BIG PICTURE PERSPECTIVES ON PLANETARY FLOURISHING

Metatheory for the Anthropocene

Volume 1

Edited by Nicholas Hedlund and Sean Esbjörn-Hargens

This volume is dedicated to Roy Bhaskar (1944–2014). Roy's unique combination of a beaming joyful heart with a fierce philosophical mind touched and inspired all of us. We are deeply grateful for the unwavering support and vision he brought to the CR-IT symposiums and their resulting volumes. May these volumes help carry the bright light of his life into the world serving to inspire the next generation of visionary scholar-practitioners.

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AFTER WORDS[1]

The Spirit of Evolution and Envelopment[2]

Frédéric Vandenberghe

> The integral knowledge admits the valid truths of all views of existence, valid in their own field, but it seeks to get rid of their limitations and negations and to harmonise and reconcile the partial truths in a larger truth which fulfills all the many sides of our being in the one omnipresent Existence.
>
> *Sri Aurobindo (2006, pp. 692–693)*

It is not only the Spirit that evolves. People evolve and change too. Roy Bhaskar started off as an anti-positivist philosopher of science (CR), became subsequently a grand dialectician in the analytical tradition (DCR) and, eventually, in a rather risky but courageous move, he also turned into an integral world philosopher (PMR).[3] The question for anyone who followed his trajectory is not so much to understand how this acorn grew into a sturdy oak, but to decide for oneself whether one should take the whole tree on board or rather stay with the roots (CR), the trunk (DCR), or the foliage (PMR). Kenneth Earl Wilber was originally a romantic developmental psychologist with a rather strong interest in Eastern mysticism. Later, he expanded his evolutionary model of transpersonal developmental psychology into a quadrilateral model of the development of the Kosmos, understood as the integration of the physio-, bio-, noo- and theospheres. The model, known as AQAL ('all quadrants, all levels'), includes behavioural, intentional, cultural, and social aspects into an encyclopedic evolutionary scheme that offers the key to the universe.

While both started to publish at about the same time in the mid-1970s and became leading figures of philosophical movements on the academic fringe, they did so from opposing and complementary sides of the geographical and geopolitical spectrum: UK versus USA, Oxford versus Lincoln (Nebraska), New Left versus New Age, Verso versus Shambhala, or, as Marshall (2012, p. 206) says in a

thoughtful comparison between CR and IT, 'social emancipation vs self-realization'. From his early critique of standard economics, Bhaskar's impetus has always been political and subversive. Notwithstanding his spiritual turn, he would remain an unconventional socialist at heart till the very end. His philosophy of metaReality can even be considered a prefiguration of a joyful communism in which the personal development of each and every one would go hand in hand with the societal development of all in a free, democratic, agapic community.

Ken Wilber for his part has little sympathy for Marxism or socialism.[4] His heart is elsewhere and so are his intellectual investments. He's not so much interested in social action and political change as in silent meditation, personal transformation, and self-development. He's not concerned with social structures, but with evolving spirals. To the extent that Eastern mysticism blends the quest for the Divine with a search for a higher Self, developmental psychology is a perfect outlet for his cosmic yearnings. As a psychologist steeped in spiritual practices, he wants to work out transpersonal psychology into an integral theory of holons (a term coined by Arthur Koestler).[5] What he knows best is Western developmental psychology, dynamic systems theory and Oriental mysticism. Unlike Bhaskar, he never quotes Lukács, Gramsci, or Althusser. His main references are Plotinus (who travelled in India), Sri Aurobindo and Whitehead on the philosophical axis, Piaget, Habermas, and Gebser on the developmental one. While his knowledge of Eastern spirituality is truly exceptional, his knowledge of the Western canon is often superficial and based on second hand readings (e.g., Lovejoy, Taylor, etc.). Whereas Bhaskar's texts are characteristically dense and his style is often forbidding (not to say, as his critics, 'appalling'), without any concession to the reader, Wilber writes above all for a non-academic public. His texts are clear and limpid; at times, they shade off into self-help literature. Unlike Bhaskar, he does not complexify, but simplify. That is his strength, but also his weakness.

The different structures of sensibility and engagement of the British philosopher and the American psychologist explain, in part, the divergences and convergences in form, content, and style that one can encounter in the book. Hans Despain, Iskra Nunez, Neil Hockey, and Leigh Price basically come from CR. If they engage the dialogue with IT, they characteristically do so from the vantage point of dialectical critical realism and not, as I had expected, that of the philosophy of metaReality. They are obviously receptive to spirituality, but that, one may surmise, is a precondition for engaging with IT in the first place. Even when they invoke the evolution of the Spirit, one can still sense the pulse of emancipatory politics beating through their texts. Their style is dialectical and, however constructive or reconstructive their approach, they are involved in critique.

Zachary Stein, Kevin Bowman, Gary Hampson, Matthew Rich-Tolsma, Otto Laske, and Bruce Alderman come from IT. In Wilber's writings, they have found a 'big picture theory'. They espouse his holarchic developmental approach with its hierarchical rainbow (orange, green, turquoise, etc.) and feel part of a spiritual avant-garde. They find CR attractive, share its militant anti-positivism and its wholesale rejection of 'flatland' conceptions of reality. They want to supplement IT

with a more robust ontology and think that CR might offer it. Their incorporation of CR is rather limited, however. They use it in the same way as they use systems theory—to rethink the natural sciences and, to a much lesser degree, the social sciences. They, thus, naturally concentrate on the Lower-Right quadrant and seek to syncretize constructivist epistemologies with realist ontologies. Although they are concerned with the environment and the imminent collapse of the ecosystem, as indicated by the reference to the Anthropocene in the very title of the book, they do not blame capitalism as such and do not show strong sympathy for 'radicals' (Bowman, for instance, puts Occupy Wall Street in the same basket of 'less developed extremes' as the Tea Party). They rather seem to believe that the ecological crisis is the outcome of a 'fractured worldview' and an 'industrial ontology' and that education will solve the issue. Their style is synthetic, their endeavour is encyclopedic, their approach classificatory.

1   Metatheory[1, 2, 3]

This is the follow-up volume of a protracted dialogue between hardline critical realists and softline integral theorists. Interestingly, both volumes are presented as contributions to metatheory: *Metatheory for the Twenty-First Century* and *Metatheory for the Anthropocene*. In spite of the title, the foreword (Walsh, 2016), and introduction to the first volume (Hedlund et al., 2016), the question remains: What is metatheory? As the prefix indicates, metatheory is theory about, above, or beyond theory. In an attempt to bring some clarity in an obscure issue, I will suggest it is so in a triple sense: as an overarching worldview (metatheory$_1$), as a mapping device (metatheory$_2$) and as a propaedeutic to substantive theorizing (metatheory$_3$).[6]

As an overarching worldview, metatheory$_1$ is an integral set of 'orienting generalizations' (Wilber, 1995, p. 5) for the systematization and organization of existing theories into a single overarching framework. As such, metatheory is an organizing device—a 'red thread' as Marx once said about his historical materialism—that runs through and connects a string of existing theories into a higher-level theory that transcends all and integrates each of them.

Thanks to its general drift, it is capable of infusing different theories, traditions, disciplines, paradigms, etc. with a deeper sense of unity and direction. Kant's system of transcendental deductions, Hegel's dialectics, and Comte's law of three stages offer historical examples of complex systematics that sort out and file away encyclopedic knowledge. Nowadays, Morin's complexity theory, Wilber's integral theory, and Bhaskar's critical realism are primary instances of totalizing frameworks for the Anthropocene.[7] Taken together, they have the potential to arrange a whole range of theories into a complex, transdisciplinary, encyclopedic, developmental, non-reductionist, dialectic metatheory of being, becoming, and nothingness—hence, a 'theory of everything' (Wilber, 2000a).

As a mapping device, metatheory$_2$ provides a topological analysis (*analysis situs*) of the underlying principles of vision and division that generate the multiplicity of

theories within an existing field of research. Understood as a kind of a 'generative grammar of theory', it takes the form of a systematic analysis of the philosophical presuppositions (the ontological, epistemological, and axiological premises) that structure a given field and make the reduction of the multiplicity of theories to a couple of basic positions and oppositions possible.

In philosophy, the basic oppositions that fracture the field are rationalism versus empiricism, idealism versus materialism, realism versus nominalism, holism versus atomism (or 'heapism', as Wilber (2000a, p. 53) occasionally calls it). These traditional oppositions, which unite the opponents in their common struggle, reappear in transfigured form in the sciences. In sociology, for instance, the philosophical positions are condensed into an opposition between agency and structure; in geography, between space and place; in psychology, between the mind and the brain. Once one has identified the main axes, factors, or vectors that traverse the field and carved up the space into sectors, quadrants or hori-zones, one can then continue the taxonomic approach and assign the various schools, paradigms, and authors to their respective quarters (e.g., Wilber, 1996, p. 77; 2000a, p. 51). Single names (e.g., Piaget, Freud, Parsons) or substantives (e.g., ecofeminism, hermeneutics, positivism) become, thus, 'epistemic subjects' who represent the different approaches in person and in substance.

