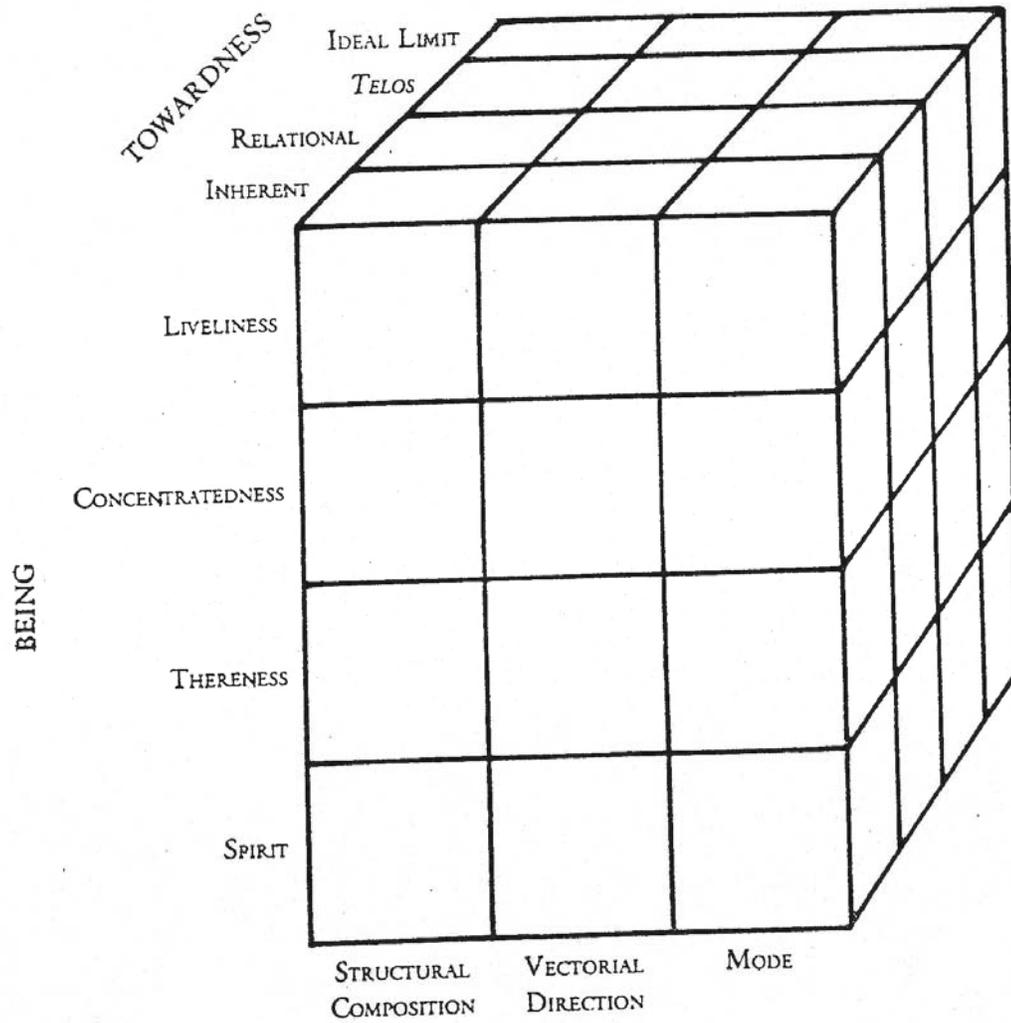


Figure 3. Robert Nozick's Matrix of Being model. Also called the polyhedron of reality. (Nozick, 1989, p. 193).

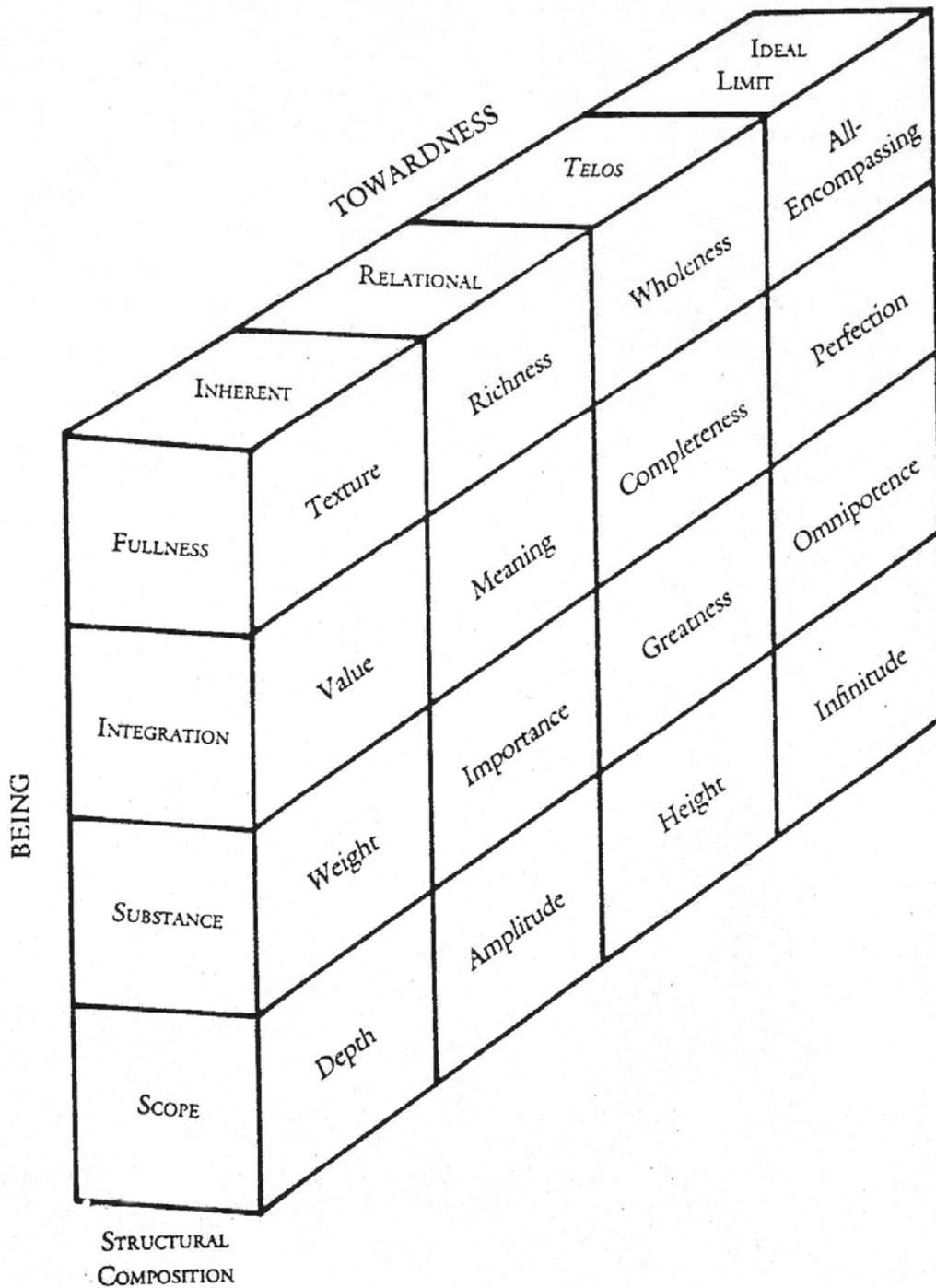


Figure 4. A cross-section of the Matrix model. Notice the idealistic nature of the categories. (Nozick, 1989, p. 195).

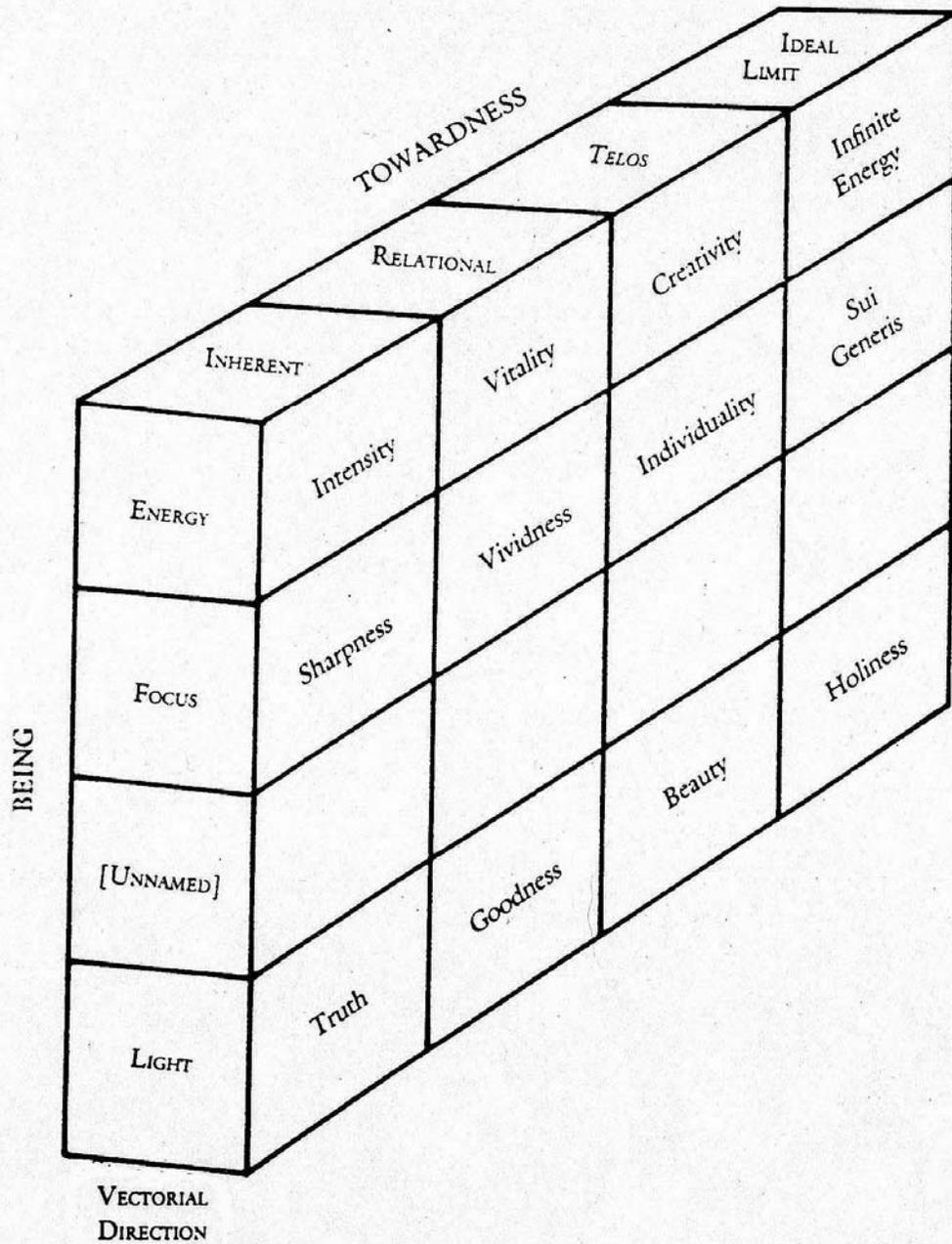


Figure 5. The vectorial direction segment of the Matrix model. As I have suggested, all the dimensions of Nozick's model entail a teleological aspect. (Nozick, 1989, p.196).

