

# FUTURES AND THE FUTURE

## *An Integral Response to Epistemological Pluralism in Futures Studies*

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**ABSTRACT** This article is an integral response to “Epistemological Pluralism in Futures Studies,” featured as a special issue of *Futures* (Vol. 42, No. 2). Since that issue itself was a critical response to “Integral Futures,” a 2008 special edition of *Futures* (Vol. 40, No. 2), this article reflects on the “debate” and responds with inquiries concerning the truth claims of postmodern and poststructuralist epistemological pluralism and its criticism of Integral Theory. I begin with a review of the articles featured in the 2008 issue and then examine the validity of some of the 2010 critiques of Integral Futures, focusing in particular on the accuracy of the criticism of Ken Wilber and his contribution to Integral Theory. I also examine the claims of “epistemological pluralism” to consider whether it is an appropriate framework for futures inquiry and practice. The article concludes with an historical overview of Integral Theory.

**KEY WORDS** epistemology; futures; integral; pluralism; theory

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In 2008, *Futures* published a special edition (Vol. 40, No. 2) on Integral Futures. In this special edition, several futurists showcased Integral Futures (IF), largely based on the philosophy of Ken Wilber, as a new framework for futures research and practice. Richard Slaughter (2008), the guest editor, writes in the introduction that the promise of IF is to realize “a more hopeful role for futures studies” by reinvigorating, repositioning, and revitalizing it in a “new level of operational capacity” (p. 105). Several integral practitioners demonstrated the value of IF and how this emerging theoretical framework can help raise futures studies (FS) to this new level of operational capacity.

However, another special edition of *Futures* was published in 2010 as a response to Integral Futures. Entitled “Epistemological Pluralism in Futures Studies,” for the most part it rejected the claims of IF to realize its promise for FS; instead, the 2010 rebuttal issue directed considerable criticism toward Wilber and his contribution to the evolution of Integral Theory. Furthermore, as a counter-proposal to IF, the 2010 response posited “epistemological pluralism” as a safer, more reliable model for the futures field.

In order to better understand the background of this “controversy,” I begin with a review of the contributions of the special issue on Integral Futures, and then I examine the validity of selective critiques of IF and Integral Theory in general. Furthermore, I examine the claims of epistemological pluralism to investigate whether it is, indeed, a more appropriate framework for futures inquiry and practice. In this consideration, I treat epistemological pluralism as an expression of skeptical postmodernism. Finally, I give an historical overview of Integral Theory and conclude by reappraising IF and Integral Theory in its capacity to revitalize and reposition foresight studies toward an integrated vision of the future. In this treatment, I consider Integral Theory as the highest expression of affirmative postmodern consciousness, which by assimilating the best of

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traditional, modern, and postmodern perspectives (as well as advances in systems theory and developmental psychology), goes beyond postmodernism to represent a new stage within the evolution of consciousness.

## Integral Theory and Integral Futures

Integral Theory has been applied to a variety of disciplines such as medicine, art, business, education, spiritual practice, politics, social work, and ecology. This new holistic perspective has the capacity to enable such disciplines or fields to engage in their respective practices more freely and completely than had been previously understood, largely due to the incorporation and revitalization of the “invisible” Left-Hand quadrants, which represent interior or subjective qualities of reality that are not readily seen.<sup>1</sup> Wilber’s four-quadrant model represents a map or theoretical window for interpreting reality, the universe, all that exists, or “everything,” as Wilber has bluntly stated. However, as Wilber has also pointed out in several publications, the four-quadrant model is *merely a map* and so shares all the shortcomings of representation. In other words, the conceptual map should not be mistaken for the territory it represents. Nevertheless, even as we take into consideration its representational shortcomings, it *is* important to have a “map,” especially when we want to know what direction we are going; in this respect, the map also serves as a guide for the future, and the better the map we have, the more informed we will be when it comes to futures and foresight studies.

Such was the principal reason for applying Integral Theory to FS—into what has become known as Integral Futures. Because of the interdisciplinary character of FS and because it attempts to look at the “big picture,” it is ideally suited for the application of Integral Theory. Surely, such was the presumption of those futurists who experimented with the Integral model to pioneer IF. The publication of the 2008 special edition of *Futures* showcased the results of their efforts.

First, to demonstrate the “difference that integral makes,” Richard Slaughter (2008) traces the progression of FS from forecasting to scenarios to critical futures studies (CFS). Through each stage of FS evolution, he notes the inadequacies that were encountered as challenges within the field that had to be overcome in order to progress to a new stage of theory and practice. Then, as an example to demonstrate the difference “integral” makes, he revisits his own publication, “Mapping the Future” (1996), which had incorporated CFS but did not yet have the benefit of the integral perspective. Slaughter demonstrates the “new clarity” that Integral Theory brings to his previous work, which was largely an expression of CFS. Principally, he realized how he had completely ignored the Upper-Left (UL) quadrant. Consequently, without a trace of ego attachment, he critiques his previous work as an “unconsciously distorted view of the world”—that he had been “whistling in the dark” by attempting to evoke the UL phenomena “but completely uninformed by the structures and processes that are operating there” (2008, p. 125). From that point on, Slaughter applies Integral Theory to likewise critique other futures methods: scenarios, environmental scanning, the T-cycle, and causal layered analysis (CLA), pointing out how IF can further develop these methods.<sup>2</sup>

Then, in a concise statement on the value of Integral Theory to FS, Joseph Voros (2008) examines five inquiry paradigms (positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and its variants, or “criticalism,” constructivism, and participatory) to show how “methodological choices and approaches are embedded within paradigmatic assumptions, stances or commitments” (p. 191). However, when considering the integral inquiry and approach, because of the very nature of the holism that “integral” implies, Voros notes:

The integral inquiry will need to be founded on a complete set of pluralism regarding the ontological, epistemological, methodological and other assumptions upon which all forms of inquiry are based. That is, the foundational assumptions of integral inquiry must take into account, honour and somehow include the essence of the foundational assumptions of all existing approaches to inquiry, as well as extending them in new ways and joining them together into a harmoniously unified whole. Thus,

to take an *integral* perspective, one needs to be able to move out of specific, particularizing paradigmatic assumptions and paradigm-based perspectives into what we might call a “meta-paradigmatic meta-perspective”—a perspective which recognizes and values the contributions of all paradigm-based perspectives but which is nonetheless free of and outside of their particularizing hold. (p. 198)

