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Edward Berge

- Purpose** Get the conversation started.
- Outcome** Inspire discussion.
- Questions** Wilber's (mis?)representation of Laszlo's ideas

### Introduction

To get this party started I'd like to know if you agree with some of Wilber's representations of Laszlo's idea in Integral Spirituality. (Note I only have the draft copy of IS, so pagination might be different than the published version.)

[Admin note: The excerpt from Wilber is posted in the Document Library, under this forum's section.]

1. Do you agree with Wilber that Laszlo confuses individual and social holarchies? (p. 171)

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4 Edward Berge

revised 02/10/07 12:00PM



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I apologize that I didn't think that the reader might not have a copy of Integral Spirituality, or at least the draft copy I have that was widely disseminated.

I was referring to Ken's statements when he was talking about a hierarchy that goes like this: quantum events, atoms, molecules, biochemical structures, nerve impulses, neurons, assemblies of neurons, brain consciousness, culture. Ken said in the IS draft:

"That kind of holistic sequence is found in most systems thinking. It is central to Ervin Laszlo's 'theory of everything,' which Deepak Chopra endorses as 'the most brilliant and comprehensive theory of everything imaginable.' It is central to deep ecology. It is a crucial part of all New Paradigm thinking. Virtually all forms of eco-holism and Web-of-Life theories use it. And all of them are deeply, deeply, deeply confused.

"The more I grappled with this intractable issue of individual and social, the more it seemed to me that all these approaches were caught in the same basic confusion. They were stacking apples on top of oranges (and then calling the whole sequence oranges, or calling the

whole sequence apples)."

I assumed that it was standard, academic protocol to quote your source and the page number and that the reader could look it up. I did not assume, nor does standard, academic discourse assume, that the reader might not have the quoted reference; it is incumbent upon the reader to get it.

I question however that this arose from a) my assumption that the reader was lacking in knowledge or intellectual capacity or that b) I am so embedded in the statement (it was a question) that I assume it's truth without consideration of other perspectives. As to a) quite the contrary, as I assumed superior knowledge and capacity (given the context and people involved) and was genuinely seeking other perspectives. This also answers b) in that I assumed that by asking the question about Wilber's interpretation that it wasn't "the" truth and I was seeking other perspectives.

Granted you (Sara) did express that it was your interpretation of my motives for my omissions. This brings up an issue for me about this integral dialog process and perhaps getting too much into psychologizing others' assumptions and motives. But that dialog belongs in another section, which I'll take up there as time permits.



private

5 Sara Ross

02/10/07 1:22PM



**clarifying !**

Edward, I'm sorry for causing a misunderstanding! My "Stance" was NOT referring at all to you or any omissions you made in your post!

I was pointing at the starting point for me to engage your question: first, I questioned the assertion by Wilber that individual and social holarchies were confused. I couched it as a generalized stance in how I work with written texts. It was referring to instances, such as Wilber's assertions about Laszlo in the excerpt posted in the Doc Library.

I don't think integral dialogue is about psychologizing about others in the dialog, presuming motives without inquiry, heck no. I was reporting impressions I have experienced when I read the sorts of writing behaviors I described. If I were in dialog with a writer with those behaviors (such as when reviewing articles for submissions), I would inquire into them. Failing that opportunity to do sense-making, such impressions fall into the interpretive domain. Which I guess is the only place we get to do sense-making if we cannot dialog directly. Another strong motive to engage dialogically, huh?

Does this explanation clear up the confusion I caused?

Sara



private

6 Edward Berge

02/11/07 12:54PM



Understood Sara. Thanks for clarifying. I took it personally and defensively as perhaps people often do in dialog. Which is a meaty topic for discussion in itself, perhaps in the other sections on general discussion. Now back to Ken's statements on Laszlo.



private

7 Karen Kho

02/11/07 4:13PM



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In my reading of the Integral Spirituality text (p171-179) Wilber trying to make one point - which is to distinguish between individual and social holons. His discussion of Laszlo seems like a caricature to make that case. I can see why it is useful not to "stack" individual and social together, and it appears that Laszlo's hierarchy does this. But not having read more of Laszlo's work, I don't know how he actually uses these hierarchies - or holarchies - in practice. Maybe someone else can shed light on this.



private



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Mark Edwards

02/12/07 7:03AM



**I have a question...**

Hi karen,

Nice to hear from you. You mention something about "Laszlo's hierarchy" could you (or anyone else) describe what the levels are in this "Laszlo's hierarchy". Are you referring to an atom-cell-organ-organism-ecosystem-Gaia type of thing?

mark



private



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Edward Berge

02/12/07 9:27PM



Mark, Karen,

I listed it in post 4: to reiterate--quantum events, atoms, molecules, biochemical structures, nerve impulses, neurons, assemblies of neurons, brain consciousness, culture. I also cut and pasted a couple of paragraphs of Ken's comments in that post.



private



10

Charles Silverstein

02/13/07 5:58AM



**Yes, I agree...**

I agree with Mark's comment on Wilber's personalized vehemence - seems to me like an emotional charge for which there may be shadows at work.