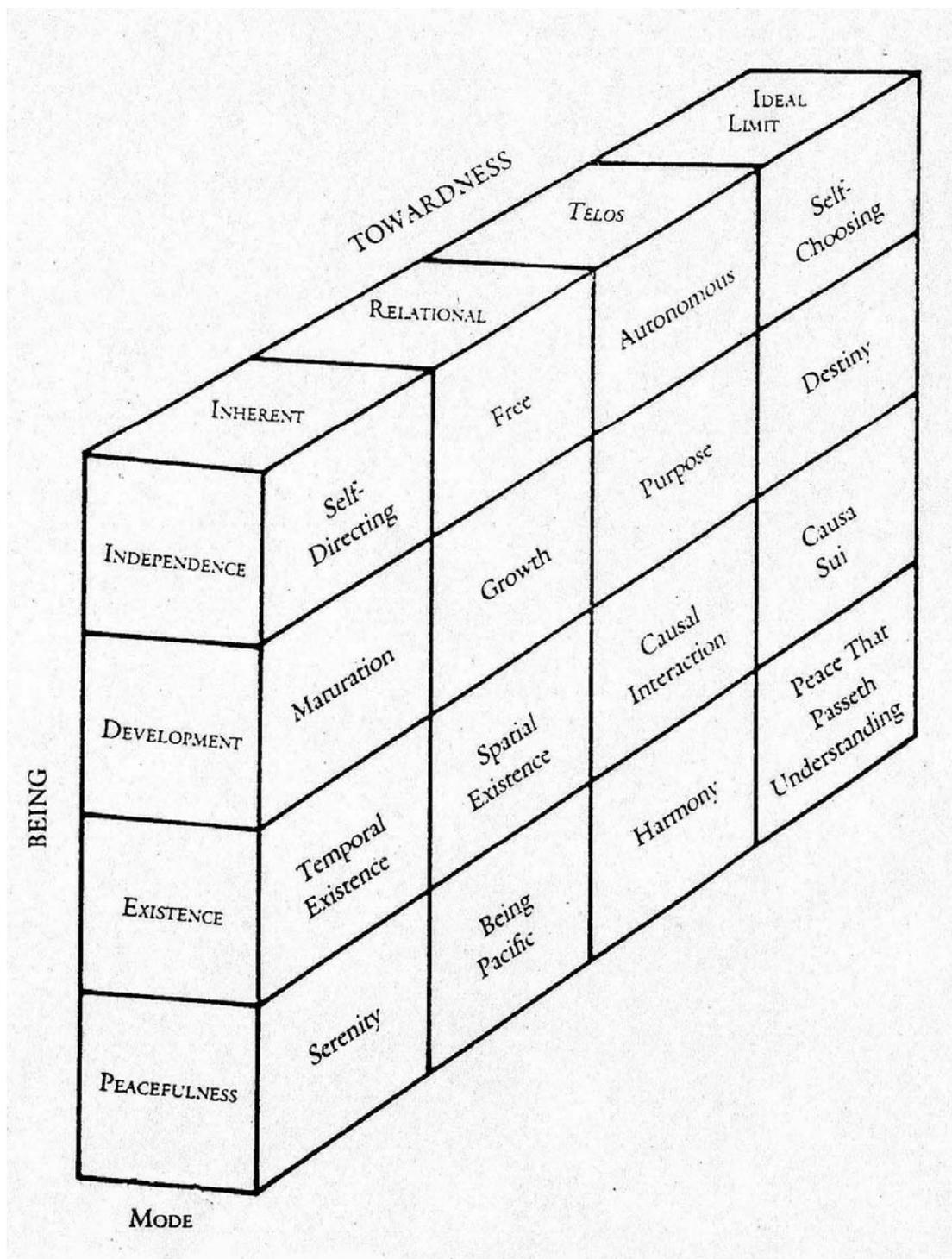


Figure 6. The complete mode segment of Nozick's model. Despite the term "complete", Nozick is clear that he is not offering a completed model, but rather a thought experiment. (Nozick, 1989, p. 197).

The above illustrations which Nozick has constructed are meant to represent a sort of thought experiment about how we might think about Reality (and by implication, human consciousness within Reality) as a spectrum of properties. But we should be very clear that Nozick is not arguing that his model is the only model or the best model. Nozick is clear that the way he is conceptualizing the spectrum of Reality is just one of the ways in which we might think about the arrangement of Reality's properties (see Nozick, 1989, p. 210). What we are particularly interested in focusing on right now, however, are the teleological issues that Nozick suggests are implicit to a spectrum model of Reality such as Nozick presents.

Nozick challenges a positive teleology. The significant difference, we believe, between Wilber's teleology of depth and Nozick's articulation of teleology is that when Nozick uses the expression of "greater reality" in reference to a concept of degrees of depth within R/reality, Nozick explicitly identifies the possibility that greater reality may not always equate to something positive. Unfortunately though, Nozick's illustrations (in figures 3-6) don't really represent this fact. We have to look elsewhere in Nozick's work for this discussion about teleology. In studying Nozick we find that, at points, he is, frankly,

unresolved as to how exactly we should think about the teleological arrangement of Reality's properties or dimensions of depth. More specifically, Nozick does not want us to be too quick to accept what he calls an end-state conception of what Reality is like (Nozick, 1989, p. 128). Consider how Nozick summarizes his indecision over how to view the teleology of depth within Reality:

I am led to worry, though, about treating greater reality as an end to be desired and pursued, for what guarantees that reality will be something positive? Is the positive simply an additional dimension of reality, one aspect among others, so that usually increased reality involves a turn toward the positive, but not always? Wasn't Iago real? Wasn't Hitler? How then do I exclude dark paths?

(Nozick, 1989, p. 139)

Nozick is asking whether depth within Reality implies a certain kind of teleology of value and meaning. In other words, does R/reality take us in a certain direction if we seek the deepest depth? We know that Wilber's answer was that the deepest depth does take us to a certain level of consciousness and experience which is nondual in its nature. But we saw that with Ferrer the emphasis seemed to be more on the plurality of possibilities to which depth leads the individual. As Ferrer said, "spiritual truth is perhaps not a pathless land, but a goalless path" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 157). Both Ferrer and Wilber, though, of course

assume a *spiritual* context of interpretation to what pluralistic depth will look like, and this is no small point that we must consider.

Nozick's broad interpretation of metaphysical depth.

When we come to Nozick's discussion, the question or issue of teleology is broadly construed in that Nozick asks whether teleological depth within consciousness and Reality is of a singular nature, such as positive or negative, or if depth entails both positive and negative predications, how might both be included in a teleological framework? Given the potential broadness of the ideas Nozick is working with, we believe that we can justifiably translate Nozick's concerns about conceptual inclusion in relation to our issue of inclusiveness in relation to transpersonal frameworks of depth. This is a novel approach to a critique of transpersonal theory, but ultimately a helpful one I hope.

Nozick seems particularly explicit that the idea of Reality must include all phenomena that depth within Reality may need to include all phenomena that are significant to our experience. Accordingly, the meaning of depth (and by our translation, transpersonal depth) within Reality seems to be open to a broad interpretation in Nozick's work. And following what we have said, I would

like to continue building our analysis by examining how Nozick talks about Reality as an all-inclusive context of reference.

The All-Inclusive Context of Reality

Certainly the term "Reality" or one of its correlates (like Being, The Kosmos, The Mystery out of which everything continually arises, etc.) is frequently used among philosophers, mystics, and transpersonal theorists alike. But in relation to our study, we take a critical approach towards the use of this term in saying that we believe the term Reality should be recognized as a symbol for the idea of an *all-inclusive* context of reference (which we also suggest all three of our thinkers already utilize such as we will shortly talk about).

Part of the challenge, we believe, of coming to crystallize the true complexity of what the idea of Reality represents requires that we focus upon the ambitious nature of the idea of including all the most basic, most irreducible categories of experience, and as well, we recognize this would mean that we need to include an exhaustive number of subdivisions within such an all-inclusive context (Pursuing this line of thought, though, can easily take us off track). In our case, we are not suggesting that we should try to describe everything, but

rather, we are trying to highlight certain issues that we believe may be relevant to the project of attempting to represent the broadness of transpersonal phenomena and their most irreducible categories of experience.

We are interested in Nozick's work because he takes a critical approach to the question of conceptual inclusiveness tempered by an intellectual honesty as to the unresolved nature of conceptualizing the complexity of Reality. Nozick says at this stage in our intellectual history the idea of Reality has not yet really been clarified. Nozick thus advises, "Even if this notion of reality is not yet a completely precise one, we want to be patient with it and not dismiss it too soon. The history of thought contains many notions it took centuries to clarify and sharpen, or even to remove the contradictions from" (Nozick, 1989, pp. 137-138).

Whatever the notion of Reality is going to turn out to look like, Nozick suggests that the idea of Reality must represent an all-inclusive context of reference. As Nozick says, "The most basic category, as I see it, is that of reality....Reality is so inclusive a category, it encompasses so many others as subdimensions, that it is not clear what more general category could be used in understanding *it* (Nozick, 1989, p. 137). As a technical

matter we should note that Nozick does not explicitly correlate the idea of an all-inclusive context of reference with a capitalized term such as I have utilized throughout our study. Such capitalization is, however, at times utilized by Wilber, and as well by Ferrer, and to this issue I would like to now briefly speak further.

"Reality" Capitalized and Not Capitalized

As I initially indicated in our study (see p. 6, footnote 1) I use the term of "Reality" in caps whenever I believe that one of our thinkers are utilizing an all inclusive context of reference in their work. This technical distinction is not, however, exclusive to my use. We can see that both Ken Wilber and Jorge Ferrer also practice a similar distinction of capitalization as I do, but neither Wilber, nor Ferrer, nor Nozick applies capitalization in relation to the term "Reality" as I do. I am, frankly, surprised by this fact, and I don't understand why the idea of Reality would not be capitalized if such terms as "Being", "The Kosmos", or "The Mystery" out of which everything continually arises, are capitalized. I suggest the idea of an all-inclusive context should always be capitalized, and the idea of "Reality" is just such an all-inclusive context, I believe.

Capitalization as regards Wilber's philosophy. Ken Wilber most notably discusses the capitalization of certain significant terms within the context of his declaration that, "Spirit is fully transcendent and fully immanent" (Wilber, 2000, p. 8). This previous quote is made in reference to the following illustrative "holarchical" understanding of Being in which Wilber says the small s of spirit indicates that spirit is only one level among others, albeit the highest. But then as regards his use of the capitalized term of "Spirit", Wilber says such represents the very paper upon which the illustration is drawn. The capitalized term of Spirit thus represents the Ground of all the levels (with a capital S to indicate, as Wilber says, that it has no other).