Thus, as Voros (2008) continues, a truly integral approach to inquiry would “seek to include different *ways* of knowing,” ...as well as “different forms of *levels* of knowing,” which leads to the consideration also of “different levels of *reality* as possible domains of inquiry... *all* levels of existence *itself*, in *all* of the forms it has been conceived of in the entire history of the human knowledge quest, be it material, mental or, indeed, spiritual” (p. 198). In fact, an integral approach to inquiry accepts that

...there are multiple ways of knowing (i.e., “*epistemological pluralism*” [emphasis added]), multiple domains of inquiry which are knowable (i.e., “*ontological pluralism*”), and that many different methods, modes or forms of inquiry are appropriate for these different ways of knowing and domains of interest, be they physical, mental, or spiritual (i.e. ‘*methodological pluralism*’). (Voros, 2008, p. 198)

Finally, Voros (2008) explains why FS is so ripe for the application of IF. All six of the paradigmatic commitments he considers have, at various times in the history of FS, yielded “different approaches to and methods of futures work”; in fact, various forms of methodology considered valid in futures inquiry has led “to the existence of many different ‘traditions’ of futures work” (p. 199). IF, therefore, is an approach to futures inquiry which

...is based on a meta-paradigmatic integral meta-perspective—an approach which attempts to take the broadest possible view of the human knowledge quest, and of how this knowledge can be used to generate interpretive frameworks to help us understand our images of what potential futures may lie ahead. Because futures inquiry is, by its very nature, a broadly inter-, trans-, multi-, meta-, counter-, and even anti-disciplinary activity... it is well suited to the conscious use of more inclusive and integral frameworks, such as the one proposed by Wilber. (Voros, 2008, p. 199)

In another article featured in the 2008 special edition of *Futures*, Peter Hayward (2008) offers “a possible ‘genealogy’ of the integral perspective,” from Jean Gebser to Jürgen Habermas to Ken Wilber (p. 110). Hayward notes that each theorist shares a concern “that the material and empirical approaches to knowledge creation were either subordinating or eliminating other approaches” (p. 110). Consequently, each theorist proposed an approach “...that addressed what each saw as a perspectival deficiency in ourselves and our societies—and by doing so sought to create an integral perspective” (p. 110).

As Hayward (2008) points out, Gebser’s contribution to Integral Theory lies in the evidence he presents for structures of human consciousness, which has evolved through three distinct stages since the archaic or primordial structure (Gebser does not consider it as a form of individualized consciousness): the magic, the mythic, and the mental, and that “a fourth mutation in human consciousness, *integral*, was possible” (p. 110). In consideration of future consciousness, Gebser notes that this capacity largely emerges during the “mental” or rational stage, whose duality is “resolved through abstract and synthetic thought” (p. 111). The future then emerges as “...a realm that consciousness can shape. There is a partial rejection of the past, to the extent that it is unmeasurable, and in its place the future becomes the focus of attention” (p. 111). The fourth mutation

of consciousness identified by Gebser, *integral*, is only a potential stage of consciousness, which Gebser was not certain would emerge (p. 111). As Hayward (2008) explains, integral consciousness is not merely the synthesis of "...what the mental structure has dualistically separated, but an *integration of all the previous structures of consciousness*" (p. 111).

Hayward (2008) then considers the contribution of Habermas, whose primary interest has been in "the integration of social theory, philosophy, psychology and evolution in the promotion of human emancipation and universal morals" and, furthermore, argues that "communication, social systems, and ego development are interrelated" (p. 112). Hayward sees a similarity in Habermas' final stage (Level III) of ego development and the attributes of Gebser's integral perspectives (p. 112). When considering Integral Theory, Hayward (2008) writes that some may find it surprising that Wilber defends rationality as a means to advance the integral perspective, with the caveat that this rationality be universal by allowing differences to "exist side by side by seeing them as different perspectives in a more universal space" (Wilber, 1999, p. 180, as cited by Hayward, 2008, p. 114). Hence, a universal rationality is one that

...accepts that no perspective is privileged and that all perspectives are interrelated, however, the perspective also holds that not all perspectives are relative. In this way, the integral perspective is *antithetical to contemporary poststructuralism and deconstructive postmodernism* [emphasis added]. It does not return to earlier structures of consciousness to find validity nor does it level out all perspectives. Wilber calls this worldview centauric; an entity that has integrated mind and body. (Hayward, 2008, p. 114)

Finally, Hayward (2008) presents results of his doctoral research concerning stages of consciousness over a period of two years. He observes consciousness evolution from conventional to postconventional to integral. In particular, he points out how the pathway to an integral perspective "must pass through the self's point of uncomfortable, postconventional differentiation" as an impetus for the evolution of consciousness (p. 118). He identifies this "sense of uncomfortable disequilibrium" as one in which the sense of self, while "drawn towards the potential for postconventional integration," was nevertheless "pulled back towards the conventional," since "sense of career" is tied to a mostly conventional world (p. 118). Hayward finds that this dilemma can only be resolved through the emergence of an integral perspective, which is "quite capable of being employed from a conventional sense of self to conventional ends" (p. 118). This is because the integral perspective, in contrast to the postconventional self, does not completely reject the conventional perspective but instead includes it and by doing so can "...generate more choices for the conventional self to use... to maintain its perspective and to not consciously try to stand outside of it" (p. 118).

In another valuable contribution, Josh Floyd (2008) investigates the potential "integral renewal" holds for systems methodology in FS. Through the integral theories of Habermas and Wilber, as well as the models of Susanne Cook-Greuter, Floyd draws out the implications of these perspectives for systems thinking and systems theory as elaborated by prominent systems theorists such as Peter Checkland, R.L. Flood, and C. West Churchman. First of all, Floyd (2008) relates how Wilber's intense criticism of systems theory, partly influenced by Habermas, may appear by some to be an outright rejection; however, this interpretation of Wilber's thought is not accurate, as Floyd points out, for "...Wilber's model is itself an expression of an integral systems theory—that is, a theory of system, the boundary of which is expanded beyond the exterior domain to encompass and honour interiority as 'real,' and developmental depth as increasingly significant (or intrinsically valuable)" (p. 141). Hence, Floyd finds the redemption of systems theory "in the critique itself," for the "...recognition that the problems identified are not *inherent* in systemic thought, but rather are the result of partial *expressions* of systemic thought" (p. 141).