Metatheory is not only mapping device. Its real function is to act as a propaedeutic to substantive theory construction. By making one conscious of the philosophical principles of vision and division that articulate a field, metatheory$_3$ allows us to test the architecture of existing theories, check the solidity of their foundations and the cogency of their conceptual articulations. As a 'holistic indexing system' (Wilber, 2000a, pp. 108–112), AQAL does not only sort out extant theories into discrete categories ('pigeonholing'), it also enjoins the analyst to integrate a whole range of existing theories ('pigeonwholing' as it were) into a non–reductionist, multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary, developmental, dynamic, holistic framework.

By forcing one to ponder the philosophical dimensions of any scientific theory—not just of one's opponents ('cynical' use of metatheory, according to Bourdieu, 1997), but also one's own ('clinical' use)—it also serves as an aid to develop a synthetic theory that is in continuous dialogue with the other contenders of the field. This synthetic drift is, of course, one of the hallmarks of integral philosophy. The adjective 'integral' does not only express reverence for the philosophy of Aurobindo and the Mother, but also a reference to the transdisciplinarity of its multi-tracking approach.

The relation between metatheory and theory is not one of mere subsumption of the particular under the general. Theories intervene at a lower level of generality and have to craft their own concepts and their own articulations. Let's take my own field, social theory, as an example: The general injunction to explore the different aspects of reality in an integral fashion corresponds to a demand to develop a multi-level and multi-dimensional theory of society that reduces neither structure to agency (or vice versa) nor action to instrumental-strategic action (Alexander,

1981–1982). How the different social theories take that injunction into account and how they articulate their main concepts (system, structure, autopoiesis in the case of Luhmann; field, habitus and practice for Bourdieu or system; lifeworld and action for Habermas) is up to them. Metatheory only tells them to develop the concepts in such a way that they cover the whole spectre of possibilities without reduction or conflation.

2   Metacritique[1, 2]

Integral theory and critical realism are both metatheories. Proposing a systematic representation of the world, they are sophisticated mapping devices that highlight the interrelations between the parts and the wholes that make up the universe, as well as the theories that try to capture them. At their best, they function like a GPS that helps us to find where we stand, tells us what to look for, and indicates to us where to go (both in the theoretical universe and the cosmos at large).

What distinguishes IT from CR is metacritique. Hans Despain (2013, p. 509) has aptly summarized the difference in the following terms: 'Integral theory is a metatheory, dialectical critical realism is a metacritique of the real contradictions'. If metatheory is theory about theory in the triple sense we've outlined above, metacritique is, literally, critique of critique (as in Hamann's and Herder's critiques of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*), critique that comes after or on top of critique and points to a possible transcendence of the antinomies. In CR, metacritique comes essentially as a two-pronged critique of theories and metatheories (like Popper's positivism or Rorty's postmodernism) that ties conceptual criticism via *Ideologiekritik* to social critique. In Bhaskar's conceptual universe, metacritique comes in two forms (Bhaskar, 1993, pp. 354–365): metacritique[1] isolates an absence in a text, theory, or practice, indicating an incompleteness, inconsistency, or tension that is not contingent, but of a systematic nature. The pinpointing of a 'T/P inconsistency' within positivism, which denies in theory both the causality of freedom scientific experiments presuppose (von Wright) and the communication among scientists (Habermas) it practices, is an example of the first type of metacritique.

Wilber also practices immanent conceptual critique, but unlike his British-Indian colleague, he does not proceed to social analysis and social critique. Inspired by Apel's and Habermas's systematic tracing of 'performative contradictions', time and again he looks for tensions in the theories of his contenders and slams them for saying one thing (e.g., 'everything is relative', 'there are no hierarchies'), while doing something else (e.g., affirming the superiority of one's own theory, introducing a hierarchy that denies hierarchy). Usually, the drift of his argument goes in the direction of a more encompassing theory that resolves the tension through transcendence and inclusion of the lower-level theory. Following through the enfolding spiral, the *telos* of the affirmative negations is an integral theory that ideally includes everything into the Spirit and excludes nothing from the Universe.

While Wilber's theory is evolutionary, in spite of its occasional invocations of Hegel, it is hardly dialectical, however. More driven by the pull of identity than

the push of difference, it lacks the negativity and the causality of absences. In Bhas-karese, this *horror vacui* implies 'ontological monovalence' (Bhaskar, 1993, p. 40), understood as denial of the negativity in Being. With its neo-Platonic dialectic ascending from the many to the One and descending from the One to the many, it spiritualizes the whole of existence and dissolves difference and contradiction in the process of transcendence. The imposition of a teleological, univocal, and monovalent narrative on the multiplicity papers over the real contradictions in life and suggests that cultivation of the Self can overcome domination, alienation, and reification. Wilber's non-engagement with Marxism may be related to the 'mystical shell' of his spiritual dialectics and explain why he abstains from social analysis and from social critique, which brings us to metacritique$_2$.

In Bhaskar, theoretical metacritique is immediately followed by social critique. If metacritique$_1$ identifies the omission of a concept or category in a theory as a symptom of a systematic error in the theoretical construction, metacritique$_2$ traces this error back to its historical roots and to the underlying structures of oppression and domination in society. Thus, radicalizing Horkheimer's classic critique of so-called 'traditional theory' (Horkheimer, 1988/1937), Bhaskar explains the theory/practice inconsistency of positivism through a reconceptualization of the latter as an ideology of science that obfuscates the possibility of practice (Bhaskar, 1986, pp. 151–218), an inconsistency that can only be overcome in practice through a radical transformation of society. In their respective chapters, both Despain and Price make creative use of the subscript$_2$ to tie immanent conceptual to practical social critique. For them, as for Bhaskar, metacritique$_2$ operates as a bridge between the theory under scrutiny and the practices that help to reproduce it. Like in critical theory, from Marx to Adorno and Bourdieu, the reflexive analysis of the structural powers of 'generalized master–slave relations' that weigh on the mind of the social actors and block their correct perception and conceptualization of reality, is a preamble to the resolution of theoretical gaps in and through transformative social practices. Nothing forecloses to trace back social transformative practices to their existential ground. That is what the later passage from transformative to 'transformed transformative practice' (Bhaskar, 1993, pp. 119–120) was all about. It is one of the moves that connect DCR to the philosophy of metaReality. It is at this point where IT and CR can meet, making CR more developmental, existential, and internal, but, conversely, also making IT more social, political, and external, gearing into the outer world. Not only transfiguring it, but also actively transforming it.

3   Radical Constructivism

Whether they originally come from CR or IT, the authors of this volume (and its companion) all seem to agree that CR is definitely stronger on ontology and that it can help to upgrade IT's credentials and make it more robust, by moving away from Wilber's constructivist epistemology (see Marshall, 2012a; Hedlund, 2016). I concur, but at the same time I think that the development of critical realism, from basic (first-wave CR)

via dialectical critical realism (second wave CR) to the philosophy of metaReality (third wave CR), has not only deepened, but to a certain extent also weakened Bhaskar's strong ontological stand. I do not mean that to detract from Bhaskar's main achievements, but to indicate some problems with the canonical distinction between the intransitive (ID) and the transitive dimensions (TD) of knowledge. As one moves from the philosophy of the natural sciences to the philosophy of social science and, from there, to the philosophy of metaReality, the categorical distinction starts to blur. The hard and fast 'ID/ TD'-distinction of transcendental realism morphs into the 'quasi-intransitivity' of critical naturalism and then, eventually, evaporates into the 'in/transitivity' of non-duality.[8] Through an insistence on the productivity of culture, language, and consciousness, I will bring CR closer to IT. The position I'll defend is not that of integral realism, however, but of a realist hermeneutics (Vandenberghe, 2014).

But let us first look at the debate between Wilber and Bhaskar in the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* (Bhaskar, 2012; Wilber, 2012; and the follow-up essay in Wilber, 2013; see also Alderman in Volume 2).[9] The main point of contention concerns the relation between epistemology and ontology. Can ontology 'subsist' without epistemology, as Bhaskar claims? Or are ontology and epistemology interdependent, co-created, and uni-dual, as Wilber argues? The whole discussion concentrates on the philosophy of the natural sciences and the ontology of nature. The social world as such is not really taken into account, lest it reappears within science as a context of determination that affects the truth. There are occasional references to dialectics and spirituality, but the fact that Wilber considers the philosophy of metaReality a form of 'cheating' (Wilber, 2012, p. 46)—i.e. smuggling consciousness into the CR edifice—is indicative that the argument is about basic (or first-wave) critical realism, as set out in *A Realist Theory of Science* (Bhaskar, 1978).

First-wave critical realism is an anti-positivist war machine and a defence of science. A realist theory of science is really a theory for science. It does not privilege the philosophical theories of science, but fastens on the ordinary practices of scientists and brings them to conceptual clarity. Against positivist philosophies that conceive of science as an ongoing application of regression analysis and of causality as a mental correlation between contingent events, Bhaskar insists that science is 'abductive' and inventive (rather than deductive and falsificationist, as in Popper-Hempel's DN-model). It consists in imagining hypothetical complex generative mechanisms whose existence, if demonstrated by sense extending technologies, would explain the correlation between events not as contingent but as necessary.