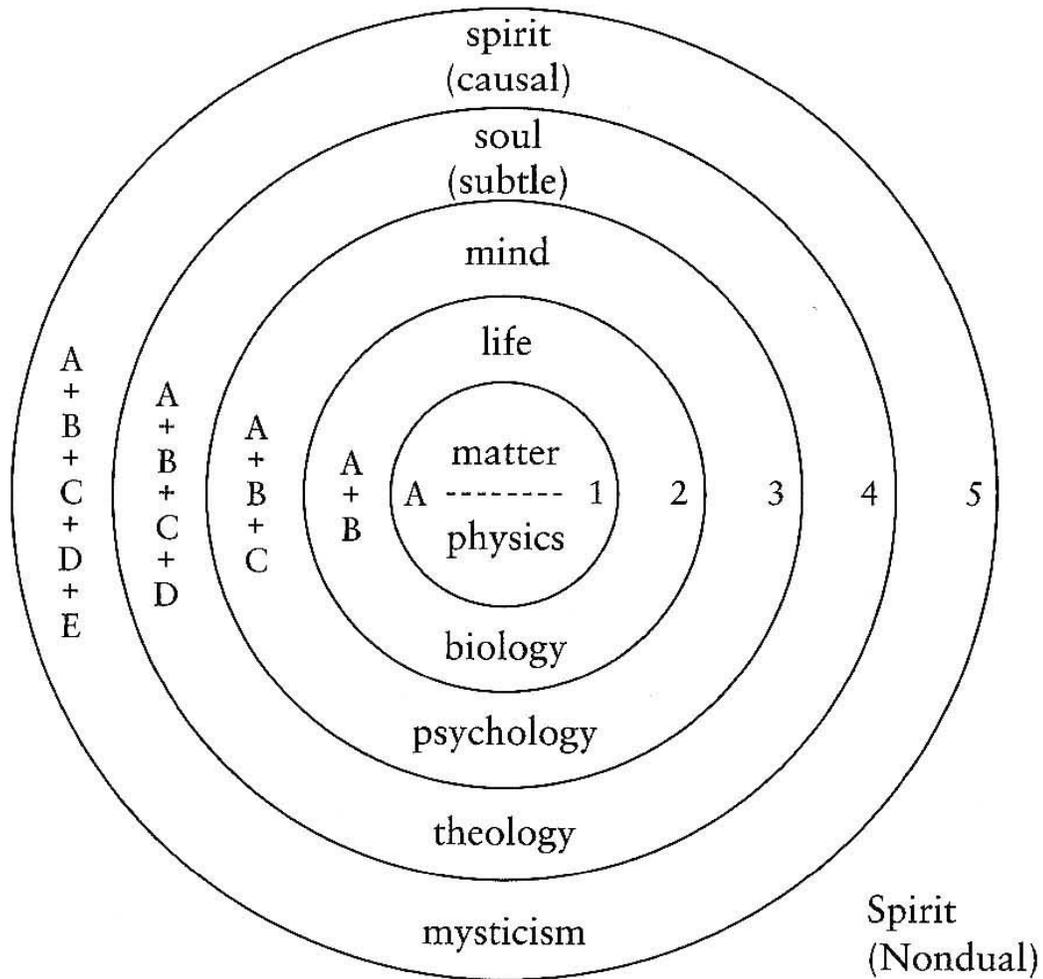


Figure 7. The Great Nest of Being. Spirit is regarded as both the highest (causal) level of being, as well as, the nondual Ground of all the levels. (Wilber, 2000, p. 6).

I have also included another holarchical diagram of Wilber's which we might view as an inverse representation of the Great Nest or Great Chain of Being. This diagram, however, features Wilber's levels of consciousness (see chapter two) in correlation with the idea of levels of B/being, or a chain of B/being.

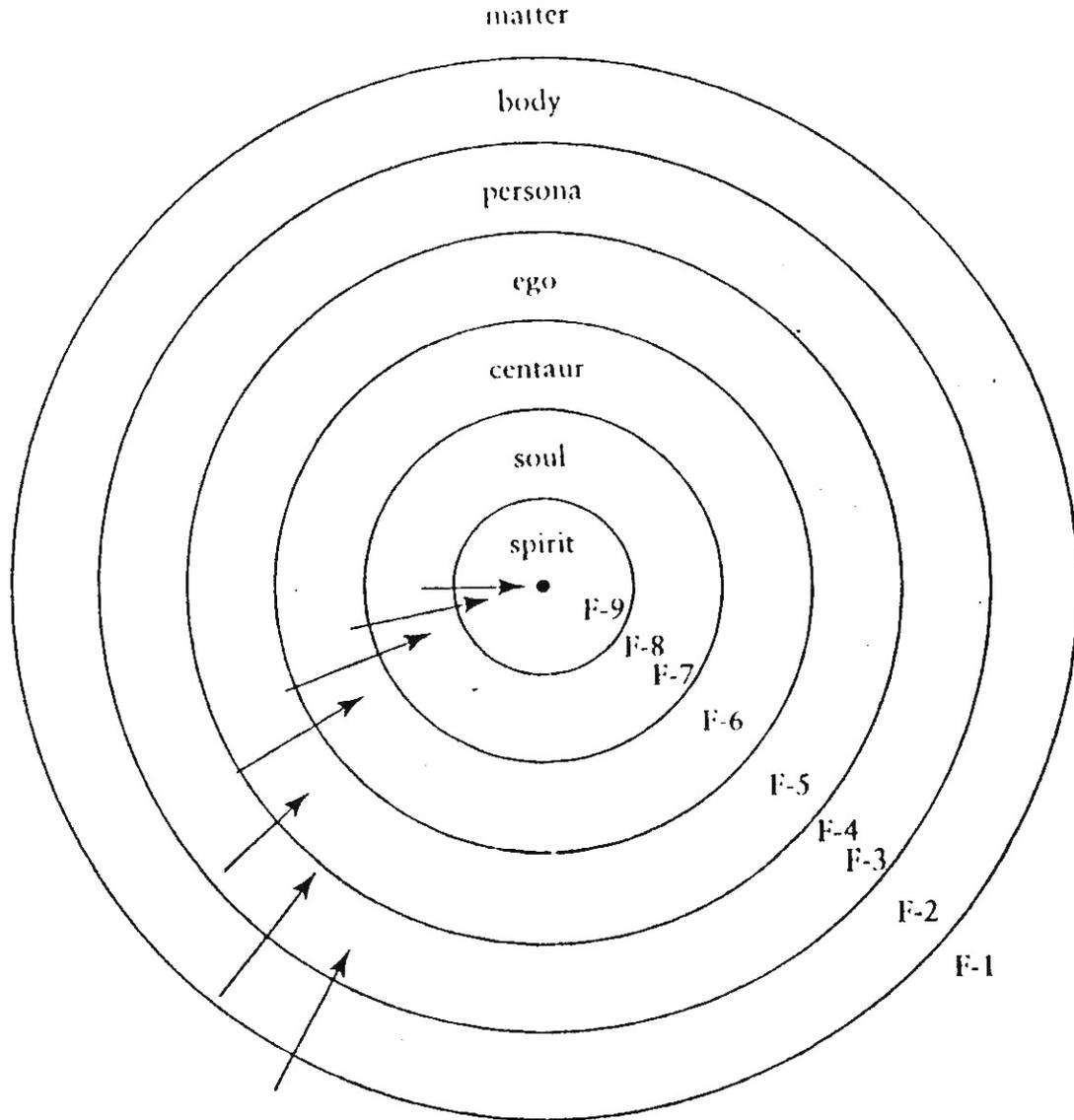


Figure 8. The layers of the self. This illustration is somewhat of an inverse of the previous Great Chain of Being illustration. (Wilber, 2000, p. 103).

Jorge Ferrer also practices the capitalization of certain terms. As we have already noted, Ferrer talks about "Spirit" and about "The Mystery" out of which everything continually arises. In addition, Ferrer talks about the individual being connected to the source of our "Being".

What Ferrer does not talk about, however, is the technical distinction or reason for his capitalization of certain terms.

We assume that where there is capitalization of such terms as we have cited there is an all-inclusive context being assumed. And what I have suggested is that we should adopt an explicit technical or semantic approach to our use of such terms as Reality, Being, The Kosmos, etc. In this light I have further suggested that we should recognize a distinction between the ideas of "Reality" and "reality". The idea here is that we would use a small "r" to indicate when we are dealing with a single reality or a limited collection of realities (such as an individual's subjective reality, the reality of a thing, place, etc.). But in relation to the abstract idea of the collection of all individual realities we should then use a capitalized "R" to denote this all-inclusive context, which, paraphrasing Ken Wilber, has no other.

Leaving our technical discussion of capitalized contexts aside for now, let us look at another aspect of Nozick's discussion of the all-inclusive context of Reality, that is, the idea of Reality as a value-laden context.

Reality as a Value-Laden Concept

Getting back to our analysis of Nozick's work, we can be sure that Nozick is trying to clarify the idea of Reality as an all-encompassing context even though he does not adopt the technical notion of capitalization as I have. A somewhat traditional way in which Nozick approaches the issue of conceptualizing inclusiveness is by asking how the concept of Reality might bring together both facts and values so that the idea of Reality becomes a sort of synthesis or unifying bridge to these two historical polarities. In this light consider Nozick's elaboration of the issue of the fact/value distinction in relation to the idea of Reality:

It may seem awkward that this notion of reality seems to straddle the fact/value gap, or the descriptive/normative gap, yet that straddling is an advantage. For how could we ever hope to surmount these gaps is not through some basic notion that has a foot solidly on each side, a notion that shows there is not a gap all the way down, a notion that lives and functions *beneath* the level of the gap? And the notion of reality certainly is basic; it *looks* as basic as can be on the factual side—whence the temptation to identify reality with actuality and existence—yet it also has an evaluative and grading role; what is more real is somehow better. Hence this notion of reality offers some hope of progress on the otherwise intractable fact/value problem. It would be foolish, then, to dismiss this notion too quickly or to sharpen it prematurely so that it falls on only one side of the gap.

(Nozick, 1989, p. 139)

For Nozick, the issue of inclusion within the teleological framework of Reality has two elements which have been viewed as, at best, competing goods, and, at worst, as polar opposites, and yet Nozick believes these elements can be brought together within the notion of Reality.

The translation of inclusion. In relation to our study of transpersonal phenomena, we believe that if the issue or goal of a conceptual model of Reality is the inclusion of all facts and values as Nozick has suggested then we believe this might translate into a challenge over how we might think of conscious and transpersonal depth as including both facts, such as our assumed fact that there are negative modalities of transpersonal depth, along with the inclusion of values, such as the assumption that there are positive modalities of transpersonal depth which are to be valued in a more obvious sense.

Even though Nozick does not use the terminology of *transpersonal* phenomena I want to, again, suggest that Nozick's general analysis of the framing of a spectrum view of Reality is relevant to our analysis of a spectrum view of transpersonal depth within the individual. My assumption, as I mentioned at the beginning of our study, is that there are *not* two or three different spectrums of

consciousness or depth within the individual, but only a single spectrum of depth which has transpersonal expressions within its reality.

Nozick is wrestling with the nature and problems of a teleological or spectrum view of depth within consciousness and Reality, and germane to this issue, Nozick points out the value-laden nature of our models of qualitative depth. Similar to the concerns we voiced earlier in our study, Nozick is concerned with how depth in consciousness and Reality is usually conceptualized in positive terms—such that greater reality is always defined as a positive thing which necessarily takes us in a positive direction. Nozick most notably speaks to this subject of the problematic teleology of depth within his chapter on darkness and light to which I would now like to turn our attention.

Darkness and Light as Metaphors for Negative and Positive Dimensions of Reality

In his chapter entitled "Darkness and Light" (Nozick, 1989, ch. 18) Nozick makes it clear that he would *ideally* like to think that depth within R/reality always points us in a positive direction--towards the path(s) of light, and away from the negative path(s), the path(s) of darkness-- but Nozick recognizes that this view of teleological depth

within R/reality may just be an expression of our arbitrary desires and values.