Drawing upon systems theorists Checkland and Flood, Floyd (2008) makes a distinction between *systems thinking* and *systems theory*. This distinction is important because systems thinking is “first and foremost an epistemology,” and has

...shifted recently from a perspective in which the world is seen as consisting of real systems, to one in which the world, whatever its underlying reality, is understood in terms of ‘systematically organized conceptions.’ This involves a change in perspective from regarding systems as representational tools to regarding systemic metaphors as an appropriately useful way of shedding light on situations as we encounter them. The distinction here is between, on the one hand, systems as things recovered as objective features of the world, and on the other hand, systemic thought as a means of conceptual engagement that arises when subjects interact with the world using particular processes of cognition. (p. 140)

According to Floyd (2008), systems thinking (*as epistemology*) “gives rise to theories of system” (p. 140). Such theories of system form the conceptual basis for a group of methodologies, which he describes collectively as *systems intervention methodologies* (p. 140). Since subjects applying systems methodologies “play an active role in what is seen and understood, and in what is done as a result,” Floyd introduces *intervention* to emphasize a view “of the practitioner as participant observer” (p. 140). In conclusion, he writes that by developing the capacity “...to integrate methodologies designed to explore system from the perspectives of communicative and emancipatory interests as well as technical interests, practitioners’ decisions and actions that follow systemic intervention will be more effective in the creation of preferred futures” (p. 148).

Another IF article illustrating the “difference that integral makes” applies Integral Theory to futures scenario generation. Chris Stewart (2008) identifies the most important factor in scenario creation as the role of worldview, pointing out how different worldviews produce quite different scenarios; hence, one “quality criteria” for improving scenario methods is the incorporation of a diversity of worldviews (p. 161). The scenario method applied needs to include “...a diversity of worldviews to be useful, and thus the greater the degree of difference in the worldviews incorporated the better in terms of accessing the different change potentials of the issue the scenarios are addressing” (p. 161). Yet how is one to recognize a variety of distinct worldviews? Is there a structure for the identification and classification of worldviews? In response to this question, Stewart (2008) turns to the studies of Gebser and Hayward to identify and characterize the various types of foresight based on distinct worldviews and then delineates the “scenario characteristics” that would follow, giving examples of each (pp. 163-164).

Stewart (2008) then further develops integral scenario foresight through the AQAL model because it “permits the interfacing and classification of many other approaches from both integral and other worldviews” (p. 165). In short, the integral worldview “...holds the promise, with approaches such as AQAL meta-theory, to transcend more of the limitations and also to include more of the benefits of previous approaches to scenarios than any preceding worldview of foresight” (p. 166). Stewart refers to “integral scenarios case studies” to demonstrate the superiority of the integral worldview in scenario generation and then looks beyond case studies to other applications that have been explored in theory though not yet in practice. These include “long-term or macrohistorical integral scenarios and a three-dimensional or diamond scenario development space” (pp. 168-70).

Finally, in an article analyzing and critiquing the futures method Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), pioneered by Sohail Inayatullah, Chris Riedy (2008) applies the integral approach to demonstrate what difference “integral” can make to improve this well-known method of inquiry in FS. Riedy points out how CLA, like IF, is at the forefront of a “shift in futures theory and practice” in that it too is a method that is “sensitive

to multiple ways of knowing,” recognizes “multiple values,” and seeks to “expose deep worldview commitments” (p. 150). As such, Riedy continues, CLA draws attention to “the multiple epistemological frameworks employed in futures work and seeks a plural approach in which there is room for all these frameworks” (p. 151). Riedy then summarizes the “four different ways of knowing” that CLA takes as its “starting point,” from the shallowest to the deepest: litany, systemic causes, discourse/worldview, and metaphor/myth (p. 151). In support of CLA, Riedy notes that CLA has “...proven to be of great value for drawing out the deep cultural commitments, worldviews, metaphors and myths that shape the way people interpret their world” (pp. 151-152). Moreover, according to Inayatullah (2004, p. 1), it is a theory and method that “...seeks to integrate empiricist, interpretive, critical, and action learning nodes of knowing” (as quoted by Riedy, 2008, p. 152). However, at the same time, Riedy finds that there are “conceptual differences between Integral Theory and CLA” (2008, p. 152).

While comparing CLA to Integral Theory, Riedy (2008) writes that both can be characterized as “responses to the failings of postmodernism” (p. 153). As far as Wilber’s version of integral philosophy is concerned, this statement is quite true since Wilber has written extensively about the failings of postmodernism. For example, in the preface to *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, Wilber describes Integral Theory as a “response to the unconstrained ‘pluralistic relativism’ of postmodernism” (as cited by Riedy, 2008, p. 153). As Riedy (2008) summarizes Wilber’s thoughts on the topic, postmodernism recognized that

...there are plural perspectives but argued that all of these perspectives are equally valid. Unfortunately, this argument ignores what is known about the development of the self and culture. Developmental research indicates that psychological and cultural development brings forth perspectives that are more inclusive than those that they transcend. Thus, for example, the postmodern recognition of plural perspectives is only possible after a long process of personal development, supported by cultural development. Like postmodernism, Integral Theory seeks to honour all perspectives; unlike postmodernism, Integral Theory also recognizes that perspectives that emerge later in the developmental process have greater depth and a greater degree of consciousness than those perspectives out of which they emerge. (p. 153)

Riedy (2008) then relates how Inayatullah was likewise not satisfied with the relativism of postmodern thought and thus adopted a vertically constructed notion of reality, largely based upon Indian philosophical thought, writing that truths are realized through an inward process by “going deeper into the mind” (p. 153). Nevertheless, as Riedy points out, the four layers of CLA seem to be instead “inspired by other sources” and do not correspond to the “...levels identified in Integral Theory. Rather they include a mix of what Integral Theory defines as quadrants, levels, and lines” (pp. 153-154). Riedy then illustrates how the four layers of CLA correspond to quadrants and developmental lines within the Integral framework, identifying the “deeper layers” as a line of development within the Lower-Left (LL) quadrant of culture and worldview (p. 154).