Bhaskar leaves no doubt that the theoretical invention of hypothetical causal mechanisms is a *conditio sine qua non* of science; yet at the same time he strongly denies that theories 'produce', 'perform', or 'enact' the mechanisms they postulate. To that effect, he introduces the distinction between the 'transitive' and 'intransitive' dimension of knowledge (Bhaskar, 1979, pp. 26–27), the former pertaining to the historically variable theories—the succession of 'paradigms'—that try to capture the real; the latter referring to the reality that exists independently of those

theories, yet that they presuppose as their reference, ground, and condition of possibility.

For critical realism, this distinction between the epistemic/transitive and the ontological/intransitive is essential. It is enough to even suggest that the transitive might in one way or another induce the intransitive and immediately the red card of 'epistemic fallacy' (Bhaskar, 1979, p. 36) will be shown.[10] Hence, it comes as no surprise that when Wilber contests that the object can exist independently of consciousness, and *a fortiori* of the knowledge we have of it, critical realists charge him of deliberately fusing and confusing the TD and the ID. The only way to avoid the epistemic fallacy, according to Bhaskar (2013, p. 40), is to 'allow that the object exists independently of consciousness'.

Wilber resists, though, and assails basic critical realism from a similar vantage point as the philosophy of metaReality. Accessing higher levels of consciousness that reveal a higher truth and a higher reality, he looks down on CR as a philosophy of the 'demi-real'. It is not that IT refuses ontology altogether; rather it proposes a non-dual ontology that considers the ID and TD, ontology and epistemology, being and consciousness as two aspects of a single 'in/transitive' or 'epistemontological' reality. The first and most basic tenet of IT leaves no doubt about it: 'Reality as a whole is not composed of things or processes, but of holons' (Wilber, 2005, p. 43)—all the way up and all the way down. Every part is part of a whole, which is in turn part of a larger whole, and so forth *ad infinitum*. Thus, like the extremes, the part and whole touch each other and commingle: from every part, one can ascend to the whole, which is in the part, which is in the whole (to paraphrase Morin's (1986, pp. 101–102) 'principle of hologrammatics'). Through consciousness, every part is merologically connected to something larger and more encompassing that includes and transcends it. The Spirit is everywhere. Wilber insists that all beings, all entities in the universe have an interior and, therefore, a consciousness or, at least, a proto-consciousness. All things, including material things, have an interior that connects them to the Spirit. He not only defends a 'panpsychism' in the Schellingian tradition of Western Vedanta, which is kind of fine—the Spirit dwells in the material world and, we, humans, are only the conscious tip of the evolving universe—but also argues that ontology cannot be separated from epistemology: 'IT is panpsychic—epistemology and ontology/consciousness and being cannot be torn asunder' (Wilber, 2013, p. 44).[11]

This is the case, according to Wilber, because our conception of reality is actually constitutive of reality. It 'co-creates' and 'co-constructs', 'performs' and 'enacts' reality, precisely as 'reality' (please note the quotation marks). Although this may sound like radical anti-realism, a closer look reveals, however, that his 'enactivism' is more akin to a form of 'actualism': 'the intransitive object is dissolved into actualized relations and perspectives' (Rutzou, 2012, p. 217). The real is not necessarily denied in its existence, but it is reduced to an actuality ('reality') and identified with a series of contingent events (events as experienced by some sentient, proto-conscious or conscious entity) that can neither be grasped from without, nor exist without a perspective or interior that co-creates and co-constitutes it in the act of

cognition. The real is not only known, but necessarily 'enacted' and 'performed' by contingent acts of knowledge.

Wilber cannot think of reality without an observer, without someone or something who conceives of the world and apprehends it. Note, however, that if Wilber commits both the epistemic and the actualist fallacies, he does not commit the anthropic fallacy. Drawing on Maturana and Varela's radical constructivism, he argues that non-human, living animals (like frogs) construct their own world from their own point of view.[12] To understand what they see, one must observe what they cannot see, to wit their point of view on the world that is also a point of view in the world and of the world. Following Whitehead's process philosophy, Wilber takes the freedom to extend biological phenomenology to physics and argues that what holds for living beings also holds for non-living organic beings (e.g., atoms and molecules) who, allegedly, 'pre-hend' in their own way their own reality. What holds for frogs and atoms also holds for humans. They also can only apprehend the world from their own point of view.

The radical constructivism of system theorists, like Von Foerster, Maturana, and Varela, but also Morin and Luhmann, should not be confounded with the philosophical deconstruction of a Derrida or the social construction of sociologists and social psychologists (Le Moigne, 1999), though, as we will see below, Wilber willingly fuses the two. It is actually much more radical and constitutes in my opinion the most serious challenge to realism. Through a scientific analysis of how organisms (not only frogs, but also humans, and among humans, scientists) observe and necessarily constitute their environment from a certain perspective, second-order cybernetics introduces an observer into the observing system—'observing systems', to use the wonderfully reflexive title of Von Foerster. Through a recursive loop, it shows that there is and can be no object without a subject, no environment without a system, no world without a worldview that constitutes it.

From the point of view of radical constructivism, realism is the philosophy of a science that protects its foundations, but that is unwilling to consider its foundations as a result of its own epistemic operations (Fuchs, 2001). On a first level of observation, constructivism confirms the transcendental presuppositions of realism, but—and here comes the rub—as presuppositions of the sciences. Without them, the sciences could not operate. What appears obvious and necessary to the sciences appears, however, to an observer of the second order as pretty contingent. For sure, the world is as it is, but for the constructivist who observes the realist who observes the scientist, this self-same world that is always already presupposed by them can only appear as it is from a certain perspective, namely that of the scientist, which is different from that of common sense, which is different from that of the artist, the religionist, or the extraterrestrial visitor. From this perspective, the presuppositions of observations are not seen as the consequence of its very observations, but held as an invariant and necessary presupposition. Without a transcendental observer of all observers, realism is, at best, a contingent attempt to reduce contingency, and, at worst, a lack of reflexivity that transforms its own weakness into strength.

4 Social Constructivism

As a developmentalist, Wilber is committed to the evolution of the Spirit to ever higher levels of enfolding. What interests him is tracking the unfolding of the levels of consciousness through history, both onto- and phylogenetically, both in individuals and collectives. When one changes levels, going from, say, 'preop' to 'conop' and 'formop' (Piaget) or—moving now from individuals to whole collectives—from mythic to rational and beyond (Wilber), the worldview changes. And with the worldview, the Kosmos changes as well: The Kosmos looks different at each of these stages because the Kosmos *is* different at each of these stages' (Wilber, 2006, p. 72). 'Different worldviews create different worlds, enact different worlds, they aren't just the same world seen differently' (p. 52) 'And at each stage of development the world looks different because the world *is* different—and there is the great postmodern revelation' (p. 58).

The emphasis on the verb leaves no doubt about it—Wilber is no realist at all.[13] He does not assent to an ontology that is relatively independent from epistemology, but in typical postmodern mode, melds the two together in some kind of 'epistemontology'. For someone who approaches reality from a non-dual perspective, that could hardly be otherwise. In the same way as epistemology cannot be separated from ontology, the object cannot be separated from the subject or the transitive from the intransitive. The transitive is in the intransitive, and vice versa. It is in/transitive.

Changes of levels are akin to paradigm changes (Wilber, 2000a, pp. 158–160). Like Thomas Kuhn, Wilber assumes that when the worldview changes, the world changes as well. It is not the same world seen from a different perspective; it is a different world altogether that emerges. What we call 'worldview' is not a view on the world, the selfsame world that is analyzed and experienced differently at different levels by differently situated observers, as realists would claim, but a view or vision of the world and a perspective on it that constitutes a world by enacting a certain version of it as the world, as pragmatists, constructivists, and perspectivists like Whitehead, Latour, and Viveiros de Castro would claim.[14] What we as observers of the world (of the others) call a worldview (perspective of the observer) is experienced by those who perform it (perspective of the participant) as the world itself.

Phenomenologically speaking, Wilber is, of course, correct, but for a realist the question is not so much how the world is experienced or observed by the participant, but how the world that is analyzed by the sciences really *is*, independently from the theories, the paradigms, the worldview from which it is observed. Rigorously speaking, Wilber is talking about the lifeworld—the *Lebenswelt*, to be understood by phenomenologists—not about the world as such. When he extends the experience of the world from a certain worldview to the world as such, he commits the fallacy of actualism (i.e. reduction of the real to the actual, of laws to constant conjunctions of events and experiences). And, worse, when he confuses the worldview with the world, when he induces the world from the worldview,

substituting surreptitiously the 'world' for the world (without quote marks), he commits the epistemic fallacy as well.