More explicitly, Nozick points out that we do not start with a value-neutral idea of Reality and then discover a spectrum of value as an objective *fact* of "greater reality". Values are already implicit in a view of depth within Reality. Consider how Nozick elaborates about this idea in reference to his theoretical model, The Matrix of Being (and once again for clarification purposes I insert some clarifying brackets--not parentheses--into Nozick's dense passage):

In the theory of reality presented thus far, most of the dimensions [of Reality] (intensity and vividness, for example, importance and even value as degree of organic unity) admit just about anything [positive or negative] as constituting the content of reality. [But] With such a formalistic theory, the problem arose of whether evil, pain, brutal power or mere wealth might not increase reality [that is, make one more real]—for reality itself was described as requiring no particular content. This led to attempts, somewhat unconvincing, to show how that [a] formalistic theory of reality could point away from dark content. Instead [Nozick suggests], we can make the row of light—that is, truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness—the content of reality, while all the other dimensions of reality increase reality when (and only when) they enfold *this* content. Intensity or vividness increase reality when they intensify or make more vivid truth, goodness, beauty, or holiness; value is a unification of the diversity of some portions of truth, goodness, beauty, or holiness; depth makes for more reality when it is the depth of these; and so on. Or perhaps, rather than requiring these other dimensions to be filled by the content of light, we can see them in general as increasing reality

provided they are not filled with the *opposite* of light; neutral content will serve with them.

No longer, however, would we try to justify the good from within a largely neutral theory of reality; reality gets built upon truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness from the beginning. But why did we want to provide some neutral rationale for the good, anyway? Why not just admit that we are committed to the good and to light? After all, if we told some neutral story that turned out *not* to lead to the good—for instance, so far as we know, deductive logic all by itself does not point that way—then we would say this was not the appropriate neutral story. Perhaps we desire a neutral story in order to convince someone else, but history reveals scant success along that route, and if that story *did* lead to the good, a sufficiently probing critic would uncover its initial nonneutral tinge or the place where nonneutrality got slipped in—after all, if it were neutral through and through, then it would not be able always to lead to the good rather than the bad.

(Nozick, 1989, pp. 215–216, brackets mine)

Nozick's passage is enlightening to our study in that Nozick has suggested that the idea of depth within Reality is a value laden concept. But this in itself is not regarded as problematic for Nozick. As Nozick says, "Why not just admit that we are committed to the good and to light?" Why not just be honest that the concept of depth could not be anything other than an expression of human value?

The value-laden nature of our frameworks of depth is an interesting issue. But we are particularly interested in Nozick's suggestion that there may be two teleology's of depth—positive and negative—which seems to bring up a very

different question about value in relation to our teleology of depth within consciousness and Reality. More specifically, the issue here is that it does not appear to be clear how we should think about a negative dimension of depth—and by extension, a negative dimension of transpersonal depth. We believe the concept is one of relevance to transpersonal studies, but in the absence of discussion along the specific lines in which we want to take the subject, we have turned to Robert Nozick's work which seems to touch on certain foundational issue of relevance to our project. Following what we have said, let us continue our focus on how Robert Nozick approaches the idea that there are positive and negative dimensions of depth.

Positive and Negative Dimensions in Nozick's Work

Certainly the idea that Reality contains both positive and negative aspects seems straightforward enough, but how this basic intuition translates into a teleological framework of depth with consciousness and Reality is a more complicated matter. For instance, Nozick asks, "What is the basis of the categories of the positive and the negative themselves; does that distinction exist at the most fundamental level or does it arise later" (Nozick, 1989, p. 209)? Here Nozick appears to be questioning whether his

distinction between positive and negative dimensions is supposed to be an (objective) metaphysical position, or more of a normative (value-laden) position, such as we looked at in relation to the fact/value gap that Nozick talked about earlier. Nozick does not really answer this question. He is mainly trying to formulate what the issue is. What we are particularly interested in right now is how Nozick talks about a putative negative dimension of Reality.

Negative dimensions in Nozick's work

A revealing passage in Nozick's work which deals with the existence of a negative dimension of depth is found where Nozick asks whether an individual must ultimately travel along a positive path in order to best increase one's reality, or whether there are also legitimate possibilities of increasing one's reality by going along a negative path or dimension of depth in Reality (that is, as such is conceptualized in relation to Nozick's Matrix model). As Nozick here phrases the matter, allow me to, again, insert some clarifying brackets into Nozick's somewhat complex passage to make it more accessible to the reader. As Nozick summarizes:

The dark or negative side also includes what is not (morally) evil itself or the direct *opposite* of a reality dimension—for instance, suffering and tragedy.

[But] It is with a somewhat divided mind that I say these things [traveling along a negative dimension] can increase reality only by moving a thing [or a person] further along *another* dimension [that is, a dimension different from the negative dimension], for one part of me wants to acknowledge that *these* components of darkness are themselves separate and independent aspects of reality, not subordinate [to the positive dimensions]. Isn't that a more profound and less truncated view of reality? I worry.

(Nozick, 1989, p. 208, brackets mine)

As Nozick lays out the matter, there may be both positive and negative dimensions of depth within Reality and how one dimension, e.g., the positive, the good, or "light", necessarily wins out over the negative, or "darkness", is not conceptually clear. We know that we don't want to narrow the meanings of Reality or truncate Reality's meaning as Nozick warns against. And following this previous point, we know the existence of a negative dimension or negative space in Reality is in one sense obvious.

But, again, what exactly the nature of this conceptual space of the negative is remains open for discussion. According to Nozick, the negative dimension of reality is not deemed negative in the sense of being morally evil. The negative has something to do with our connection to pain, suffering, and tragedy (and we believe we can extend Nozick's list to include such aspects as our conscious

connection to our finiteness, moral indeterminacy, injustice, loss, etc.).

The point is that for Nozick, there is no one way to conceptualize Reality's myriad components, dimensions or properties. Accordingly, the relationship between what Nozick identifies as positive and negative dimensions of depth is unclear. Nozick, though, gives us an optimistic goal in suggesting that, "When we manage to find the narrative implicit in the labels of these particular rows and columns [the rows and columns of Nozick's Matrix of Being model], perhaps then will the basic distinction between the positive and the negative be grounded" (Nozick, 1989, p. 209, brackets mine).

The translation in relation to transpersonal studies.

We suggest that the ways these categories of positive and negative dimensions of R/reality are grounded is an interesting issue, but again, we are more interested in how the very idea of positive and negative dimensions of depth might translate in relation to transpersonal theory. For as we have already argued, we believe the reality of depth within our consciousness exists within a *singular* spectrum such that Nozick is by default talking about transpersonal realities whenever he talks about depth within consciousness and within R/reality.

So we are suggesting that Nozick is not just dealing with abstract analytical issues over how we might conceptualize the representation of depth within Reality. We believe Nozick is speaking to the conceptualization of participative transpersonal depth within the individual. And most notably, Nozick has suggested that the qualitative nature of depth may go in both positive and negative directions. This, we believe, is the uniqueness of our interpretation of Nozick's position in relation to Wilber and Ferrer.

If our translation of Nozick's work into "participative" terms such as Jorge Ferrer uses is regarded as legitimate, this would seem to be an interesting connection of Nozick's work to transpersonal studies. Following what we have said, let us look at how Nozick talks most explicitly about the phenomena which we believe are intimately connected to the participative (and so transpersonal) elements within an individual's consciousness and life experiences.

**Participative Transpersonal Relations in Nozick's Work:
Becoming More Real**

Though Nozick does not use the terminology of "transpersonal phenomena" or "transpersonal participation" at all in his (1989) work, we suggest that Nozick is

speaking to a class of participative phenomena that can legitimately be called transpersonal. Nozick, though, was not a scholar in the field of religious studies, hence, Nozick does not use the language of "spiritual development" or characterize the development of depth within the individual in terms of an individual's movement away from a separate self sense. In addition, Nozick is not concerned with how the individual might achieve a nondual state of consciousness. As Nozick describes the matter, what is important is that an individual lives an actively reflective life, and as well, seeks to connect with the most reality, thus entailing a connection to others and an encounter with the depth of our existence. Adopting, then, such a modality of living over the course of one's life is what Nozick refers to as maximizing one's "reality curve" (Nozick, 1989, p. 135).

Focus and intensity as a principle of depth. For Nozick, the deepest depth or the most reality is experienced, not in a mystical deconstruction of the sense of self in a state of contentless awareness, but in the connection of the self to specific activities, projects, relationships, etc. Nozick says, "People often say they feel most real when they are working with intense concentration and focus, with skills and capacities

effectively brought into play; they feel most real when they feel most creative. Some say during sexual excitement, some say when they are alert and learning new things. We are more real when all our energies are focused, our attention riveted" (Nozick, 1989, p. 131). Nozick's context might be understood as a secular context and yet we suggest the relation of participation is the privileged concept.

Let us look at some more explicit examples of how Nozick talks about what we will suggest are participative transpersonal phenomena. Foremost along these lines is how Nozick talks about the nature of love's bonds and sexuality.

Love's Bonds. Regarding our fundamental dimension of human sexuality, Nozick says, "The most intense way we relate to another person is sexually" (Nozick, 1989, p. 61). Sex is a mode of communication and participation which Nozick, at points, even talks about in mystical terms. For instance, Nozick says, "in sex one also can engage in metaphysical exploration, knowing the body and person of another as a map or microcosm of the very deepest reality, a clue to its nature and purpose" (Nozick, 1989, p. 67). Nozick's passage is somewhat enigmatic, but again, we are interested in the participative elements implicit to Nozick's work.

Nozick further characterizes the participative aspects of love when he says, "love in some amount is present when your well-being is affected to whatever extent (but in the same direction) by another's. As the other fares, so (to some extent) do you. The people you love are included inside your boundaries, their well-being is your own" (Nozick, 1989, p. 69). Nozick is here describing the basic phenomena which, in our introduction, I cited in relation to psychology's attachment theory. And again, we are interested in the metaphysical implications that seem to be associated with Nozick's talk about how the boundaries of the self are altered via our participative relations. As Nozick summarizes:

Intimate bonds change the contours and boundaries of the self, altering its topology: in love, as we have seen, in the sharings of friendship, in the intimacy of sexuality. Alterations in the individual self's boundaries and contours are a goal of the religious quest: expanding the self to include all of being (Indian Vedanta), eliminating the self (Buddhism), or merging with the divine.

(Nozick, 1989, pp. 85-86)

Nozick's talk about an alteration to the self's boundaries and topology may be seen as relating to how Wilber talks about Buddhist selflessness and nonduality, and as well, germane to how Ferrer talked about the movement away from egocentrism as defining of the core

truth of religious and transpersonal traditions. In this sense, Nozick may be in sympathy with the teleological framework that our transpersonal theorists utilize.