I also appreciate Mark's distinction between spacial criteria and developmental criteria.

Related to this discussion is Wilber's charge of subtle reductionism (see Integral Spirituality draft pdf page 342 - 343, and see reference posted by Sara). Wilber says, "Intersubjectivity is not only ignored by Erwin Laszlo but, on the rare occasions it isn't, it is badly misinterpreted and caught in a widely extended and imperialistic subtle reductionism (possibly the worst subtle reductionism I have seen, given his braggadocio about its inclusiveness)."

Finally, Wilber says, "He is essentially a zone-#8 theorist and has been most of his life."

In Science and the Akashic Field, pages 144 - 146 Laszlo is bringing consciousness as an interiority into his thesis - zone #1. He talks about Chalmer's hard problem, and settles on panpsychism. On page 40 - 41 he speaks of transpersonal connections between cultures, and individual telepathy - seems like zone #3 to me.

But I believe Wilber's concern is with science as a way to the promised land. Wilber's position is that the great war was not between the material realists and the subjectivists,

but between the subjectivists and the intersubjectivists, with the intersubjectivists demolishing the subjectivists by deconstructing the cultural, linguistic and structural backdrop of consciousness. Books like *The Tao of Physics* played into the hands of the intersubjectivists by associating subjective spirituality with new paradigm physics and was able to discredit them both by showing that both engaged in the myth of the given and monological methodology. Wilber goes on to point out that the RH war was between the atomists and the systems theorists, while the LH war was between the subjectivists and the intersubjectivists. To Wilber, the RH war is unimportant and will continue to be fought with no consequence. The real war was the LH war with the intersubjectivists winning, and banishing introspectiveness, phenomenology and spirituality from both the LH and RH academia. Wilber's point is that the new paradigm science writers are in the same monological camp as the subjectivists, and they should bring the structuralism of the intersubjectivists into their analysis instead of being oblivious of [...more...](#)



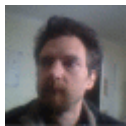
private



11

Alan Kazlev

02/13/07 6:02PM

**I have a different perspective**

*Do you agree with Wilber that Laszlo confuses individual and social holarchies?*

I suppose he does, if you're a fundamentalist Wilberian. But is it so important? All this stuff about individual and social holarchies, quadrants, methodological perspectives, and so on is just Wilber theory. Why should Laszlo be criticised for not conforming to Wilber's abstractionist mental edifice? Most importantly of all, why should Wilber get all flustered over it? If I create and refine my cosmology, I don't get upset because someone with a rival cosmology or metaphysic isn't playing by my rules. After all, they're my rules, not the other guy's. Same here.



private



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Sara Ross

02/14/07 6:20PM



Good point of detachment, Alan!

Edward's question has kept niggling at me, though. So I asked myself, why? Seems I mostly come back to a fascination with why what Wilber says is taken seriously when he does not employ ( as Jeff and others have pointed out) the same standards of critique he demands of others toward his work. Actually, it is one of our guidelines, here, too, so I'm trying to figure out how to enact it: E.g., Can we state our understanding of another's point of view and inquire into whether we understand accurately? I guess when that basic protocol is abandoned, it seems like jousting at shadows - who knows what anybody means about anything? I cannot seem to paraphrase what Wilber means to be sure I understand it, because he doesn't supply any supporting information to explain his assertion.

Edward, you posed the question to get this party started. I want to ask: do you want us, in this dialog, to find our way through to sorting out an answer? Do you have an answer? Is an answer possible?



private



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Edward Berge

02/14/07 9:48PM



Part of the dilemma in enacting the paradigm of understanding another's perspective is by what criteria is that judged? Is it judged by the person making the original claim, who when you communicate your understanding will say "yes, that's what I mean?" Maybe

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not, as I pointed out in "Who decides what Wilber means" at Integral World. This assumes that the originator knows what the hell he means! And the originator not only might but will have some degree of unconsciousness going on in his own claims, including his personal and familial dynamics, cultural contexts etc. So I'm guessing it takes a village to make meaning, because I might state my understanding of what the originator said and he might say "Yeah, now that you mention it, that is part of the meaning of what I said and I didn't realize it."

So is there an answer? No, there are various and sundry answers. I think it's through the process of a group's search for meaning and understanding that the original statement or question is only that, the starting point, a party started. The party is over when the last person passes out or goes home.



private

**Contribute**

*All times are displayed in your local time (Eastern)*

10 Charles Silverstein

02/13/07 5:58AM



close

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Wilber, being a philosopher and not a scientist, would have that the most important war fought for the minds of humans in the late 20th century was in philosophy. But I agree with with Laszlo, "Science...matters...it suggests a trustworthy way of looking at the world - and ourselves in the world."