Nick Hedlund (2016), who also reads IT through the lens of CR, summarizes Wilber's ontology in the following terms:

> For Wilber, and IT at large, ontology is enactively or *empirically contingent* (i.e., a product or 'co-creation' of the knowing-consciousness or experience of sentient beings/holons), *developmentally stratified* (i.e., according to species and psychological levels of consciousness), and therefore *pluralistic* (i.e., there are multiple ontologies and many worlds that may or may not referentially overlap). In short, IT champions an irrealist *ontology of the phenomenal*, which is in marked contrast to that of CR (for whom it wouldn't really be considered an ontology at all).
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> *(p. 189)*

As always, though, the tables can be turned. With Michael Schwartz (2016), we can argue that CR's emphasis on the real has led to a correlative neglect of actuality and of experiences. The critique of actualism has led CR to abandon the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) to hermeneutics, pragmatism, and phenomenology. This is unfortunate. Rather than dispensing of those rival approaches, CR should try to reclaim them and offer, when possible, realist interpretations of them.[15] As actualism is constellationally contained within realism, this can easily be done. From this perspective, one could say that IT is philosophically wrong when it muddles the world and the lifeworld, but that it is right when it leads science back to the natural experience of the world and, thus, to the lifeworld. As far as I am concerned, it should even be more phenomenological and go back with Husserl and Heidegger 'to the things themselves' as they are given in ordinary experience. This shift from scientific experiments with nature to experiences of nature allows one not only to interpret and make sense of pseudo-ontological statements about multiple worlds, but also to see that in spite of everything CR remains transcendentally tied to its origins in the philosophy of science. Even if it offers a radical critique of positivist science, it still shares a certain scientism with its opponents. Science is not only presupposed by it, but it is also reaffirmed with the double result that the ontology of science is generalized ('ontologized' as it were) and that non- and pre-scientific experiences of nature are devalued. Indeed, it is only with the philosophy of metaReality that a poetics of nature can be envisaged.

5   The Constitution of Society

In this collection of essays, integralists and realists encounter each other as fellow metatheorists. In her superb contribution to the volume, Iskra Nunez has found the right formula for the common endeavour: the exploration takes 'a basic critical realist metatheoretical vision of reality and science', and then uses 'integral theory as a common heuristic for inclusion'. This formula is synthetic, not syncretic, and indicates the direction of a fruitful dialogue with IT (see also Hedlund,

2016). Like a fusion of differing perspectives of the right and left eye that allow depth perception ('stereopsis'), the blending of CR's depth ontology with IT's epistemic pluralism can be expected to deepen our philosophical understanding and to broaden our perspective on the world. I concur, but I also think that Wilber's more hermeneutical position can be used to open up CR from within and disconnect it from the materialism to which realists remain committed, not just politically, but also theoretically and metatheorically. I am no longer entirely convinced by the twinning of CR and Marxism. To untie the knot, I will suggest that nothing excludes that CR adopts a more idealist and constructivist approach in the social sciences. My suggestion is not only that a hermeneutic analysis of the social and historical world is compatible with CR. Rather I want to introduce hermeneutics as an idealist version of critical realism.

When Bhaskar analyzed the ontological presuppositions of the natural sciences through a transcendental investigation of scientific experiments, he did not tie his fate to any of the theories in physics, biology, or chemistry. In the social sciences, however, he was not that cautious and explicitly took sides. Against Durkheim and Weber, he opted for Marx and enthroned Marxism as the epitome of a critical naturalism. The question is now if this alliance can be partially undone and whether the pluralism that characterizes the social sciences can be reinstated.

To make my argument, let me state the obvious. Human beings are, by nature, cultural beings, endowed with transformative powers and reflexive capabilities. Thanks to culture, and above all, thanks to language, they live in a world (the lifeworld) that always already makes sense. It is against this inherited background of symbols and meanings, norms and rules, and expressions that actors can endow their action with meaning and intervene in the world to change it or to adapt to it. The social world is shot through with meanings, norms, and aesthetic expressions. Unlike the natural world, the social world is cultural and historical.[16] It is, literally, made by humans; yet culture, society, and history are also what make Man and transform a biological animal into a human 'species being' (Feuerbach's and Marx's *Gattungswesen*), endowed with reflexivity, capability, and creativity.

Thanks to these endowments, human beings are able to make history and society with will and consciousness, though not, as is well known, 'in conditions that they themselves have freely chosen' (*nicht aus freien Stücken*). The social, cultural and historical preconditions of agency are 'immediately encountered', 'given', not chosen, 'transmitted', not created (*unmittelbar vorgefundenen, gegebenen und überlieferten Umständen*) (Marx, 1988, p. 215). To the extent, however, that the preconditions of action that are transmitted have themselves to be produced and reproduced, changed or transformed to retain their causal power, they are not transcendental, but, as Habermas (1973, p. 240) says, 'quasi-transcendental' conditions of social action, social order, and social change.

Following Bhaskar, who emphasizes that the preconditions of action are themselves the result of action, and Margaret Archer (1988), who stresses that the conditions of action that the social sciences analyze are not produced by the social scientists, nor, strictly speaking, by the actors themselves who encounter them, but,

rather, by their predecessors who made them by incorporating descriptions of the social world into their actions, we can now better understand why in the social sciences the transitive dimension of knowledge cannot be as rigorously separated from the intransitive dimensions as in the natural sciences.[17]

Though they act at different times, causes and consequences are intrinsically interconnected in the social world. What appears as a transcendental precondition of action is itself an inherited product; yet the product of the past that is a precondition of present action has itself to be acknowledged and activated by the agent to be active. Given that the knowledge of the social is somehow always implicated in the constitution of the social, the intransitive is not really intransitive, but 'quasi-intransitive'. As far as I am concerned, one might as well say 'quasi-transitive'. Rather than stressing the independent nature of the social, one might as well emphasize the dependency of the social on common sense and fully incorporate Wilber's enactivism into a hermeneutic sociology of transformative social action.

In the social world, the descriptions of the social world are reflexively and constitutively tied to its reproduction and transformation. This is true for the scientific descriptions, which 'circle in and out' of the sciences, and also, *a fortiori*, for the common sense descriptions and symbolic representations of the world that ordinary actors use in their everyday life. As scientific concepts slip over into common sense, the social sciences are complicit in the constitution of the social world they describe. In this sense, every competent actor may be said to be a social theorist. Consequently, as the transitive (social-cultural-historical) is in the intransitive, as the transitive constitutes the intransitive dimension (culture-society and history), the distinction between the transitive and the intransitive dimension of knowledge collapses.

Hermeneutics is more than a method of understanding. It is an ontological condition of life in society as such (Gadamer, 1999). It is only because the world is always already 'pre-interpreted, pre-understood, and pre-structured' by the background of a shared context of meaning that human action is possible. The world is disclosed to us as a meaningful one that always already makes sense. Yet, in another sense, the world is disclosed through us. As actors, we give meaning to the world. Between the actors and the world, cultural understandings always intervene as a mediating element that discloses the world as a properly human world that is shared by others.

6   Integral Sociology

In spite of everything, Wilber remains a developmental psychologist with mystical inklings. He's not a sociologist, and if he is one, he's definitely not a very good one, if I may say so. Unlike Bhaskar, who has done a serious effort to grapple with the classics of the discipline, was deeply involved in the social theory of the 1980s (remember structuration theory?) and is now being relaunched by prominent American sociologists (like Phil Gorski, Chris Smith, and George Steinmetz), Wilber is not well versed in sociology. His knowledge of sociological authors seems

rather dated (Talcott Parsons, Gerhard Lenski, etc.), going back to his student days, and limited—with occasional references to cultural anthropology (Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas) and religious sociology (Robert Bellah, Peter Berger, etc.).

Although he accepts the phenomenon of so-called 'emergence' in other fields (cf. Tenet 3, Wilber, 1995, pp. 53–56), apparently unaware of Durkheim's foundations of sociology, he refuses to grant relative autonomy to social facts and, thereby, implicitly negates the relative autonomy of sociology as a discipline too. For him, the individual and the social are only 'two aspects of the same thing, not two fundamentally different things (or levels)' (Wilber, 1995, p. 90). Going against the basic premises of a stratified social ontology, the social does not refer to a different stratum of reality that emerges out of the relations between individuals and groups, but rather to the interactions between individuals and groups themselves. In Wilber's conception, there seems to be hardly any room for social structure. Instead of a relational conception of the social sciences (Bhaskar, 1979, pp. 41–47), we get, at best, an interactionist view of society as individuals and groups acting together, and at worst, a positivist, cognitivist, and behaviourist view of society as embodied brains behaving together. In terms of the stratified conception of social reality and its celebrated distinction between the real (the totality of social relations), the actual (the totality of interactions), and the empirical (the correlations that are observed by 'brainspotters'), this amounts to a systematic reduction of the real to the actual and of the empirical to the observable.

To make things worse, he systematically seems to equate sociology with a positivist, empiricist and behaviourist approach of social externalities, with the result that it appears as a flat systems theory of the social world that has all the trappings of Comte's 'social physics':[18]

> The Lower-Right quadrant, in other words, represents all the exterior forms of *social* systems, forms that also can be *seen*, forms that are empirical and behavioral (everything on the Right half of the diagram is empirical, because it involves the exterior forms of holons; in this case, the social holon). This is why the study of human 'sociology' (especially in Anglo-Saxon countries) has usually been the study of the observable *behavior* of social systems (or 'social action systems').
>
> *(Wilber, 1995, p. 128)*

Indeed, in his encyclopedia of the sciences, both sociology and systems theory occupy the same space—the Lower-Right quadrant (Wilber, 1995, p. 127; 2006, p. 65; 2010, p. 43)—which makes one wonder not only how adequate his scheme is (it's an analytic device for pigeonholing that has serious trouble with intersections and complex cases), but also how he actually defines sociology and separates it from systems theory. Moreover, as he denounces positivism, but does otherwise not really question its relevance in the natural sciences, positivism is not overcome in the social sciences either. Sharp as ever, Mervyn Hartwig (2016) draws hard conclusions:

> In classic hermeneutical fashion (cf. e.g. Habermas, a key philosophical mentor), the whole right hand (RH) half of the four quadrants is ceded to

positivistically conceived science by Wilber—a move that pre-empts the possibility of a non-positivist naturalism or unification of the social and natural sciences.