But in a vein of thought similar to how Jorge Ferrer critiques the supposed perennialist privileging of nonduality as the highest or deepest reality, Nozick takes issue with the way the expansion of the self is often conceptualized (or situated) in certain fixed teleological terms

Nozick's Critique of Mysticism: Ontological Claims as Intuited Through Experience are Problematic

According to Nozick's reasoning, even if individuals on a large scale do report experiencing a mystical state of selflessness, bliss, nonduality, etc., this is no reason for a philosophical system to assume that Reality is as we perceive it. Following this line of thought consider how Nozick critiques the enlightenment experience:

The reality this enlightenment experience seems to reveal is felt to be the very deepest reality, not just a deeper one than ordinarily is experienced. It is difficult to see how the character of the experience itself can guarantee its ultimate depth, though. Could not another hidden level of surprisingly different character underlie the level that is experienced? One Zen master reported a later, deeper enlightenment experience that surpassed, overturned, and placed in a different light his first one; and the twentieth-century Indian philosopher Aurobindo reported an experience of the vibrant void—an experience Buddhists report as deepest—and said that through it he was able to reach a yet deeper (Vedanta) experience of a full

and infinite blissful conscious reality. I do not doubt that there are Buddhist sages who also report having both experiences—with the order reversed, the one of the void lying underneath the other of a full infinite reality.

Whether or not the enlightenment experience is an experience of the very deepest reality, in part because of the experience's own intense reality (in the special sense of this term) it feels like it reveals one extremely deep

(Nozick, 1989, pp. 245-246)

The mystical experience is about connecting with the deepest reality. Nozick's emphasis in the previous passage is that how we perceive Reality to be in the mystical experience is no guarantee of its validity. But regardless of this point about the confirmation (or as Ken Wilber would say, the communal confirmation) of mystical experience, Nozick's stated goal of becoming more real is to connect with the deepest reality, or as we might say, the goal is to explore the most depth within consciousness and R/reality. And just as Nozick said there was a problem with how to place a potential negative dimension of reality in relation to the positive dimensions, so too Nozick suggests that in relation to the idea of going deeper in R/reality, positive modalities of experience may not be the deepest modalities. In other words, Nozick suggests that positive modalities of depth such as happiness might even be at odds with the attainment of the greatest depth.

Consider how Nozick summarizes an important aspect of this thought when he says,

We are not merely empty buckets to be stuffed with happiness or pleasure; the self's nature and character matter too, even matter more. It is easy to fall into an "end-state" conception of the self, demarcating some particular condition for it to reach and maintain. As important as the self's constituents and structure [are], however, are the ways [in which] it [the self] transforms itself.

(Nozick, 1989. p. 128, brackets mine)

In short, Nozick is not against the positive aspects of the mystical experience such as the attainment of bliss, feelings of liberation, or happiness. But rather, Nozick suggests, sometimes the issue may come down to a choice of whether to connect with positive modalities of experience such as happiness or whether to connect with negative realities, which Nozick implies sometimes entails a deeper connection to Reality (remember, the negative is not a category of evil but of suffering in general).

Nozick's point is that the mystical experience is often situated in a positive context which can be problematic if that context is presented as *the* context for situating the teleology of depth within the individual and within Reality. The idea of a positive context is very subtle, however. In this light consider how Nozick further characterizes the enlightenment experience:

This reality is experienced as wholly positive or—perhaps this is really an inference from the experience—as giving a redeeming place and purpose to whatever in the universe appears negative....The self then is experienced differently, no longer wrapped up in the everyday constituents of consciousness or wholly constituted by it. It may be experienced as a witnessing consciousness out of time, an infinite pure consciousness without beginning or end, a pure mirror and observer of whatever is before it, a void not separate from the larger universe, an infinite space rather than an entity within space, or as identical with the deepest infinite reality itself. In each case, the self's boundaries are extended or dissolved.

(Nozick, 1989, p. 246)

Expanding the boundaries of the self is, again, a central goal implicit to Nozick's concept of becoming more real. But the picture of depth here that Nozick is interested in is one which emphasizes the connection (or expansion) of the self to Reality without overemphasizing the positive or transcendent modalities of depth. This is why Nozick says, "we would give up some happiness in order to gain the depth" (Nozick, 1989, p. 102).

As we said, in Nozick's work the issue of the relation between positive and negative modalities of depth remains somewhat unresolved. We pointed out that Nozick would ideally like to hold that greater depth takes us always in a positive direction, but Nozick emphasized that this may be just an arbitrary inserting of one's desires or values into a metaphysical equation.

In short, Nozick suggests that there may be a negative modality of depth—a negative potential of becoming more real. But how, exactly, to formulate this thought is a challenge yet to be mastered. We might say there are positive and negative modalities of depth which we might want to view as running parallel to one another, or maybe depth within the individual is something that is in its deepest aspects a synthesis of these two features of Reality. But regardless of our answer here, what we do know is that this basic idea of expanding the boundaries of the self is a metaphor for participating with others and with realities greater than the individual self, and herein we believe Nozick, Wilber and Ferrer are connected.

The problem, again, is that we don't want to accept a fixed view of what teleological depth within the person and within Reality looks like. And in this vein of thought Nozick is particularly relevant to a critique of Ken Wilber's teleology inasmuch as Wilber seems to conceptualize transpersonal depth or transpersonal development within the individual as leading to a positive state of nondual experience—conceptualized as a correlate to our encounter with the deepest, ultimate Reality.

Our thesis suggests that what is needed is a participative view of transpersonal experience which will

recognize all modalities of our participative consciousness such as connect us with others and with realities greater than the individual self, that is, positive modalities resulting in happiness, love, bliss, the end of suffering, transcendence, etc. But we believe we should also recognize a negative domain of depth that reflects our connection to loss, tragedy, suffering, etc. We believe Robert Nozick's work speaks to this special challenge of including positive and negative expressions of depth within the individual. But we suggest that much theoretical work needs to be done as this idea of negative—and we will also add, mundane—expressions of participative transpersonal consciousness is still in its beginning stages of conceptualization. I have tried to highlight certain aspects of this project in relation to our three thinkers, and now I would like to present a final summary argument, review, and conclusion of what we have accomplished.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

**A Participatory Vision and the Challenge of Integral
Inclusion: Standards of Inclusion**

A central idea we have focused on and appealed to in various contexts within our study concerns the participative relations that we suggest are resident within transpersonal phenomena and which we believe ultimately define the essence of what should be called transpersonal phenomena. In the context of this interpretative framework we have thus suggested that the challenge of integral inclusion—which Ken Wilber talked about as a challenge of the inclusion of all legitimate human perspectives, and which Jorge Ferrer talked about as a challenge of the inclusion of a plurality of spiritual values, ultimates, and ways of knowing, and which Robert Nozick (in more secular terms) talked about as the inclusion of positive and negative dimensions of depth—is, by our account, a challenge of including all participative modalities of human experience within a transpersonal framework. The key assumption of our project is, again, the assumption that all participative modalities of human experience should be recognized as transpersonal modalities of experience. And

this is certainly a very broad view of transpersonal phenomena.

Our argument for a broadening of the participatory meanings of transpersonal phenomena is, admittedly, an extending of the meaning of transpersonal phenomena beyond what Wilber and Ferrer would agree to (and as we noted, Nozick does not use the language of transpersonal phenomena, so we will speak to Nozick separately). Given, then, our aspiration towards a very broad view of what can count as transpersonal phenomena, we are particularly interested in the fact that Wilber and Ferrer place constraints on what can be considered transpersonal phenomena. Limiting the meaning of what can count as transpersonal phenomena is nothing out of the ordinary, but it is a point that we wish to underscore.

Wilber's standards of legitimacy. When we looked at Ken Wilber's work, we might recall that Wilber said, "The endeavor to honor and embrace every legitimate aspect of human consciousness is the goal of an *integral psychology*" (Wilber, 2000, p. 2). And this notion of legitimacy is what we are particularly interested in right now. What is a legitimate aspect of human consciousness? Putting our answer on hold for a moment, we should also note that Wilber has suggested that if transpersonal psychology does

not become more integrative it may potentially become irrelevant. This is why Wilber said that,

In 1983, I stopped referring to myself as a "transpersonal" psychologist or philosopher. I began instead to think of the work that I was doing as "integrative" or "integral".

Continuing then, Wilber further elaborates about his view of the superiority of the integral over the transpersonal:

My own opinion is that integral psychology is not a transpersonal psychology; it appears to be more encompassing than anything that today calls itself transpersonal. Nor do I believe that transpersonal psychology can or will become truly integral; all of its main factions are rooted in models that seem demonstrably less than integral¹.

(Wilber, n.d., p. 1)

Wilber suggests that the integral work he is doing is geared towards an all-encompassing framework, but again, we are interested in Wilber's suggestion of limitations as to what will count as a legitimate aspect of human consciousness.

¹ I think Wilber's statement that "integral psychology is not a transpersonal psychology" is potentially misleading because Wilber is certainly presenting a philosophy that deals with what we commonly understand as transpersonal phenomena. In other words, I believe it is clear that Wilber is concerned with the nature of our experience of transpersonal phenomena and how such phenomena alter us. And at least for my part it is not clear whether Wilber would advise that we should give up the term "transpersonal phenomena" and try to replace it with the term "integral phenomena", because Wilber doesn't explicitly suggest this. But I may be reading more into what Wilber is saying.

Ferrer's standard's of legitimacy. When we look at Jorge Ferrer's work we also note that Ferrer has also suggested that there are restrictions on what can count as legitimate transpersonal phenomena. Recall Ferrer initially said the very motivation for his project was to respond to some of the wild metaphysical speculation regarding the defining of transpersonal phenomena. As Ferrer said, "The lack of criteria for determining what could be considered valid transpersonal knowledge was rendering transpersonal theory a free-for-all open to any form of metaphysical speculation" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 9). In addition, Ferrer says, "perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing transpersonal studies is to outline the conditions governing the enactment of valid spiritual ultimates (Ferrer, 2002, p. 152). Again, we have standards of validity suggested as to what can count as legitimate transpersonal phenomena. So in terms of the work of Wilber and Ferrer there appears to be a subtle tension between the aspiration to include as many perspectives, values, spiritual ultimates, and modalities of experience as possible within a transpersonal framework in competition with the caveat that not just anything can count as transpersonal phenomena.

The key element that both Wilber and Ferrer seem to appeal to as regards the defining standard of legitimate transpersonal phenomena concerns the qualitative nature that transpersonal knowledge engenders, and to this issue I would like to speak further.

The Defining Essence of Transpersonal Phenomena is its Qualitative Nature

In Ken Wilber's philosophy the driving force of an individual's development (and collectively within history as a whole) is seen in the most basic sense as a drive towards cultivating greater spiritual depth within the psyche of the individual. In this light we noted that Wilber's narrative of the individual's development is one which predominately emphasizes the movement of an individual away from egocentric modes of being, and this is in conjunction with Wilber's metaphysical narrative that ultimate spiritual development involves getting away from the separate self sense altogether. Such selflessness is then most notably represented in Wilber's talk about the mystical experience of nonduality in which an individual comes to recognize there is a timeless essence within their own being which is prior to experience, events in time, and even the material world itself. This timeless awareness is regarded to be Spirit recognizing its own face. In this

light Wilber cites the Romantic and spiritual philosopher Friedrich Schelling, "for Schelling (and for his friend and student Hegel) Spirit goes out of itself to produce objective nature, awakens to itself in subjective mind, and then recovers itself in pure Nondual awareness, where subject and object are one pure immediacy that unifies both nature and mind in realized Spirit" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 303). Coming to live everyday life with such a spiritual mode of awareness is what Wilber talks about as internalizing a transpersonal mode of being. And Wilber further describes this as the attainment of a consciousness which remains "awake" under all possible conditions and is the achievement of a permanent and enduring trait of consciousness (Wilber, 1997a, p. 269).

In short, Wilber suggests that the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena brings about a change in the way an individual lives one's life. Accordingly, one becomes more in control of their mental state, compassionate towards others, less egocentric, and in general, one comes to see the world and its creatures as a divine manifestation of the unfolding of Spirit-in-Action.