Riedy’s main criticism of CLA is that it gives little if no attention to the UL quadrant of individual consciousness and spirituality, and that the last two layers of CLA “are only available once a particular level of consciousness is reached” (2008, p. 154). Also, through the Integral framework, he identifies where “CLA might be located compared to other futures methods and what might be missed when CLA is applied alone,” finding that CLA “comes into conflict with Integral Theory” because CLA “favours cultural explanations over behavioural and systemic explanations,” whereas Integral Theory contends that “perspectives from all quadrants are required for a comprehensive approach” (pp. 154-155). As Riedy relates, the four forms of analysis (behavioral, systemic, psychological, and cultural) are “all equally valid and equally valuable, within the boundaries of the quadrants to which they refer” (p. 155).

Thus Riedy (2008) finds evidence of quadrant absolutism in CLA through its heavy reliance upon post-structuralism, which tends to deny the existence of the subject and of “...universal structures, emphasizing instead the central role of cultural context in the construction of truth, meaning, knowledge and reality. By cutting loose from objective reality and killing the subject, poststructuralism committed its own form of cultural quadrant absolutism” (p. 155). On the other hand, Riedy acknowledges that, to some extent, this privileging is understandable in the historical context of Right-Hand quadrants absolutism that has suppressed most Left-Hand quadrants perspectives, resulting in what Wilber describes as “flatland.” Thus, perhaps in the interest of recognition and readjustment, the valuing of the Left-Hand quadrants over Right-Hand quadrants is historically necessary.<sup>3</sup> In the short term, it may well be necessary to “...over-emphasise cultural explanations as a way of overcoming the current marginalization of cultural concerns” (p. 155). Nevertheless, as Riedy points out, one area that CLA seems to neglect is the development of the practitioner him or herself, who “gives the analysis its depth” (p. 156). According to Integral Theory, one has to consider the individual subject, but because of its strong connection to poststructuralism, CLA seems to pay little attention to the individual subject of the UL quadrant (p. 156). Instead, poststructuralists see the subject “as socially and culturally constructed and moved on to focus on this social and cultural context” (p. 156).

Riedy (2008) finds that in at least two ways, CLA’s neglect of the UL quadrant could become problematic. First, in a situation where individual personalities and perspectives play a pivotal role in the organization, the determination of future developments could be quite contingent upon these individuals, whose leadership qualities (“subjectivity”) steer the organization’s direction (p. 156). Moreover, if participants in a CLA workshop are not yet developmentally ready to reflect upon their cultural contexts (a perspective associated with the postconventional/worldcentric level of consciousness), such participants may feel “antagonistic towards positions they do not share and will certainly find it difficult to inhabit or feel empathy for some of those alternative positions” (p. 156). In some cases, this could be “transformative for the participant,” but in other cases, the experience could “...either frustrate or leave no lasting impression. Some of the criticisms leveled at CLA (e.g., that it is ethereal, impractical, too critical or too difficult) may originate from participants or practitioners that have become frustrated in this way” (p. 156).

In summary, the 2008 Integral Futures special edition demonstrated, through a number of ways, the “difference” that Integral Theory makes when applied to FS. Altogether, these “ways” represent a new perspective and methodological framework that has the capacity to propel futures research and practice to a new stage in its evolution. For example, Slaughter (2008) illustrated the “new clarity” that the Integral approach brought to his own work and then applied IF to other futures methods to likewise reveal how “integral” can add a new dimension of awareness to their respective applications. Voros (2008) examined six different paradigmatic frameworks and illustrated how Integral Theory is able to incorporate them all and so is best suited for the multidisciplinary nature of FS. Floyd (2008) demonstrated the potential “integral renewal” holds for systems methodology in FS, and Stewart (2008) reported about the “valuable outcomes” of integral scenario methods in futures work. Finally, Riedy (2008) gave particular attention to CLA and identified its strengths and weaknesses within the Integral framework.

## The Critiques of Integral Futures

In his introduction to “Epistemological Pluralism in Futures Studies,” Inayatullah (2010) writes that many of the contributors are “well versed in integral or integral futures” (p. 99). While it is not for me to question their credentials, nevertheless, few contributions featured in the 2010 rebuttal issue gave evidence to support this statement. No substantial treatment of Integral Theory was given; instead, Wilber’s views were mostly caricatured, and he was rarely quoted.<sup>4</sup> Authentic criticism of IF or Integral Theory should be constructive rather than destructive, dealing with the details of Wilber’s work and its application by qualified practitioners, and the ideas and issues presented in the 2008 special issue. Moreover, constructive criticism would offer

alternative perspectives or counterproposals to the IF framework, rather than asserting a vague notion of postmodern “pluralism” in FS. On the other hand, destructive, disingenuous criticism that resorts to ad hominem attacks, negative stereotype portrayals, caricatures, scare tactics, and straw man arguments is a sign of weakness and can be interpreted as “reactionary” (i.e., a frightened postmodern consciousness threatened by an infringement of what it perceives as its intellectual territory).<sup>5</sup> The criticism featured in the 2008 special issue is an example of constructive criticism, which offers a fair and balanced assessment of various paradigms, theories, and methods in FS, reviewing the details and acknowledging the strengths of each while offering criticisms that are, in the spirit of honest academic discourse, meant to improve them. Moreover, by presenting Integral Theory as a viable, alternative framework for viewing and applying futures research, methodology, and practice, the 2008 IF special issue demonstrated specific benefits to the development of the field of FS as a whole. However, since a number of contributions in the rebuttal edition of 2010 responded only with advocacy of postmodern relativism as an alternative for FS, I will only sum up and address the main criticism of Wilber and his contribution to Integral Theory. Then, through an analysis of postmodern relativism, I argue why epistemological pluralism, absent of Integral Theory, is an incomplete framework for futures and foresight research and inquiry.