In principle, nothing precludes, however, the development of a multi-dimensional conception of sociology as a discipline that is able to conceptualize and integrate social structure, culture and agency into a unique framework. The overall scheme of AQAL may be right. It is just that our psychologist has misidentified sociology. I think that is the case.[19] But before I get there and retranslate the Quad of integral development into the metatheoretical 'space of possibilities' of the social sciences (Vandenberghe, 2009), let me quickly remind the reader how the grid is actually constructed (Wilber, 1995, pp. 115–157, 197–198; 1996, pp. 63–95).

The basic idea behind the AQAL-model is simple: 'Spirit-in-action manifests as all four quadrants' (Wilber, 2006, p. 94). This single idea can, in turn, be decomposed in two affirmations, an analytical one and a developmental one, and two corresponding injunctions, a multi-dimensional and a multi-level one: (1) the Spirit manifests itself in all corners of the universe and these corners can be mapped according to two arch-polarities, namely the interior-exterior and the individual-collective. In order to develop a multi-dimensional, non-reductive analysis of reality, one must simultaneously track all its quadrants ('All Quadrants', see Wilber, 1997); (2) The Spirit evolves and is teleologically directed towards the attainment of higher levels of consciousness throughout the Kosmos. Those levels of consciousness have to be hierarchically ordered into developmental sequences at different levels of attainment ('All Levels', see Wilber, 2000b).

The analytic idea is that everything in the Kosmos is a holon in which the Spirit 'plays' out. Every thing, be it a material, corporeal, psychic, social, cultural, or spiritual thing, has both an interior and an exterior aspect, as well as an individual and collective one. These distinctions are not empirical ones, but to adapt Talcott Parsons's (1937, p. 757) 'analytical realism' to the case at hand, analytical ones.[20] This means that 'no holon simply exists *in* one of the four quadrants'; 'each holon *has* four aspects' (Wilber, 1995, p. 135). Each holon, whether a piece of clay, a bush in the garden, a chimpanzee or a bureaucrat behind his desk, has four quads and has, therefore, to be analyzed from multiple, complementary perspectives, though, obviously, not all holons have the same depth. A sentient being as a bureaucrat has more depth than his desk.

If we fill in the scheme, we arrive at the well-known diagrammatic representation of the integral quadrants (see Figure A.1), with the soul (*psyche*: individual and internal) in the Upper-Left Hand, culture (*pneuma*: collective and internal) in the Lower-Left Hand, the material body (*soma*: individual and external) in the Upper-Right Hand and society (*societas*: collective and external) in the Lower-Right Hand. Of the corresponding sciences, psychology (psycho-analysis *senso latu*) investigates intentional (conscious, unconscious, and supraconscious) states of the self at the individual level, whereas pneumatology (hermeneutics *senso strictu*) studies cultural worldviews and lifeworlds of communities at the collective level.

interior   exterior

I   IT

intentional   behavioral

UL   UR

individual
(micro)

LL   LR

cultural   social
(worldspace)   (system)

collective or
communal
(macro)

WE   ITS

Left Hand   Right Hand
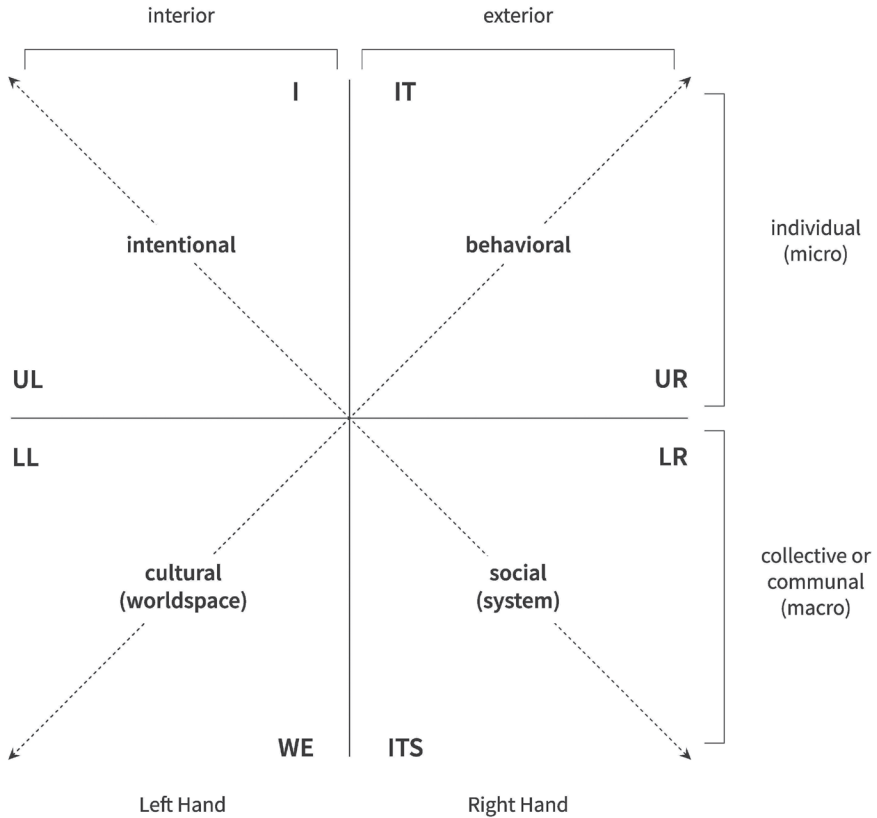
FIGURE A.1 Wilber's four quadrants

Both analyze interiors, seek depth, and are interpretative. Somatology studies the behaviour of brains and bodies at the individual level in behaviourist and cognitivist terms, while sociology, its collective counterpart, tries to explain collective behaviour in functionalist, structuralist, and systemic terms. Dealing with exterior behaviours, both are determinist and reductionist.

7   Revisiting the Quad: RAQAL

Assuming that any study of communities and collectives must be integral and integrative, we can now outline the contours of a multi-dimensional and multi-level sociology.[21] On the internal-external axis, it would be both anthropological and sociological, idealist and materialist, intersubjective and interobjective, culturalist and naturalist, emic and etic, interpretative and explanatory, quantitative and qualitative. It would ideally combine an external, structural, and systemic approach of the social world (etic perspective of the external observer) with an internal, interpretative and hermeneutic approach (emic perspective of the participant).

Working with a multi-dimensional concept of action (rational and non-rational action, symbolic and non-symbolic action) and a two-level conception of society (both as lifeworld and system), it would neither reduce action to strategic action (as in rational choice) nor culture to a system of codes (as in structuralism).[22]

On the individual-collective axis, it would be both micro and macro and avoid the errors of 'conflation' (Archer, 1988, 1995), be it the 'upwards' conflation of the action fraction or the 'downwards' conflation of the culture structure. It would not only fully acknowledge the phenomenon of 'emergence', but transcending the opposition between agency and structure, it would also fully take into account the mediating role of culture and satisfactorily work out the micro-macro linkages without reducing structure to agency or society to an assemblage of individuals and groups.[23]

To avoid the nominalist, actualist, and empiricist tendencies of IT, I would suggest the introduction of the realism-nominalism polarity as a supplementary dimension. This realist enhancement of the AQAL-model—its transformation from a bi-dimensional into a tri-dimensional RAQAL-model (sic)[24] that could be graphically represented as a cube—would have different advantages: it would avoid the 'disemergence' of the social and the flattening of sociology that corresponds to it; it would also fully acknowledge the pluralism within the social sciences (at least six zones).[25] Moreover, and more importantly perhaps, it would provide for a distinction between two versions of realism, a materialist-externalist one and an idealist/internalist one, and to fully acknowledge hermeneutics and structuralism as realist approaches to culture that complement CR's realist approach to structure. Indeed, the difference between hermeneutics and structuralism does not pertain to the third axis (realism-nominalism), nor to the second one (micro-macro), but to the first one (external-internal or etic-emic).

With the three dimensions in place and the full recognition of hermeneutics as a realist-internalist approach to culture, it would be possible to combine the strengths of CR's transformational model of social action with IT's more hermeneutic approach to cultural worldviews and lifeworlds. Assuming that it can be done and that one could indeed integrate the best of CR (its strong conception of structure as a system of relations, its dialectics between agency and structure, its transformational impetus) with the best of IT (its consistent defence of multi-dimensionality, its pluralist methodology, its hermeneutic insistence on culture structures, and its developmentalism), one would then have a reformulated CR that would maintain Marx's emancipatory interest of knowledge, but not his historical materialism.

Pushing CR in a more hermeneutic direction that takes the causal and transformative power of culture more seriously, going back to the authors who have influenced Wilber (Hegel, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas), one could then join the critique of domination and generalized master–slave relations with a hermeneutic reconstruction of what, for lack of a better world, one could call historical idealism. It would analyze the evolution of the Spirit and show how cultural change can put the individuals and collectives into action, potentially leading to the emergence of a fully 'morphogenic society' (Archer, 2013).

In this society, culture and personal existence are transformed at the same time.