As we turn to Jorge Ferrer's work we note that Ferrer talks about the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena in saying, "What makes transpersonal phenomena

distinctly 'transpersonal' (as well as interesting, provocative, and transforming) is not their nonordinary or occasional ecstatic character, but the character of the knowledge they provide during an expansion of individual consciousness" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 9). What is the nature of this knowledge, though? According to Ferrer it is a knowledge that can "free individuals, communities, and societies from egocentric understandings of reality and associated ways of life" (Ferrer, 2002, p.3). Following this idea, Ferrer concludes, "The validity of spiritual knowing can be more adequately established, I have proposed, by assessing its emancipatory power for self, relationships, and world" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 221). We are again back to the idea of the movement away from egocentrism and all that this implies in terms of being more compassionate and connected to others and the world as defining of the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena.

So the validity standard of transpersonal phenomena appears to be similar between Wilber and Ferrer. What then is at issue here?

What Might be Lacking with Wilber's and Ferrer's Talk of the Qualitative Nature of Transpersonal Phenomena?

We agree that as an individual partakes in transpersonal phenomena the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena does bring about a movement away from egocentrism as both Wilber and Ferrer outline. And following Wilber, we believe that an individual can and should internalize a transpersonal mode of thought in one's everyday life. But what we find problematic about Wilber's elaboration of the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena is Wilber's metaphysical context that situates the articulation of the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena in relation to the experience of nonduality. This can be viewed as another version of Ferrer's critique against the supposed perennialist absolutism and structuralism that privileges the phenomena of nonduality and that Ferrer associates with Wilber's philosophy. But we are not as dismissing of the language of nonduality as Ferrer is.

Could Nonduality be Re-Interpreted in Participative Terms?

What I would like to suggest is that the experience of nonduality which mystics and others have reported through history and which we have identified in terms of its Eastern, mystical, and perennialist situating, may be

interpreted in participative terms in the sense that an aspect of nonduality may be seen within the relation of participation or participatory knowing itself. But of course such a redefining of an understanding of nonduality requires that we say a lot of other things about why we need to apply new meanings to a historically situated idea. And such a project is beyond the scope of our study.

If we recall Ferrer's critique against perennialism's supposed privileging of a nondual metaphysic as representative of the nature of ultimate depth within R/reality (see pp. 127-136 of our study), and if we consider Ferrer's words that, "Neither the indeterminate nature of Spirit nor the dynamic quality of spiritual unfolding can be fully captured by any conceptual framework" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 187), we find that there are certain similarities between our argument for a more pluralistic framework and Ferrer's arguments for a more pluralistic and participative understanding of transpersonal phenomena.

Ferrer is clear that he believes no conceptual framework can *fully* capture the indeterminate and dynamic nature of spiritual reality, and yet we suggest that if we think in terms of the *representation* of our participative transpersonal relations, a framework which seeks to provide

conceptual space to both positive and negative modalities of transpersonal experience could be a novel step in the direction of thinking about conceptual inclusiveness. Realizing, however, the novelty of this descriptive language of positive, negative, and what we have also described as mundane modalities of transpersonal phenomena, let us speak to a potential criticism of this descriptive aspect of our project as we also focus more particularly upon this language of positive, negative, and mundane forms of transpersonal phenomena.

Challenging the language of positive and negative modalities of transpersonal phenomena

The question a critic such as Ken Wilber might ask of our project is whether the very language of positive and negative modalities of transpersonal phenomena is legitimate to use in the first place. And the main objection here would probably have to do with the claim that such predications as positive and negative modalities are not, ultimately, the most irreducible predications. In other words, Ken Wilber would likely suggest that the most irreducible way to talk about transpersonal phenomena would be to recognize that the deepest or highest transpersonal awareness is *ultimately* a contentless awareness and experience of the ultimate nondual nature of R/reality. In

Robert Forman's terms, and possibly in Hindu or Buddhist terms we might talk about the pure conscious event (the PCE) in which the sense of an individual situated self is dissolved and there is a mergence with the reality of pure awareness, consciousness, and being—which is also described in Buddhist terms as emptiness.

Hindu and Buddhist ideas about the ultimate nonduality of consciousness may well be a significant fact about the nature of R/reality. In this light we recently suggested that the very essence of participative consciousness or our participative transpersonal relations may be that such participative modalities contain a nondual element or basis. Accordingly, we suggest the language of nonduality has many potential uses but transpersonal theory needs to explore the concept in a broader framework of interpretation such as we are suggesting.

In relation to the language of positive and negative dimensions of experience, we might suggest that such predications are at least secondary levels of description, if not deemed primary levels of description. This is to say, we grant the possibility that at a primary (irreducible) level of description, transpersonal phenomena might be best described in terms of the pure relation of participation, connection, mergence, nonduality, etc. And

yet we still suggest that such a primary level description need not dictate all other descriptions. Applying this thought to our discussion of positive and negative modalities of transpersonal experience, we might suggest that maybe such a polar framework of description may be a secondary level of description². Regardless though of the irreducibility of the predication of positive and negative modalities of experience, what we are trying to develop is a pluralistic transpersonal metaphysic. And we believe the idea of positive and negative modalities of transpersonal phenomena is potentially an important idea to develop within transpersonal studies. Grasping what we are trying to develop, however, requires that we are first clear about our view of the linear nature of the frameworks which we believe situate the teleology of most transpersonal frameworks of depth.

We are attempting to address the "linear" teleological aspects of certain frameworks of depth

As I said, our effort to talk about positive and negative modalities of transpersonal phenomena is an effort to construct a pluralistic transpersonal framework which assumes that there is not one, but two teleologies of depth

² I am not personally prepared to grant that the idea of positive and negative modalities of transpersonal phenomena is unquestionably a secondary level of description. These two predications may be irreducible in their own right.

within consciousness and Reality—a positive and a negative polarity or teleology, if you will. And we believe this kind of a polar framework is a particular challenge to such an, arguably, linear framework as Ken Wilber presents.

Wilber's linear framework. Ken Wilber is very adamant that his framework is not a linear framework, and yet the particular idea of a linear framework that Wilber seems to be responding to in his work concerns that idea that an individual must go from one state of transpersonal experience, such as say, fulcrum-7, nature mysticism, before one can go to Fulcrum-8, deity mysticism (Wilber, 1998, pp. 309–310).

We believe we are focusing on a different aspect of the idea of a linear framework. We are suggesting that inasmuch as we talk about an individual going deeper in one's consciousness and correlate this with the idea that an individual is going deeper or higher in the spectrum of Being, this is a correlation of consciousness within Reality that is imbued with positive linear connotations. The qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena is, in a certain sense, a positive thing. But we suggest if the meanings of transpersonal depth are always interpreted in a positive sense this may actually entail a subtle structuralism at work. Transpersonal phenomena may, at

times, be painful and negative as an experience, even if the overall interpretation of transpersonal phenomena is that it is positive.

The idea of structuralism extended

To reiterate what we have said, we suggest that our critique can be viewed as a development of Ferrer's critique of perennialist structuralism in that we are concerned with those frameworks which predicate ultimate reality to be of a singular nature. Ferrer focuses on how that assumed singular nature is articulated in perennialist nondual terms, such as in Wilber's work, but we are interested in an even broader occurrence of structuralism that we suggest may be resident in that very suggestion that consciousness and Reality are, in their deepest manifestations, harmonious, benevolent, blissful, nondual, and in short, positive. Such predications, we believe, entail structuralist elements inasmuch as they assume a singular (positive) nature and teleology to the meanings of transpersonal phenomena.

Our thesis suggests that we get away from a structuralist and linear framework if we adopt a view of transpersonal phenomena which recognizes that there are at least two modalities of transpersonal depth--positive and negative modalities--which we can and do participate in.

(And we might as well talk about a third, neutral modality, which might correlate to certain aspects of the nondual experience, but which we are not going to try to develop in our limited analysis, mainly because it unnecessarily overcomplicates the simplicity of our position). What we are arguing is that a pluralistic metaphysic of transpersonal phenomena implies a broad view of the nature of transpersonal phenomena and this must allow in even *mundane* meanings of what can count as transpersonal phenomena.

Transpersonal phenomena should not be defined solely in relation to extra-ordinary states of consciousness

What our study has suggested is that transpersonal theory often defines the meaning of transpersonal phenomena in relation to so-called extra-ordinary or altered states of consciousness, and this is may ultimately be problematic and a limitation to transpersonal theory.

Certainly, we grant that an important area of transpersonal studies deals with such extra-ordinary states of consciousness such as Ken Wilber most notably speaks to in our study. But the suggestion of our thesis is, again, that the meanings of transpersonal phenomena must not be defined solely in relation to these extra-ordinary states of consciousness. We believe that transpersonal phenomena

manifest in early childhood and become progressively more complex over one's life.

The beginning of transpersonal relations in the infant

According to our broad position, we suggest that transpersonal phenomena begin to manifest within the infant's relations to its parents and its environment and become more developed, complex, and (potentially) realized throughout one's life³. The fundamental element of importance, we believe, is the relation of participation itself. Following this vein of thought we initially cited the psychoanalytic idea of attachment theory as an expression of such a basic relationship of participation that we engage in. And, again, the most radical claim of our study is that these basic psychological connections are indeed latent or ever-present transpersonal structures at work. This is a really broad understanding of transpersonal phenomena. And in another sense we might say that what we are suggesting is a naturalizing of spiritual or transpersonal phenomena and a "spiritualizing" of

³ Again, we want to note that our position of ever present or latent transpersonal structures shares certain similarities to Michael Washburn's "Dynamic Ground" which talks about latent "physicodynamic processes" resident within the infant child in the sense that the infant seeks a state of psychic connection to the source of its being (see Washburn 1995, and see pp. 68-73 for our discussion of Wilber's characterization of his own philosophy as once subscribing to a view similar to Washburn's).

psychological phenomena. Allow me to explain this idea further.

A Demystified View of Transpersonal Phenomena

We suggest that the essence of a broadened view of transpersonal phenomena will recognize our participative transpersonal relations, not only as mystical relations, but as psychological, social/relational, empathetic, imaginative, and moral. And we believe Jorge Ferrer echoes a related thought when he says that his vision of spirituality is realized, "not so much in isolated individual inner experiences, grandiose visions, or metaphysical intuitions, but through intimate dialogue and communication with other beings and the world" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 191). This is the kind of conceptual opening that our study is interested in further exploring in relation to a broadened participative understanding of transpersonal phenomena. In this light consider how Jorge Ferrer talks about a potentially broad understanding of transpersonal phenomena such as we quoted in part at the beginning of our study:

It is quite probable that there are a number of genuine spiritual potentials whose emergence and expression may not be encouraged or cultivated in traditional spiritual practices....such as primary instincts, sexuality, interpersonal intimacy, conscious parenting, emotional intelligence, creative imagination, or spiritual potentials perhaps specific to race, gender,

and sexual orientation. Seen in this light, the increasing spiritual eclecticism observable today in Euroamerica, although not without serious hazards and potential abuses, may be seen as the vanguard of an emergent awareness striving to include these other dimensions into a more integral understanding of spirituality

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 152)

To include may not be to integrate. We would emphasize that what Ferrer has spoken of as a more integral understanding of spirituality could, by our account, also be described in terms of a more inclusive or broadened picture of the participatory meanings of transpersonal phenomena. And we believe the significant point here would be to suggest that to include all the diverse dimensions that Ferrer has alluded to may not necessarily be to *integrate* these dimensions (But Ferrer, as well as Wilber would likely disagree on this point). In fact, we suggest that these two concepts of inclusion and integration may be quite different in that the concept of integration has positive or harmonious connotations associated with it, while the idea of inclusion may be more open to both harmonious and non-harmonious potentials. But regardless of this previous point, let us say more about how we suggest a broader understanding of transpersonal phenomena might be conceptualized.