### ***The Main Criticism of Integral Theory***

Because Integral Theory is based upon a “theory of the universe” or “everything,” it has received the same criticism that all “grand” (or holistic) systems theories have been dealt. Hence, the caricatured postmodern response criticism implies that there should be no systems view or theory of the universe at all because *all* are “ideologically-laden,” and *all* are “hegemonic,” and *all* are attempts at intellectual “colonization” through Western “Orientalism,” and so on. Thus, as the postmodernist deconstruction myth goes, all theories and systems are Western “totalizing” schemes of intellectual domination and are, hence, inherently imperialist, and we would all be much better off if we simply learned to live with intellectual chaos—that, in fact, the only “absolute” is absolute relativism. Of course, by implication, this means that anyone who asserts that one value is greater than another or assumes development or stages within social, cultural, or consciousness evolution has committed the grave postmodernist sin of asserting (or even implying) a dominator hierarchy, which is something that all postmodernists “know better” than and should foreswear. Hence, the postmodern response to this criticism goes something like this: *Regardless of this contradiction, we will lead you through the chaos to the relativistic heaven of no values and thus no depth. So just hold hands with a stone and chant “All is of Equal Value in the Pluralistic Heaven on Earth.” And finally it goes without saying that all of this should not be regarded as a theory of the universe. In other words, since we take no such theories seriously, please don’t be so absurd as to say that to hold no theory is also a theory, for by pointing out this bit of sophistry, you will then drive us to rage, and unfortunately, we will be forced to show you what tyrants we really are.*<sup>6</sup>

Although Wilber pastes grand titles to his works (e.g., *A Theory of Everything; A Brief History of Everything*), close scrutiny will reveal that he does not mean “everything” in the ultimate sense. For example, although Integral Theory is indeed a theory of the universe, it is also a theory of evolution, and evolution does not imply “completeness” or “perfection.” Instead, as Wilber (2000) relates while retelling an old aphorism about what the Earth rests upon, he says, “It’s turtles all the way down.... But it’s also turtles all the way up” (p. 43). Wilber (2003) has also related that there will be a post-integral stage and stages beyond that (“centuries”) in the future. In other words, the key difference that many of his critics fail to recognize is that the Integral model is *open-ended* rather than closed; furthermore, it is not “ideological,” as some critics have asserted since according to Wilber, the Integral Operating System is a “...neutral framework; it does not tell you what to think, or force any particular ideologies on you, or coerce your awareness in any fashion.... Likewise, to say that all occasions have Four Quadrants—or simply ‘I,’ ‘we,’ and ‘it’ dimensions—is not to say what the ‘I’ should do, or the ‘we’ should do, or the ‘it’ should do” (2006a, p. 37). Furthermore, neither is



it “exclusionary,” since one imperative of the Integral model is to be absolutely *inclusive*.

Among the typical postmodernist criticisms leveled at Wilber is that he engages in such thought crimes as “mega-mapping,” which utilizes shameful “categories” in a “hidden curriculum” designed to “reify” and covertly “colonize” through “self-referential” language. Moreover, Wilber’s Integral framework is (supposedly) a “hegemonic” and “hierarchical” “Orientalist map” that (undoubtedly) “closes all options of dissent,” and thus are the same tiresome, worn-out criticisms of modernity once more pulled out of the subjectivist, impressionist, postmodern hat in a one-size-fits-all fashion—just “one more western hegemonic totalizing theory” (Inayatullah, 2010, p. 103) of modernity:

[Integral] arrives with a *modernist* understanding of language; that language is transparent, adequately describing the world that it represents. Poststructuralism challenges this position asserting that *language is opaque*, complicit in the worlds that are described. Integral thus *languages* the world in particular ways—ways that I argue *reinscribe hierarchy, linear developmentalism, and Orientalism*. [emphasis added] (Inayatullah, 2010, p. 108)

With this conclusion, Inayatullah exposes a number of postmodernist/poststructuralist assumptions that deserve particular attention and extensive analysis, which would best be served in the context of a later section concerning the influence of postmodernism on the social sciences. In the meantime, the use of rhetorical devices found in some of the contributions of the 2010 special edition are worth pointing out.

### ***Ad Hominem Attacks and Straw Man Arguments***

Some of the contributions to the 2010 special edition resort to a variety of rhetorical devices in an attempt to deconstruct IF. For example, Marcus Bussey (2010) utilizes fear, not evidence or strength of argument, as an obvious scare tactic by referring to IF through the metaphor of a “trap,” warning us that the word *integral* should come “with a large red sticker clearly visible: Buyer Beware!” (p. 110). Then Bussey goes about painting a subjective, impressionist caricature of “integral,” using the forms of deconstructive terminology (“colonizing,” “hegemonic,” “epistemic absolutism,” “hierarchy cascade,” “Platonic dualism,” “panoptical,” etc.), yet remarkably, Bussey’s subjective portrait of integral contains only one reference to Wilber’s writings (2010, p. 111). Moreover, this one reference quotes from *Integral Spirituality* (2006b), where Wilber makes a casual comment about metaphysics; Bussey then props up this quote (from a text specifically focused on Wilber’s perspective on spirituality) as if it were representative of Integral Theory as a whole. Overall, Bussey puts a negative spin on Integral Theory in a series of straw man arguments, which are designed (in the true “spirit” of deconstructionism) to exaggerate, misrepresent, and distort Integral Theory and its relation to IF. Furthermore, Bussey oversimplifies and distorts Integral Theory by labeling it as “Platonic” since, according to Bussey (2010), it “poses a dualism (inner/outer) as its principle ordering structure” (p. 112). Besides the fact that Bussey probably means “principal” instead of “principle,” the notion of Platonic dualism is contentious, to say the least; moreover, to label “integral” as “neo-Platonist” and “idealist” perpetrates a negative stereotype that constitutes a sort of philosophical ad hominem attack.<sup>7</sup> This label of “Platonic” is especially disingenuous given the great lengths Wilber, in his most recent phase-5 post-metaphysical writings, has gone to distance himself from perennialism and Platonic forms. The same can be said for misrepresenting Integral Theory as “Orientalist” or “colonizing” or “ideology” without context or evidence, meant as mere subjective, disparaging, smear words, as if saying them hypnotically, as a kind of mantra, should be evidence enough.