8 Beyondism

The RAQAL-model and the tridimensional cube of the social sciences that corresponds to it is only an analytic and static device. By mapping out the articulations between the basic oppositions of philosophy (subject–object: nominalism–realism), anthropology (nature–culture: external–internal) and sociology (individual–society: agency–structure), it indicates the necessary constitutive elements that every social theory with general pretensions, at whatever level of analysis and whatever its paradigm, has to take into account and integrate in a coherent framework: intentional consciousness (UL quadrant: individualism–idealism), material things and bodies (UR quadrant: individualism–materialism), culture (LL quadrant: holism–idealism) and social structure (LR quadrant: holism–materialism). Theories that absent an element or that are built on a single quadrant will not pass the metacritical test of multi-dimensionality (Vandenberghe, 2009). That does not mean that all theories have to give equal weight to all the quadrants, but it means that, whatever one's starting point (the Upper-Left Hand for Wilber, Lower-Left for Bhaskar), one should be able, in principle, to engage all the quads in the field and learn from them, not to weaken them, but to strengthen one's own theory through dialogue.

Now that we have analyzed the analytic dimension of the AQAL-model ('All Quadrants'), we can take a look at its developmental aspect ('All Levels', as shorthand for 'all levels, all lines, all states, etc.' (Wilber, 2000b)—and given that IT has a strong Piagetian pedigree, also learn something from IT. Following Piaget's post-Hegelian, neo-Kantian approach to developmental psychology, Wilber's model is a dynamic, evolutionary, sequential, but non-linear one that distinguishes various 'levels' (or 'waves') of consciousness, stretching from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit, both at the individual and at the collective scale. Through the various levels pass various developmental 'lines' (or 'streams'—mainly the 'Big Three': cognitive, moral, and aesthetic, but also affective, motivational, interpersonal and spiritual lines). A given person can be at a high level of development in one line (e.g., cognitive development), medium in another (e.g., emotional intelligence), and at a lower level in still others (e.g., moral or interpersonal development). Moreover, a person at any level of development can experience an altered state of consciousness ('peak experience') and get access to the metaReal whatever his or her level of development may be.

Wilber adores hierarchies and developmental schemes. His books are full of them. What they all have in common, though, and what differentiates them from the more reputable developmental schemes one finds in Piaget, Maslow, Erickson, or Habermas, is their 'beyondism'. They all point to ever higher levels of consciousness beyond the personal, the rational, the real, etc. to the etheric heights and the mystical highs of the transpersonal, the suprarational, the metaReal, or in short: the Divine. This is, of course, in accordance with the great spiritual traditions of the East and the mystical traditions of the West. Underneath, above and beyond the world, there's another world that sustains it. It is the world of non-duality, which we can access through spiritual techniques (yoga, meditation, zazen,

etc.), occultism (clairvoyance, telepathy, sex magic) or in peak experiences (ecstasy, trance, rapture). Sages, sadhus and other professional mystics can have continuous access to this world. It is the same world as ours, they say, but accessed from higher levels of consciousness and, therefore, transfigured: 'This is it'. Everything is the same; yet, everything has changed.

Beyond the ordinary and the mundane lie the extra-ordinary and the supra-mundane regions of consciousness beyond the Ego, but within the Self, that 'transpersonal psychology' investigates scientifically.[26] In accordance with the can-ons of developmental psychology, but subverting, uplifting, and transcending it, Wilber presents the staircase to heaven as a cosmic spiral that leads to the Divine. He distinguishes four more thresholds (Wilber, 1995, pp. 287–318): the psychic, subtle, causal, and non-dual levels of consciousness (which correspond, more or less, to Bhaskar's (2002) 5A (Fifth Aspect), 6R (Sixth Re-enchantement) and 7A (Seventh Awakening) in the Meldara Sequence of the Philosophy of metaReal-ity).[27] One can ascend (from Many to One) or descend (from One to Many) the staircase, but eventually, one will realize that they are the same—that All is One and is One is Many.

In an extraordinary exegesis of the 'Triple Formula of the Supermind' (Aurobindo, 2006, p. 149), Wilber (echoing Shankara, Aurobindo, and a certain Sri Ramana Maharshi) summarizes the ultimate viewpoint of non-dual realiza-tion (I quote Wilber at length here, because I think it is worth pondering the depth and the beauty of India's perennial philosophy that traverses all of the Wilberiana):

> The world is illusory
> Brahman alone is real
> Brahman is the world.
>
> The first two lines represent pure causal-level awareness, or unmanifest absorption in pure or formless Spirit; line three represents the ultimate or nondual completion. The Godhead *completely transcends* all worlds and thus *completely includes* all worlds. It is the final within, leading to a final beyond— a beyond that, confined to absolutely *nothing*, embraces absolutely *everything*.
> *(Wilber, 1995, p. 310, italics in original)*

Wilber, a practicing Buddhist himself, considers this absolute emptiness as the font, the origin and the destination of everything that exists. It is at the same time the alpha and the omega point of existence. Subject and object, inside and outside, individual and collective, transitive and intransitive—all these dualist oppositions lose their ultimate meaning. In the state of non-duality, the knower, the knowl-edge, and the known are one. This is the realm of the in/transitive. Out of this non-dual realm, which precedes and transcends the four quadrants of existence as their absolute condition of possibility, everything emerges with joy. *Sat-cit-ānanda*. When one identifies in and with the Brahman, Consciousness-Existence-Bliss are

one and the same. *Atman* (the Self) is *Brahman* (the supreme soul). 'You are not in the universe, the universe is in you' (Wilber, 2008, p. 22).

Those blissful experiences in which the higher Truth and the Divine can be directly seen, felt and intuited have been extensively analyzed, described and systematized by *rishis* (seers) over millennia. Their phenomenal analyses of the noumenal/numinous are consistent (experimental, replicable, and fallible), so consistent that Wilber does not hesitate to qualify them as 'contemplative sciences' (Wilber, 2000a, p. 77). And to bring his message home, he adds emphatically: 'There is absolutely nothing "metaphysical" about these systems: they are empirical phenomenological developmental psychology at its most rigorous and most comprehensive' (Wilber, 1995, p. 346).

As a fellow meditator (Vandenberghe, 2001), I do not have any qualms about that. With his masterful knowledge of the Eastern philosophical traditions (especially of India and Japan), his profound understanding of spiritual systems and practices, as well as his expertise in Western transpersonal psychology, Wilber is at his best when he plumbs the depths of the Divine. What I want to question, however, is the sequence of all his developmental schemes. As a card-carrying post-secular humanist, I cannot fully endorse the idea that the apex of human development is to be found in the religious realm. I also object to the idea that the highest stage of development coincides with the Enlightenment (*Samadhi*) the master himself has allegedly arrived at. That trick was already tried out by Hegel in the nineteenth century and up till today it is continued by gurus without scruples to sell their spiritual wares and attract devotees to their conferences, seminars, and workshops. Not that I reject spirituality as a matter of principle, but, as a good Habermasian, I think we should always try to reformulate the transcendent into secular language (Habermas, 2014). The fusion of the levels and lines of development (the cognitive, ethical, aesthetic, and religious) that characterizes spiritual experiences seems to indicate a confusion of the cognitive with the aesthetic and of the affective with the religious. Instead of waffling about the overcognitive, the supramental, and the meta-Rational, I suggest the mystical should be recognized, recoded and reformulated for what it is—not the highest level of noetics, but a form of high poetics.

Such an aesthetic understanding of the spiritual as poetics brings us back to politics and social critique. There's nothing wrong with mysticism, of course, but its truth should be accessible to all and should not be limited to a happy few who reached 'third-tier consciousness' (around 2 percent of the population, according to Wilber's guesses), who were so lucky to have visions and experience the Divine. This elitism and the misplaced avant-gardism that comes with it are untimely— they are neither of our age, nor do they announce a New Dawn. This aristocracy of the Spirit, which we find in most integral thinkers of the twentieth century (Aurobindo, Teilhard de Chardin, Scheler, Steiner) is hardly compatible with the humanist egalitarianism of Bhaskar, Habermas, or Morin for that matter. The denunciation of the 'mean green meme' (Wilber, 2000a, pp. 122–125) that we find in Spiral Dynamics and Wilber's more recent writings is not very promising. I think

that as critical realists and progressive integralists we should resist it and insist all the more on our humanist, socialist and democratic convictions. Not because we are mean-spirited and vindictive, but because we are post-secular and progressive.

The point is not to oppose the New Left to the New Age—they are complementary—but to invert their priority. The point of departure and arrival of Wilber's reflections is always the same—the Self (Upper-Left Quadrant). Although his AQAL-model of integral unfolding can, in theory, be fully developed from any quad, in practice, as we have seen, he tends to neglect society and demean sociology (Lower-Right Quadrant). To finish this afterword, I will now try recuperating some of the developmental logic for sociology, metacritique, and emancipatory politics of the morphogenic society.