Mundane transpersonal phenomena. In short, our thesis suggests that to argue for a participatory understanding of the meaning of transpersonal phenomena may also be to argue for a view of transpersonal phenomena as resident within our everyday--mundane--life experiences and encounters with others and with realities greater than the individual self. And our interaction within personal relationships is most certainly one way in which such conceptual broadness might be understood. In this light we are, again, drawn to how Jorge Ferrer puts the matter when he says, "Once our understanding of the nature of spirituality is expanded to include our relationships and the world, the locus of spiritual realization needs to be accordingly expanded too" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 178).

We have suggested that an expanded view of the "locus" of spiritual realization recognizes transpersonal phenomena first and foremost within the very relation of participation itself. In this light we might reinterpret the meaning of Ferrer's "transpersonal events" to include any relation of connection between persons, whether in the form of interactive dialogue, affectional bonds, blood relations, taking reflective thought of another, etc. All these aspects of our experience may contain transpersonal elements, we suggest.

Stated in a different context, we believe Robert Nozick also speaks to the broadness of our participative transpersonal phenomena in talking about the need to recognize "the holiness of everyday life" in such acts as taking food into our selves, social communication, relational bonds of love, and even sexual intimacy (Nozick, 1989, pp. 55-60). These aspects of our experience may not traditionally fall under the rubric of what is considered "transpersonal phenomena". But we believe the leading edge of transpersonal philosophy is working to provide conceptual space to just these kinds of aspects of our experience.

How broad might transpersonal phenomena be? In looking at Jorge Ferrer's work as we have, it seems clear that Ferrer is working towards a broader understanding of the participatory meanings of transpersonal phenomena, and yet in apparent opposition to this idea Ferrer declares,

What is needed, I believe, is not to embark oneself on the arduous (and probably futile) task of elucidating the multifarious meanings the transpersonal can take in all possible situations, but [what is needed is] a radically different way to think about transpersonal phenomena"

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 196 n. 9, brackets mine)

For Ferrer, the task at hand is nothing less than the implementation of a new paradigm of thought concerning our

understanding of the meaning of transpersonal phenomena. And yet in opposition to what Ferrer has said, we suggest that recognizing the true extent of the multifarious and participative nature of transpersonal phenomena may be the very key to the radical new way of conceiving of transpersonal phenomena which Ferrer aspires towards.

So while we are in agreement with Jorge Ferrer's critique and suggestion for the need of "a radically new way to conceive of transpersonal phenomena", what we would like to see is not just a new way of thinking about transpersonal phenomena such as Ferrer will represent within his metaphysic of transpersonal events and participatory knowing. What we believe is needed is a leveling of the metaphysical playing field in the sense of equally extending the meaning of the transpersonal to all forms of participative knowing, whether this be emotional, moral, aesthetic, erotic, empathetic, communicative, cognitive, meditative, spiritually conceived, or otherwise.

We believe such a broad vision of transpersonal phenomena as we have sketched out logically follows on the heels of such an understanding of transpersonal phenomena as Grof (1988) outlined when he said, "transpersonal experiences can be defined as experiential expansion or extensions of consciousness beyond the usual boundaries of

the body-ego and beyond the limitations of time and space" (p. 38). And as Walsh and Vaughan (1993) similarly stated, transpersonal phenomena are "experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos" (p. 203)⁴.

We suggest that if transpersonal phenomena can be understood as an extension of one's consciousness beyond the individual centered ego, another way to re-state this idea is to say that human consciousness is already

⁴ The reader may recall that we earlier cited the previous three thinkers in relation to Jorge Ferrer's critique of the supposed inward subjectivism believed to be resident within contemporary transpersonal theory. That is, Ferrer claimed that such an understanding of transpersonal experience as Grof, Walsh and Vaughn outline "automatically configures" transpersonal phenomena in terms of an individual's inner experience (which is subjective reductionism) and in addition, "creates a further division, this time between an experiencing subject and experienced objects of transpersonal cognition" (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 33-34). This is what Ferrer calls "subtle Cartesianism". In short, I have argued that Ferrer has not successfully demonstrated how that his metaphysic of transpersonal events is not just another way of describing the same extension of an individual's consciousness beyond the individual ego that Groff, Walsh and Vaughn have described. And from the point of our critique, whether participative transpersonal experience is taking place within an individual's mind, or is in some other way an extension of an individual's consciousness, the important point is that connection exists. So while Ferrer's desire to get away from an overemphasis on the inward subjective aspects of spiritual experience is noteworthy, I find his rejection of a definition of transpersonal phenomena as an extension of an individual's consciousness beyond the ego to be too dismissive.

transpersonal to the degree in which it is participative and connecting of the individual to others and to realities greater than the individual self. But most notably, we would suggest that the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena does not imply a certain kind of transpersonal experience, e.g., contentless nonduality, will be experienced at the deepest levels of experience because participative transpersonal experiences take us in both positive and negative directions. What is most significant is first the connection itself, and secondarily, its spectrum of manifestation. Regarding this ladder idea of a spectrum of transpersonal phenomena I would like us to now focus as I talk about positive and negative transpersonal modalities of experience.

Positive and Negative Directions of Depth

The most novel suggestion of our thesis holds that transpersonal studies might be benefited by discussing the possibility of a radically broad view of transpersonal phenomena such as recognizes both positive and negative expressions of transpersonal phenomena. And in terms of a very crude representation of such a spectrum of possibility I would suggest that we might think about a sort of *axis of being* which separates transpersonal phenomena in the way a map separates North and South as directions.

The two main directions of participative transpersonal depth, we suggest, are positive and negative, such as outlined in the following two illustrations of our individual and social/relational transpersonal experiences.

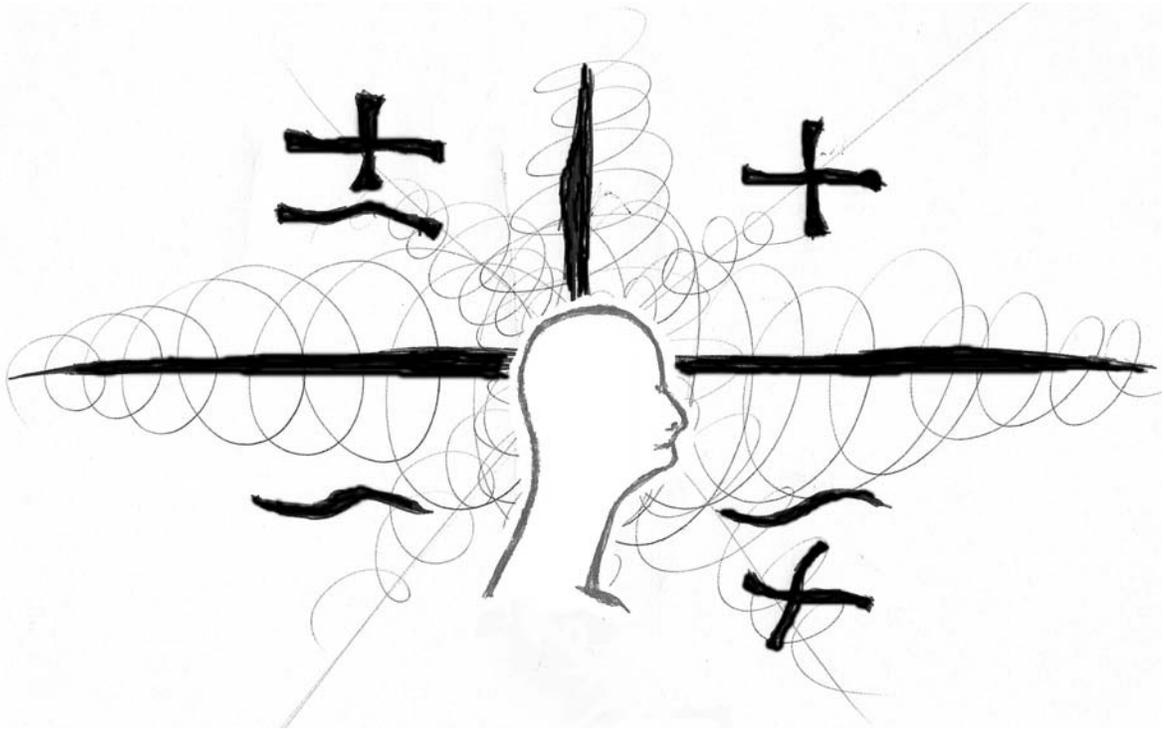


Figure 9. Transpersonal phenomena within the individual. Even if solely a function of the human mind, transpersonal phenomena take the individual beyond the self in positive and negative ways. (author's illustration).

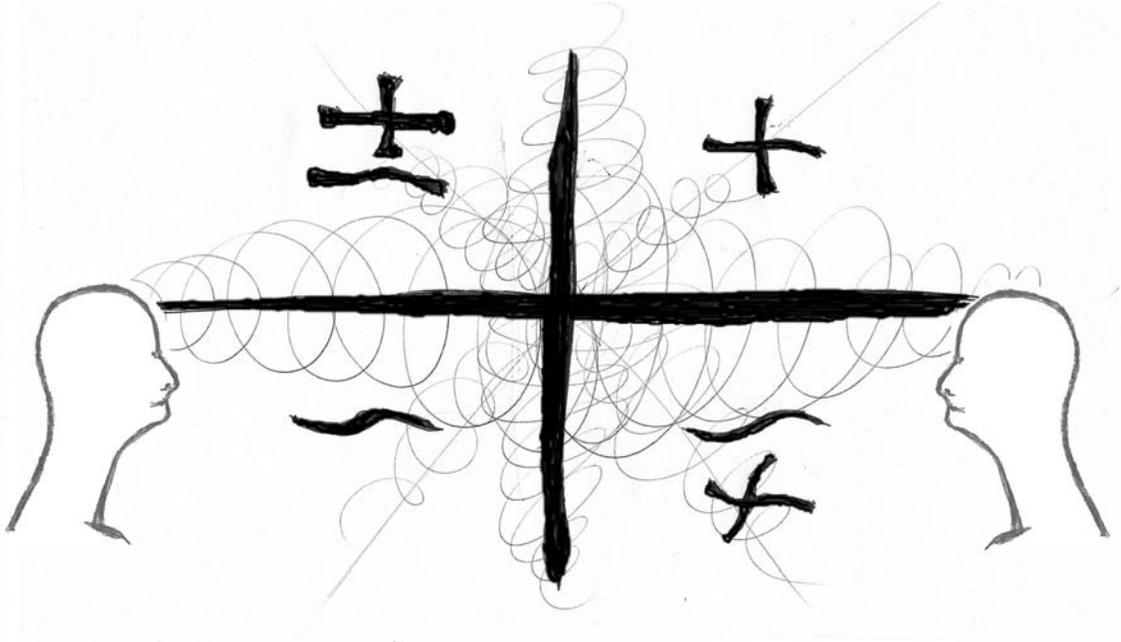


Figure 10. Our transpersonal relations. Transpersonal phenomena connect us with others and with realities greater than the individual self in many positive, negative and mundane ways.