The use of rhetorical devices as a form of guerilla warfare can also be found in the response of Inayatullah (2010) to the constructive criticism of CLA featured in the 2008 special issue. Though Inayatullah does at least respond specifically to those criticisms, still at times he too engages in negative stereotypes, caricatures,

and ad hominem attacks in his response. For example, he caricatures Wilber as a willing or unwilling “guru” who has “given the light” and continues the attack by describing Wilber’s contribution to Integral Theory as “closet hagiography” with “Wilber as godhead and Slaughter and Riedy as evangelists,” referring to Riedy’s contribution as a “religious piece” (2010, p. 104). Such vitriolic distortions, dripping with sarcasm, not only constitute ad hominem attacks but also perpetrate negative stereotypes in an attempt to discredit the source of IF and Integral Theory. Inayatullah repeats the same caricature and negative stereotype when he quotes “Frank” (or “Francis”; both are used) Hutchinson, who via “personal communication” informs us that the Integral map “appears to privilege *guruism* and *elitism* [emphasis added]...” (2010, p. 106). I cannot imagine why Inayatullah feels the need to reference an unknown person via personal communication, whose quote contributes no new perspective, nor furthers our understanding of IF or Integral Theory, but instead utilizes the same scare tactic that could just as well be entitled, “Why We Should be Afraid of the Word ‘Integral.’” Finally, Inayatullah refers us to a website that offers an “extensive critique of Wilber” (2010, p. 108). No doubt, Wilber has his critics, just as anyone who is doing anything in the world has critics. Even Plato, some 2,500 years later, still has his “critics,” but I rather think that says more about Plato than it does his critics.

More examples of rhetorical devices posing as legitimate criticism from Inayatullah and other 2010 contributors could be given; however, since this would amount to more of the same, at this point perhaps it will be more insightful to examine some of the deeper sources of criticism stemming from certain strands of postmodernist/poststructuralist thinking, which has certainly impacted the social sciences, including FS.<sup>8</sup> Hence, to illustrate these “certain strands,” I now turn back to the quote from Inayatullah (2010) describing what the heart of the matter is. Because Inayatullah’s statement affords us a fitting example of the postmodern/poststructural philosophy and approach to social science in general that permeates the 2010 rebuttal edition of *Futures*, I will examine its assumptions so as to unpack his statement.

## Postmodernism and the Social Sciences

Inayatullah (2010) states that at its “heart,” integral “arrives with a modernist understanding of language” (p. 108) In other words, in order for poststructural deconstructionism to operate, it must first frame the object of its criticism in its own “self-referential” language. Thus, it needs to *make* “integral” into the “modernist” image in order to apply its form of critical analysis. What this reveals is that postmodernism is unable to define itself except in its reaction to modernism. Without modernism as the object of its criticism, then it has little reason to exist; thus integral *needs* to “arrive” with a *modernist* understanding, for if it did not appear as modernist, then the poststructuralist analysis would be seriously undermined. Of course, integral actually arrives on the basis of *postmodern* consciousness, as Wilber has asserted, and integral does accept much of the postmodern criticism of modernity; however, that does not seem to matter to Inayatullah, for he *needs* integral to be modernist in order to apply poststructural criticism. And since it is true that integral at the same time does acknowledge and accept the positive contributions of modernism and is not so trenchantly anti-modernist as is much of postmodernism (especially skeptical postmodernism), this provides the wedge that poststructuralism needs to exaggerate through its deconstructive criticism of just how modernist integral (and Wilber) is.

However, the main point of Inayatullah’s statement concerns the role of language, which is a topic that postmodernists and poststructuralists have a lot to say about. Inayatullah states that the modernist assumption (inherent in “integral”) is that “language is transparent,” whereas the poststructuralist understanding asserts that “language is opaque, complicit in the worlds that are described” (2010, p. 108). Then perhaps it will be instructive to examine what exactly the postmodernist position on the role of language is.

Inayatullah’s assertion that “language is opaque” seems to be taken from Foucault, who argues that at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as individuals achieved more subjectivity (appearing as “subject”), representation became “opaque” (Rosenau, 1992, p. 93, referencing Foucault, 1970, p. 310). Since language is key to the act of “*re-presenting*,” which most postmodernists challenge the authenticity of, language can be considered

opaque as well. For example, Wittgenstein “emphasized linguistic relativism (the irreducible pluralism of language) and the impossibility of representing any ‘reality’ with language” (as cited in Rosenau, p. 93), and Barthes argued that words are “only symbolic representations with no direct relation to the world” (as cited in Rosenau, 1992, p. 93). This extreme philosophical position, implicit in the poststructuralist notion of language as “opaque,” seems almost absurd, and is problematic, to say the least, for social science. As Rosenau (1992) writes, modern social science

...seeks to produce objective theory that can be challenged on the basis of data. Theory is data dependent, and data has priority over theory in the sense that if data show the theory to be wrong, then the theory must be abandoned, given that the rules of method have been respected. Data and evidence are the basis for arbitrating between two competing theories. They may eventually both be found wrong; but both cannot be right. All this, the post-modernists argue, is mere propaganda because either theory does not exist or, if it does, then data are subordinate to theory (Gergen, 1987, p. 2). Every fact is itself theory laden, a construction without meaning independent of language, intuitive interpretation, and context. Facts are defined, even invented, by the community and have no meaning outside that collectivity (Smith, 1988, p. 105). Post-modernists reduce social science knowledge to the status of stories. (pp. 90-91)

This understanding affords us some context to the poststructuralist position on language and representation and is insightful when considering why many of the criticisms of the 2010 rebuttal issue did not address in detail theory or data in the IF contributions of 2008, nor was Wilber’s writings on Integral Theory given much detailed treatment. The reason is that, for skeptical postmodernists, the very *idea* of a representational framework of theories and data is suspect since all theories are mere “propaganda” based on the modernist assumption that “language is transparent”—that is, simply language exercises pretending to represent reality, which of course, cannot be “re-presented” because “language is opaque.”

While reading the articles in the 2010 rebuttal issue, I was struck by the paucity of evidence presented to support assertions. For example, Jose Ramos (2010) argues that “integral” implies an “end to history” and draws an analogy between integral theories of social, cultural, and consciousness evolution and what he (and others) derisively refers to as “developmentalism” (p. 118). Ramos considers Wilber’s version of Integral Theory to be just “another manifestation” of the “model monopoly” with its “teleological projection” about the “past and future course of human development...” (2010, p. 118).<sup>9</sup> According to Ramos, Integral Theory shares the same “presumptions of cultural superiority” and “rehashes key assumptions that were the basis for justifying the Western colonization of the world and the global genocide and enslavement which ensue” (p. 118). Ramos finds that Wilber’s “version of integral mirrors many of these colonialist assumptions” (p. 118).