9   Politics of the Morphogenic Society

To apply AQAL as a systematic device for the investigation and diagnosis of the existing social order and the possibilities of social, cultural, and personal change, one has to recast it as a DRAQAL-model (sic)—with the D standing both for Dialectics and Development. The developmental model transforms the general analytics of the social world into a morphogenetic dialectics. To apply the scheme to contemporary societies and make it move, one has to move, I suggest, from dialogic metatheory to developmental metahistory. In accordance with Habermas' (1976) proposal to reconstruct historical materialism in such a way that collective processes of learning through discursive testing of validity claims would allow human societies to move steadily forwards to ever higher levels of cognitive, moral, and expressive consciousness, from the pre-conventional and the conventional to the post-conventional stage, we can make a distinction between the 'developmental logics' and the 'factual dynamics' of history. Developmental metahistory is the consequent exploration of possible futures—counterfactual futures that could be realized if their conditions of possibilities that are not satisfied now were to be imminently fulfilled.

To find out how the basic elements are configured and, thus, whether societies tend towards morphostasis or, rather, towards morphogenesis, one needs, basically, to introduce the temporal dimension of human development and interlink the elements of the space into an 'integral field' (Arnsperger, 2009, pp. 43–57, 72, 86). The idea behind the integral field is that individual consciousnesses, material bodies, cultures, and social structures are not contingently, but systematically related to each other in specific configurations that define a variety of social formations through the ages. Through an evolutionary sequence of morphogenetic cycles of human development, individuals, cultures, societies, and humanity as such can attain higher levels of consciousness, from the pre-personal and pre-modern (subconscious, instinctive, and mythical) via the personal and modern (self-conscious, rational, and scientific) to the transpersonal, the postconventional, and the post-postmodern (postmaterial, spiritual, integral). While the developmental logics of personal, cultural, and social unfolding point to the attainment of integral consciousness of universal 'Oneness'

of all that exists, nothing guarantees that the end state of full-spectrum conscious-ness will be attained. Just as persons, cultures, and societies may be arrested in their development, humanity may fail to realize its potential, regress, and never reach its Pleroma.

In accordance with the principle of 'ecumenical secularism', which stipulates that encompassing doctrines have to be reformulated in terms that are acceptable to (post-)secular humanists, I would like to displace the cursor from the Upper-Left to the Lower-Right Quadrant, explore possible societal development beyond global capitalism and, thereby, politicize the whole AQAL-model. To avoid individualism and quietism, one should neither fold society into the individuals nor plunge them back into the Kosmos. One should rather place the individuals back into society, and society back into the hand of its members. Instead of focusing on individual consciousness, one should look at collective consciousness, social movements, and social change. In social movements, the movement goes from within to without, and then back. The plan is to change culture, society, and the subjects all at once.

A generalized morphogenesis does not require a spiritual transformation of the individuals, though it doesn't exclude it either. It presupposes conscious and conscientious subjects—'metareflexive individuals', to speak like Margaret Archer (2003)—who know that the good life is not individual, but social, the develop-ment of each being a condition for the development of all in a just, convivial, and democratic society. Social change does not exclude the turn within, nor a return to the Other, but it calls for a turn to alterity and a lived openness to the others.

This politicization of transpersonal psychology and its transformation into a convivial sociology involves a double movement—one that is critical (critique of capitalism: 'clearing the rubble') and a second one that is constructive (outline of the convivialist society: 'cutting the umbilical cord').

With a modicum of developmental psychology, evolutionary sociology, and reflexive philosophy of history, capitalism can be understood as a social formation that systematically arrests further development towards post-material, conviv-ial, democratic societies (Arnsperger, 2005, 2009). With its mechanical linkages between the base and the superstructure, historical materialism is, perhaps, the phi-losophy of history that best captures the world-historical obstruction of capitalism. Going back to AQAL, but interpreting it now as a metahistorical field of becom-ing, we can characterize capitalism as a social formation that systematically reduces the human being to a sensing body with needs and interests that faces a (pseudo-) natural social environment which it tries to control instrumentally and to which it tries to adapt itself strategically to survive.

Folding back the quadrants of the metatheoretical space into one, the behavioural space of the psycho-somatic (UR), capitalism is the social system that suppresses the cultural meanings of existence that transcend self-interest and produces the *homo economicus* that its utilitarian vision of the world presupposes. It is true that capitalism ignores neither culture nor meaning. To the contrary, it knows all too well that the human being is more than a producer and a consumer of commodi-ties, but by systematically interpreting human existence in the utilitarian language

of a rational choice between preferences, it reduces all possible goods (things and ideas) to commodities that can be possessed and exchanged. By occupying the body and the mind, its non-culture of utilitarianism produces the subjects that produce the goods and live to consume them as commodities. Thus, it tends not only to occupy the whole space of experience, but also to arrest the development of persons, cultures, societies, and humanity as such to a higher level of 'conscientious consciousness', i.e. awareness, connectedness, and togetherness. With its insistence on private property, accumulation, work, competition, innovation, consumption, and continuous growth, capitalism is a self-perpetuating system of alienation that commodifies, instrumentalizes, and colonizes the spirit and the soul, as well as the mind and the body.

Capitalist industrialism is the real 'flatland' of modernity. It disenchants the world and alienates the subjects. But as always, alienation (*Entfremdung*) is dialectical. At the height of the metacrisis, when the subjects are cut off from nature, from their own body, from their fellows, from society—in short, from themselves (*Selbstentfremdung*, to speak like the young Marx (1964, pp. 510–522))—a countermovement may set in and we see all kinds of local initiatives emerging from the margins of society: producer and consumer cooperatives, mutualism, fair trade, parallel and complementary currencies, local exchange trading systems, and numerous mutual-aid associations; the digital sharing-economy (Linux, Wikipedia, etc.); *décroissance* and post-development; the 'slow food', 'slow town', and 'slow science' movements; the call for *buen vivir*, the affirmation of the rights of nature, and the admiration for Pachamama; alter-globalization, political ecology and radical democracy, the Indignados, Occupy Wall Street, Syriza, etc. What all these civic initiatives have in common is a desire for cultural change and social reconstruction. What they share is a post-capitalist worldview of collective eudaimonia in which individuals search for the good life not in isolation from others, in meditation as it were, but in communal projects that make sense and re-enchant society.

We call it 'convivialism'. Together with a platoon of francophone intellectuals (Morin among them), we have recently written a *Convivialist Manifesto*.[28] We conceive of convivialism as a new syncretic ideology fit for new times. It includes the best of liberalism, socialism, anarchism, and communism, but transcends their limitations in a post-developmental and post-capitalist design for a more joyous, solidary, and just society. Based on the principles of common humanity, common sociability, and common responsibility, it is a project that enables human beings simultaneously to compete and cooperate with one another, with a shared concern to safeguard the world. How can individuals live together with one another in relative peace, 'opposing themselves to each other, without massacring each other' (Mauss, 1950, p. 278)? That is the central question that convivial societies have to satisfactorily resolve in the twenty-first century if they are to survive the Anthropocene. The answer is a reflexive control of *hybris* at all levels. Control not in the sense of repression, but in the sense of self-conscious mastery of tensions and impulses at all levels, to make them compatible with the whole, so that both individuals and collectives can thrive and flourish.

Convivialism is not a new theory, but a new *praxis*, i.e. a practice inspired by a new transideological worldview. It only makes the principles that subtend the cooperative practices of civil society explicit and manifest. In the same way as integral theories have to be completed by integral practices, the convivial practices of the lifeworld have to be complemented by a theory of civic communication, association, and cooperation. We may start with self-observation, self-transformation, and self-realization, but, one way or another, we have to go back to the community. As Wilber says in one of those rare passages where he talks about social practices:

> These waves of existence (from physical to emotional to mental to spiritual) need to be exercised—not just in self (boomeritis!)—but in culture as well. Exercising the waves in culture might mean getting involved in community service, working with the hospice movement, participating in local government, working with inner-city rehabilitation, providing services for homeless people.
>
> *(Wilber, 2000a, p. 138)*

We do not only have to go back to the community, but we have to continue the process of Enlightenment in social movements that consciously seek to change culture to change social practices and society. Returning for a last time to the domains of the AQAL-model—'spirit, nature, body, civics' (Wilber, 1995, p. 480)—we can now finally conclude and describe convivialism as the theory of the civic, civil, and civilized practices that reintegrate nature, the body, culture, and society in and through a societal-communal project of living the good life on Earth with and for others.

Notes

1 [*Sic*].
2 I thank the editors of the book for the invitation to write an afterword. No doubt they are doing me too much honour. I have accepted it as a final homage to Roy Bhaskar, whose fascination for India and its philosophical tradition I share. I have greatly profited from the comments, critiques, and suggestions of Mervyn Hartwig, Nick Hedlund, Michael Schwartz, Michel Bauwens, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, and Tim Rutzou. They show not only how difficult it is to please everybody at the same time, but also how easy it is to come to a reasonable consensus concerning the essentials.
3 The use of multiple TLAs (three letter acronyms) has become standard practice in both CR (critical realism) and IT (integral theory). I apologize for continuing an ugly practice, but at this stage of the game I have to presuppose that the reader knows not only the theories, but also their jargon.
4 The younger generation of integralists or, in any case, those who have demonstrated an interest in CR, seem more drawn to emancipatory politics on the Left than its founder (who supported the Bush regime!). Following Molz (2016), we can distinguish an 'integral' and an 'emancipatory' function of metatheories without suggesting that the two cannot be found in the same person.
5 In systems theory, a holon refers to a part that is at the same time a self-contained whole and a dependent part. Embedded in a larger whole of which it is a part, it also contains subsystems that at a lower level are themselves wholes. Whether the analysis is bottom up or top down, one always encounters parts and wholes—'all the way up and all the way down'.