As I said at the beginning of our study, I believe that positive modalities of experience--such as our experiences of spiritual liberation, love, transcendence, bliss, awe, fulfillment, etc.,--are the norm of what the qualitative nature of transpersonal phenomena are associated with, But what we believe is needed within transpersonal studies is a framework which recognizes the existence of positive, negative, and even mundane ways of conceptualizing transpersonal relations.

Certainly, the idea of a negative dimension of transpersonal phenomena is for the most part absent within transpersonal discussion, so I would like to end our

summary analysis by citing any potential connections of this predication to the work of our three thinkers.

The negative in Robert Nozick's work

We have already looked at Robert Nozick's suggestion that there may be a problem regarding how to understand the idea of a negative dimension of depth in relation to a teleological framework of depth within Reality. For instance, is the notion of increasing depth a singular teleological concept that includes a putative negative dimension? Or is the negative a separate dimension in its own right? Regardless of our answer here, Nozick says, "The state of *understanding* the negative may itself be something positive and deep" (Nozick, 1989, p. 208). And we suggest that it may be the case that to understand the negative may require that we participate in the reality of the negative to some degree, such as, for instance, in the form of our emphatic connection with another's suffering, our finiteness, limitations, loss, tragedy, pain, etc. These may all be valid modes of transpersonal participation we have suggested.

The negative in Ken Wilber's work

When we turn our attention towards Ken Wilber's work, one of the most notable ways in which a negative modality of depth seems to come up in Ken Wilber's framework relates

to Wilber's idea of the existential crisis of the individual, which occurs at fulcrum six (F-6) in Wilber's model of consciousness.

Recall Wilber said that before we can get to a point of true spiritual maturity and incorporative ability of the diversity of human perspectives the individual must confront a crisis of sorts. That is, as the individual delves into the depths of one's consciousness, moving towards the transpersonal domains, one must come to wrestle with the possibility that value and meaning are arbitrary and relative. Wilber characterizes this as a stage where there are too many clamoring, competing voices such that there is no up, down, right or wrong. As Wilber says, "focusing merely on the relativity of perspectives, throws you into a perspectival madness, a dizzying paralysis of will and judgment" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 193). This is an existentialist angst and a wrestling with absurdity and death.

Wilber certainly seems to be talking about a negative modality of experience, but in Wilber's system this crisis is not regarded as a negative *transpersonal* modality. Instead, it is a time in which, according to Wilber, the individual "stands on the brink of the transpersonal". So while Wilber's stage of existentialism or his stage of the

centaur represents a time of spiritual crisis, for Wilber, the good news is that this inward conflict due to the perception (or the false consciousness) of metaphysical pluralism and relativism can be resolved via an individual recognizing a reality within one's own consciousness which is not narrowed or individualistic, or even situated, but is the very essence of the ground of Being itself. This is what we earlier talked about as "Witness Consciousness" and as the attainment of nonduality.

In short, for Wilber the idea of a negative modality of transpersonal phenomena exists only in the sense of something going wrong in an individual's transpersonal development—a psychosis or its equivalent. As Wilber says, the deeper the depth the more things that can go wrong (Wilber, 1996a, p. 244). While we agree with Wilber's assessment that the deeper the depth the more that can go wrong--psychologically, emotionally, etc.--we would suggest that in a more neutral context, the degree of depth an individual experiences may be a measure of the degree of intensity of the individual's connection. And particularly noteworthy, we believe such intensity as we are speaking of can and will take both positive and negative forms.

The negative in Jorge Ferrer's work

The idea of a negative modality of transpersonal experience is not really addressed in Jorge Ferrer's work except to the extent that when Ferrer defines the idea of participatory knowing he says any way of knowing available to human beings can be considered participatory knowing. Assuming Ferrer's point, we have added to Ferrer's claim by suggesting that Ferrer's concept of participatory knowing is actually a correlate to transpersonal phenomena. Assuming, then, our point, we note that there are obviously negative ways in which we connect with others and with realities greater than the individual self (individual and social identities can be experienced as negative, etc.). Hence, there must also be negative modalities of transpersonal phenomena. This may be a novel way of talking about transpersonal phenomena that is essentially absent within transpersonal studies. Accordingly, we believe that clarifying what might be at stake here is part of the project of honoring the plurality of realities within Reality.

Participation as ultimate concern. The central element we have appealed to in our study is that of the relation of participation or connection itself--regardless of its context. Stating the matter as I have, our position sounds

somewhat similar to Ken Wilber's definition of spirituality in which Wilber said that in following Paul Tillich he would define spirituality or the spiritual line of development as "the developmental line of ultimate concern, regardless of its content" (Wilber, 1998, p. 331). And translating Wilber here, we ask what could ultimate concern imply other than the most intense participation or connection of the individual with others and with realities greater than the individual self? Such a view of spirituality and transpersonal phenomena is both broad and pluralistic in the sense of being a potentially all-inclusive view of the diversity of kinds of participative concern.

Focusing now more intently upon this idea of the challenge of conceptual inclusiveness, let us conclude our study.

The Key Aspiration of our Study is the Inclusion of All Participative Transpersonal Modalities of Experience

The key to the projects of all three of our thinkers, we suggest, is that of an aspiration to recognize, clarify, and include, all the participative--and so transpersonal--modalities of our experience within a framework or model of depth within R/reality. And one important way our study has approached this issue is in terms of the question of how a

map or model of Reality is arranged such as we discussed most notably in relation to Ken Wilber's work, and in a different context, in Nozick's work. Recall we cited Wilber's talk about a theory of everything and the goal of an integral psychology as including all legitimate aspects of human experience, as well as Wilber's all quadrant all level model of consciousness and Reality.

Wilber's model aspires to represent the spectrum of consciousness which is also regarded to be a correlate to the unfolding of Spirit Itself. This is why Wilber says that the goal of an integral philosophy is to embrace all forms of the manifestation of Spirit. Spirit is assumed to manifest as a spectrum of consciousness and can be represented (to some degree) via Wilber's idea of four quadrants. As Wilber summarizes:

Spirit—the pure immediate Suchness of reality—manifests as a subject and an object, and in both singular and plural forms—in other words, Spirit manifests as all four quadrants. And we aren't supposed to simply evaporate those quadrants—they are the radiant glory of Spirit's manifestation.

(Wilber, 1996a, p. 236)

Wilber says Spirit manifests in subjective and objective forms, in both individual and collective manifestations. And so a project geared towards conceptual

inclusiveness must take account of all of these forms of the transpersonal.

Our study has been in agreement with Ken Wilber in suggesting that there are different irreducible dimensions of experience that constitute the all-inclusive idea of Reality (or spiritual Reality). But we would add to Wilber's description by saying that within the category of the individual's inward experience, and as well, within the category of our cultural/social dimensions, there should probably be a recognition of positive, negative, and mundane forms of transpersonal phenomena as conceptually basic to the phenomena we are trying to describe. And where such a pluralistic framework is absent, we suggest this must represent a limitation of the true complexity of transpersonal phenomena.

Limitations of The Participatory Vision

Further relating to our aspiration towards conceptual inclusiveness, we are interested in Ferrer's declaration that, "Newer and more embracing universalist and pluralistic visions will continue to emerge" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 191). Following this idea, Ferrer even declares that his own participative framework of conceptualization will someday be surpassed. As Ferrer says:

There is no doubt, then, that the participatory vision will be refined, modified, and eventually deconstructed and situated in due time. Were the participatory vision to be embraced at some point by transpersonal scholars, for example, it will surely be only a question of time before its limitations emerge.

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 187)

Ferrer's openness to the potential limitations of his conceptual framework is refreshing and we believe Ferrer's words are particularly germane. More embracing, pluralist, and universalist visions of transpersonal phenomena will continue to emerge. But how will these "more embracing" frameworks be conceptualized?

We suggest such conceptualization will take the form of a framework that broadens the very meaning of participatory transpersonal phenomena by, in part, recognizing the usefulness of talking about positive, negative, and mundane forms of transpersonal phenomena.

Restating our main thesis one final time, we have argued that the participatory meanings of transpersonal phenomena should be expanded to include modes of individual experience which, according to some traditional accounts may not be considered as spiritual modalities of experience, and by the same token, will not be considered as transpersonal modes of experience either. We believe such a broad position does follow from the idea of

transpersonal phenomena as participatory, but none of our thinkers describe the matter in the exact terms we have chosen.

As regards Ken Wilber's work, we believe our position can accommodate Wilber's emphasis on the nonduality of ultimate reality to a limited degree, that is, in the qualified terms which suggest that nonduality is just one mode of participative transpersonal phenomena.

As regards Jorge Ferrer's work, we believe our vision is more easily accommodated by Ferrer's explicit participatory framework, but we believe Ferrer needs to work out the issue of whether his distinction between transpersonal events and participatory knowing might be a distinction without a real difference. We view this as a significant point.

As regards Robert Nozick's work, we believe Nozick's framework is perhaps the most philosophically complex in the sense that Nozick proceeds from the idea that the very notion of Reality is not yet worked out. And how we should view the idea of a negative dimension or teleology of depth is particularly relevant here. As we have noted, Nozick's work inspires our language of positive and negative modalities of transpersonal experience, but we wish Nozick

would have spoken to the connection of his philosophy to transpersonal theory and not just to mysticism in general.

In short, we believe all of our thinkers have contributed to a large discussion which we have no doubt insufficiently constructed regarding the pluralistic participative nature of transpersonal phenomena and how such phenomena might be represented in more explicit and critical terms. Certainly we have not defined all the terms of a potentially emerging conversation within transpersonal studies, but we hope that we have begun to carve out some territory to work in. And my hope is that our sketching of what may be at stake relevant to a broadened participatory definition of transpersonal phenomena can serve as a step in the direction of establishing a more inclusive framework for thinking about transpersonal relations, and ideally, we hope this framework will aid in connecting the disciplines of psychology, transpersonal theory, and philosophy most notably.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Wayne Williams was born in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, as the only child of Alvie and Jean Williams. Having lived in Oklahoma and Indiana, Wayne began his college studies at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana, where he developed an interest in writing, literature, history, and psychology. Wayne then received his B.S. in political science from Indiana Wesleyan in 1994 and intended to go to law school. The pull towards studying philosophy was, however, a strong attraction, and Wayne decided he wanted to delve into philosophical issues, writing, and eventually the elaboration of philosophy in teaching. Accordingly, Wayne sought admittance to the philosophy department at the University of Florida, but subsequently realized he would not have the freedom to develop a spiritual descriptive framework of metaphysics within analytical philosophy. Wayne then came to the religion department at the University of Florida where he pursued a master's in the philosophy of religion. For several years Wayne struggled to find a voice in writing and work out certain aspects concerning the metaphysics of human connection and value

that make up the human condition. Finally, in 2004, Wayne completed his first analysis and suggestion of a broad transpersonal vision within his master's thesis and received his master's degree from the University of Florida.

Wayne believes his work which aspires towards the development of a broad understanding of transpersonal phenomena is a development of metaphysics relevant to transpersonal studies. Accordingly, Wayne plans to pursue a Ph.D. in religion and become a professor within religious studies while he also pursues work in videography that will hopefully chronicle the continuation and clarification of the subject matter of the transpersonal nature of our lives which is Wayne's primary interest.