Yet where is the evidence to support these allegations? Ramos (2010) makes this comparison, alleging that Wilber’s model is the same sort of “developmentalism” that “buttressed colonialism” (p. 118), and yet he provides no evidence that this is a valid observation or interpretation based on Wilber’s writings or his proponents’. Yes, Ramos does provide one reference to Wilber; nevertheless, since he does not quote or paraphrase Wilber, the connection of the reference to the analogy is missing: one could very well argue that Ramos only pretends to give evidence in support of his analogy. Furthermore, as Ramos is surely aware, the progression of social, cultural, and consciousness evolution through stages should, by no means, be labeled as mere “linear” development; that is an oversimplified and thus distorted view of Integral Theory, which adopts the spiral and dialectical model of stages of development and evolution based on the research of Jean Piaget, Clare Graves, Don Beck, Susanne Cook-Greuter, Michael Commons, and Kurt Fisher among many others.

However, I suspect that another reason for tying “linear” to “development” is that postmodern post-

structuralists consider all theories of development as mere justifications for hierarchy (and thus “oppression”). However, as Wilber (2000) explains, in the fields of psychology, evolutionary theory, and systems science, “Hierarchy is simply a ranking of orders of events according to their holistic capacity” (p. 25). In other words, rather than examples of “hegemonic colonizing” or “fascist domination,” hierarchal development is simply a developmental sequence in which “what is whole at one stage becomes a part of a larger whole at the next stage” (p. 25); hierarchy is the fundamental structural principle by which parts link up and join together to form a whole. That is why in the systems sciences the expressions “wholeness” and “hierarchy” are often uttered in the same breath (Wilber, 2000, p. 26). Moreover, the charge that all hierarchies (or holarchies) are linear misses the point, as Wilber (2000) relates:

Stages of growth in any system can, of course, be written down in a “linear” order, just as we can write down: acorn, seedling, oak; but to accuse the oak of therefore being linear is silly. As we will see, the stages of growth are not haphazard or random, but occur in some sort of pattern, but to call this pattern “linear” does not at all imply that the processes themselves are a rigidly one-way street; they are interdependent and complexly interactive. (p. 27)

Hence, because of the disingenuousness of such criticisms, one should not fall into the trap of taking them too seriously.<sup>10</sup> Since representation is impossible and language is opaque, there is no “truth” to find or support with evidence; instead, all truths are reduced to “stories” to tell and linguistic “games” to play.<sup>11</sup> In other words, it is much easier to prop up an imitation of Wilber and paint him in a dark color of one’s choice rather than analyze the “real” Wilber and the growing body of scholarship associated with his corpus.

As long as poststructuralism associates itself with skeptical postmodernism and deconstructionism, it has little to offer the field of FS; in fact, as is the case in many of the social sciences these days, it can be corrosive and virulent. At the risk of hyperbole, it has become intellectual anarchism that creates a vacuum, which by default opens up the door for Machiavellian fascists and social-Darwinists to take over.<sup>12</sup> So for those futurists who cry “Beware!” about Integral Theory, I answer similarly with a “red sticker” of my own: “Beware of this form of nihilism!”<sup>13</sup>

In “The Genesis of *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*,” Wilber (2000) recounts how, in the 1990s, after a 10-year writing hiatus, he set about to write a textbook on psychology (with the title, *System, Self, and Structure* in mind). He was shocked to discover that four of the words that he had used in the first paragraph (development, hierarchy, transcendental, universal) were “no longer allowed in academic discourse...,” for in the meantime, while he was away, “extreme postmodernism had rather completely invaded academia in general and cultural studies in particular” (p. ix):

The politically correct had been policing the types of discourse that could, and could not, be uttered in academe. Pluralistic relativism was the only acceptable worldview. It claimed that all truth is culturally situated (except its own truth, which is true for all cultures); it claimed there are no transcendental truths (except its own pronouncements, which transcend specific contexts); it claimed that all hierarchies or value rankings are oppressive and marginalizing (except its own value ranking, which is superior to the alternatives); it claimed that there are no universal truths (except its own pluralism, which is universally true for all peoples). (Wilber, 2000, pp. ix-x)

And here we are more than a decade later facing the same problem in FS. Because the same epithets are used to malign IF and everything “integral,” much of the criticism in the 2010 rebuttal issue should be taken with a

grain of salt. On the other hand, the absolute relativism and inherent nihilism of deconstructive poststructuralism *is* something that should be taken seriously if FS is not to become even more fragmented than it already is. As a matter of fact, one reason for the emergence of IF is to address the problem of fragmentation in FS. However, in order to understand the nature and necessity of that emergence, I will take a closer look at the larger framework and how “integral consciousness” has emerged and evolved historically.

## The Integral Foundation Wilber Stands Upon

A legitimate criticism raised by Jennifer Gidley (2010) is that one should not just rely on Wilber but should recognize other sources of integral theory. While this is fair criticism, I do not think it was meant to imply that all “integrals” are the same, and while it is true that Wilber does not have a monopoly on integral theorizing, it is worth pointing out the value of Wilber’s contribution to the evolution of integral thought.<sup>14</sup>

Wilber (2000) traces some intimations of Integral Theory in the Great Chain of Being from Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus until the Enlightenment philosophers, Schelling and Hegel. Also, as previously noted, Hayward (2008) gives some sense of the history of integral perspectives “from Jean Gebser to Jürgen Habermas and finally to Ken Wilber,” as a possible “‘genealogy’ of the integral perspective” (p. 110). Steve McIntosh (2007), a contemporary integral author, dedicates a chapter of his book to elaborate on the founders of integral philosophy, beginning with Hegel, whom he refers to as “perhaps the first truly integral philosopher,” who laid the foundation “...for the evolutionary understanding of the universe that has since become central to all scientific and philosophical thought” (p. 160). McIntosh describes Hegel as the forerunner to integral consciousness since he went beyond Kant, transcending modern consciousness to pioneer the “virgin territory” of an integral worldview through what Wilber refers to as *vision-logic*. McIntosh (2007) writes that Hegel is to “integral” what Plato is to “modern”; however, like the modernist consciousness of ancient Greece, “Hegelian integralism was similarly unstable and premature, so it could not be sustained” (p. 162).