6 In terms of the introduction to *Metatheory for the Twenty-First Century* (Hedlund et al., 2016), my metatheorizing is definitely metatheory 2.0. Like Wilber & co., I am too much of a Habermasian to accept the one-man, monological metaphysical systems of the past. The distinction I make between various types of metatheory fuses the distinction between α and β and is therefore broadly consistent both with CR and IT. The real difference between CR and IT is not to be found at this level, but at the level of metacritique. If I had to introduce one supplementary type, I would say that thanks to the incorporation of axiological and political metacritique, CR moves beyond the epistemic confines of metatheory 2.0 and represents, therefore, metatheory 2.1. As such, it is a type of metatheory for the twenty-first century that retains the hope of the twentieth-century social movements in an age of political regression.

7 In contemporary systems theory, one finds a whole gamut of metatheories. If Edgar Morin is singled out, rather than, say, Niklas Luhmann, Mario Bunge, or Enrique Dussel, it is because he's an exemplary figure: a humanist, an ecologist, an encyclopedist and a public intellectual with ample moral capital and a fascinating life history. To properly appreciate his contributions, one must, however, be able to read French or Spanish. Otherwise, I'm afraid, it's like ringing a bell.

8 At the critical realism conference in New York in 2013, Bhaskar gently responded to my queries about the auto-deconstruction of the ID/TD-distinction saying that people had made too much of it and that it precluded neither hermeneutics in the social sciences nor non-duality in the philosophy of metaReality.

9 The debate between Wilber and Bhaskar is by proxy. Owing to their respective illnesses, they did not meet in person and, as Esbjörn-Hargens (2012, p. v) indicates in the introduction to the special issue of the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* dedicated to the debate, Wilber has most probably not read Bhaskar in depth or in a systematic way. What he knows about CR largely comes from Esbjörn-Hargens's (2010) 'ontological pluralism' (2010) and the synopses of CR by Marshall (2012a) and Hedlund (2013).

10 Remember: the epistemic fallacy 'consists in the view that statements about being can be reduced or analysed in terms of statements about knowledge; i.e. that ontological questions can always be transposed into epistemological terms' (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 36).

11 Compare with Sri Aurobindo (2006, p. 23): 'All phenomenal existence consists of an observing consciousness and an active objectivity'.

12 In a famous paper entitled 'What the frog's eye tells the frog's brain', Maturana and colleagues show that the world of the frog is constructed by its brain. Frogs do not move their eyes to follow prey. The frog only sees what moves and does not see what is stationary. 'He will starve to death surrounded by food if it is not moving. He will leap to capture any object the size of an insect or worm, providing it moves like one' (Lettvin et al., 1968, p. 234). This will lead the constructivist biology of cognition to question realism's basic assumption that there's a pre-given world that is not dependent on the structure of the organism of the observer.

13 Aware of the slippery slopes of social and cultural constructivism, he avoids the extremes. Here and there, one finds realist counterpoints in his writings—like this one:

> So just because these experiences have an interpretative component does not mean that they are merely cultural creations. When you watch the sun set, you will bring interpretations to that experience as well—perhaps romantic, perhaps rational, each with a cultural coloring, but that doesn't mean that the sun ceases to exist if your culture disappears. No, these are ontologically real events. They actually exist. They have real referents.
>
> *(Wilber, 1996, pp. 192–193)*

The following passage shows, however, that his realism is contextual and strategic: 'Due to the prevalence of extreme constructivist epistemologies, I often emphasize the objectively real components of many forms of knowing, since that is the partial, but important truth that is most often being unfortunately denied' (Wilber, 2000a, p. 156).

14 Looking for an 'ontology of climate change' (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009), IT has discovered CR. In his pioneering text, Esbjörn-Hargens, the editor of the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* who has introduced Bhaskar to the practice community of integral theorists, has constructed ontology as a multiple object. He blends Whitehead's pragmatist ontology with the ANT of Latour, Law, and Mol—which is fine, because like Wilber and following Stengers, Latour is a Whiteheadian—with the 'enactivism' of Varela and Maturana, as well as the realism of Bhaskar and Carolan. I concede that any two perspectives can be integrated, but not three. Three seems just another case of 'voracious overassimilation' (Molz, 2016).

15 Like 'analytical Marxism', CR represents a dialectical stream within analytical philosophy. In an attempt to reconnect CR to continental philosophy, I have explored rapprochements between CR and non-analytical streams within philosophy. See Vandenberghe (2014, pp. 23–57 for hermeneutics, pp. 105–137 for pragmatism and pp. 251–261 for phenomenology).

16 The whole debate about the coming Anthropocene is not so much about the social or cultural construction of nature, but about 'its' destruction—it referring not to nature, but to the human species that alters the environment that sustains its existence. For a pioneering investigation of how a biological agent can become a geological force, see Chakrabarty (2009); for a terrible, but rather good preview of a world without us, see Danowski and de Castro (2016). Interestingly, Meillassoux (2006) also grounds the non-anthropocentric claims of his speculative realism on a world 'without us'—a world that precedes the arrival of the human being in history and is, therefore, allegedly, non-correlationist, anti-Kantian and post- (or better, perhaps, radically pre-) humanist.

17 In his dialectical phase, Bhaskar makes a distinction between existential and causal intransitivity. The distinction is a subtle one, but serves to explain why in the social sciences only existential intransitivity applies. To the extent that accounts of the social world reflexively produce the social world they describe, causal intransitivity does not obtain. However, once anything happens in history or in society as in nature, it is determined and determinate, and nothing can now alter it. It is, therefore, indeed existentially intransitive. I thank Mervyn Hartwig for this clarification, but as a hermeneutician, I am interested in the causal and existential transitivity of history and society. One implication of the hermeneutical circle is that we cannot know the past 'as it really was' (*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, to quote Ranke's well-known phrase), for the simple reason that every new interpretation allows us to uncover one more dimension of the same event.

18 The superficial characterization of August Comte's positivism one finds in the introduction to the companion volume (Hedlund et al., 2016)—rather than as the first and foremost integral sociologist who dabbled with an 'internal synthesis' well before Sorokin or Wilber—confirms the authors have constructed a straw man of sociology. The same observation holds for Wilber's reduction of Parsons to a cybernetician—as if the social system could be unconnected from the cultural system, whereas, in fact, his structural functionalism is the most accomplished example we have of an integral cultural sociology.

19 Interestingly, elsewhere, Wilber himself acknowledges that there's space for an interpretative sociology.

> Like psychology, sociology has, almost from its inception, divided in two huge camps, the interpretative (Left Hand) and the naturalistic or empirical (Right Hand). The one investigates culture or cultural meanings from within, in a sympathetic understanding. The other investigates the social system or social structures from without, in a very positivistic and empirical fashion.
>
> *(Wilber, 1996, p. 86)*

20 It may be of interest to note that, like Wilber, Parsons was attempting a synthesis of a neo-Kantian epistemology and a Whiteheadian process ontology.

21 The drive towards multi-dimensionality is in line with Jeffrey Alexander´s (1981–1982) metatheoretical reconstruction of the theoretical logic of sociology, from Marx, Weber,

and Durkheim to Parsons. I've used it as well in my critique of reification theories, from Hegel and Marx via the Frankfurt School to Habermas (Vandenberghe, 2009).

22 Habermas' (1981) *Theory of Communicative Action* satisfies all the criteria and corresponds most closely to the ideal-type of an integral sociology that takes the internal-collective dimension seriously.

23 Formulated in this way, Bhaskar's critical naturalism, Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach, and Bourdieu's genetic structuralism fit the bill.

24 The R of RAQAL stands for Revised and Realist, but can also be read as shorthand for Rationally Reconstructed Reflexive Relational Revised Realism.

25 To work out a full social theory, one would have to think through the three dimensions. A rapprochement of CR and IT would still leave out the whole field of micro-sociology (pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, etc.) which both of the macro-approaches have largely neglected so far.

26 Transpersonal psychology (not to be confounded with parapsychology) emerged in the 1960s from humanistic psychology and religious studies as the branch that studies states of consciousness beyond the conventional ego-boundaries. It studies those states and processes in which people experience a deeper sense of who they are, or a greater sense of connectedness with others, with nature, or the spiritual dimension. As an empirical, soteriological and applied investigation of altered states, it not only aims to investigate the highest potential of the Self, but also to contribute to the realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness. For a good overview of the contested field, see Strohl (1998).

27 Since 2000, Wilber has ceased referring to the transpersonal levels as psychic, subtle, causal, and non-dual. He has since adopted terms that help to distinguish between vertical stages and horizontal states.

28 The first *Convivialist Manifesto* was published in French in 2013; the second one in 2019. Initiated by Alain Caillé, the founder of the MAUSS (Mouvement Anti-Utilitaire dans les Sciences Sociales / Anti-Utilitarian Movement in the Social Sciences), both Manifestos were written as collective documents by prominent intellectuals from the alternative left. They are now also available in English (Convivialists, 2014 and Convivialist International, 2020) and were signed (among many others) by Roy Bhaskar, Margaret Archer and David Graeber.

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