McIntosh (2007) also takes notice of the contribution of Henri Bergson, whom he describes as the first post-Darwinian integral philosopher—the first to propose

...a spiritual interpretation of the discoveries of evolutionary science.... While Bergson’s emphasis on intuition can be distinguished from Hegel’s clear use of dialectical evaluation, Bergson’s recognition of the need to go beyond modernist reason in the approach to a more complete understanding of truth can be seen as an early form of integral consciousness. (pp. 165, 167)

Bergson showed the “fallacy of the materialist metaphysics of scientism” and is considered the father of process thinking, influencing later integral thinkers Alfred North Whitehead, Teilhard de Chardin, and Sri Aurobindo. Whitehead, in particular, developed Bergson’s process thinking further by propounding a “spiritual philosophy of consciousness that now forms the basis of much of integral philosophy’s reality frame” (McIntosh, 2007, p. 168).

However, because Whitehead wrote in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he encountered “...neither the problems nor the opportunities of postmodernism, so his evolutionary metaphysics did not include the essential insights of intersubjectivity, which have since come to form such a significant part of integral philosophy’s 21<sup>st</sup>-century synthesis” (McIntosh, 2007, p. 171). Even though “process philosophy *is* an integral philosophy,” explains McIntosh, because it lacks an understanding of intersubjectivity and the spiral of development, it is not as complete or as powerful as the Integral Theory of Wilber (p. 171).

Another founder of integral philosophy considered by McIntosh (2007) is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who “went even further” than Bergson and Whitehead:

[Teilhard de Chardin developed] a unique worldview that was at once fully evolutionary and also fully spiritual.... Teilhard's recognition of the systemic nature of evolution, its "development by envelopment" and its transformations triggered at critical thresholds (even before this was described by systems science), combined with his clear understanding of the direct developmental conjunction between the inside and outside of all evolving entities makes him an important figure in the history of integral philosophy. (pp. 172, 174)

However, it is Jean Gebser whom McIntosh (2007) refers to as the "prophet" of integral consciousness, for Gebser had a "...clear intuition that human history would soon produce an emergent new structure of consciousness and culture, which he termed *integral consciousness*" (p. 176). McIntosh writes that in Gebser, "we have a thinker of a different character" because, unlike the others, Gebser is "relatively obscure" and his writing can "sometimes seem excessively cryptic, eccentric, and dogmatic" and yet, at the same time, it is "amazingly insightful and prophetic in its description of integral consciousness" (p. 176). As mentioned previously, Hayward (2008) points out Gebser's contribution to Integral Theory through the evidence presented for structures of human consciousness, having demonstrated that these structures evolved through the magic, mythic, and mental stages, and that "a fourth mutation in human consciousness, *integral*, was possible" (Hayward, 2008, p. 110). In other words, this fourth mutation of consciousness is only a *potential* stage; moreover, it represents an "integration of all the previous structures of consciousness" (Hayward, 2008, p. 111). Hence, as McIntosh (2007) relates, according to Gebser, integral consciousness is "aperspectival awareness" and "ego-free" in the sense that it is "not transfixed in partial viewpoints" and its perspective is

...not bound to the ego of one individual or one type of consciousness, but is rather able to adopt multiple perspectives. Through aperspectival consciousness, the previous structures of consciousness become transparent and "diaphanous," and this results in an increasing intensity of consciousness that integrates all previous structures. (pp. 176-177)

According to McIntosh (2007), Gebser went further than Hegel in describing the evolution of consciousness, since he defined these stages "...more distinctly and by describing how recognition of these discrete stages of historical development actually causes the emergence of the next stage" (p. 177).

Although he identifies Sri Aurobindo as more of a religious thinker than a philosopher, McIntosh (2007) also acknowledges Aurobindo's place as a "significant pioneer of integral consciousness" and "prominent founder of the integral worldview" since Aurobindo, along with Gebser and Pitirim Sorokin, first began to adopt the term *integral*. While these three writers were "... all not referring to exactly the same thing, we can see how they all had a similar vision of what was to come" (McIntosh, 2007, pp. 180-181). Hayward (2008, p. 109) and Gidley (2010, p. 129) also reference Rudolph Steiner as an important figure in the evolution of integral philosophy, and I agree with Gidley that Steiner's contribution has been largely neglected and undervalued—principally because Steiner's thought, often associated with theosophy/anthroposophy, is primarily spiritual; nevertheless, Steiner was quite involved in expanding and applying his teachings to a number of fields, and he founded a number of schools based on his philosophy of education.<sup>15</sup>

A couple of shortcomings of Gebser, as McIntosh (2007) points out, is that he failed to distinguish between postmodern and integral consciousness; also, his research did not take advantage of the research within developmental psychology at the time. It is rather odd, McIntosh remarks, that Gebser did not mention the work of James Mark Baldwin or Jean Piaget, since both were contemporaries, and the research of Piaget was already well known. Baldwin, who discovered that "consciousness evolves through universal, cross-cultural

stages of development,” provided the foundation “...from which the entire field of developmental psychology has subsequently arisen...” (McIntosh, 2007, pp. 183-184).

Piaget, whose research placed the question of developmental stages “beyond any reasonable doubt,” drew upon the research of Baldwin; as McIntosh (2007) cites, Piaget’s empirical confirmation “...of the universal, cross-cultural, developmental stages of consciousness, each with its own worldview, has now been validated and revalidated by literally hundreds of scientific studies” (p. 184). Moreover,

Piaget’s theory of the cognitive line of development has served as an inspiration and a template for the research of a long line of subsequent developmental psychologists who have since investigated other developmental lines (such as moral reasoning or the sense of self), and who have consistently found that the development of consciousness proceeds through these distinct, universal, cross-cultural stages, with these same stages being evident regardless of the particular line being traced. (McIntosh, 2007, pp. 184-185)

Piaget’s research into developmental psychology inspired other stage theorists such as Kohlberg, Loevinger, Gilligan, Gardner, and Kegan (McIntosh, 2007). Furthermore, McIntosh (2007) explains how Abraham Maslow’s research into consciousness “evinced a unique combination of modernism, postmodernism, and nascent integralism” to become “one of the founders of transpersonal psychology which he characterized as the ‘fourth force’” (p. 185). Maslow’s research had a profound influence on Clare Graves, whose discovery of “the spiral of development” came about while Graves was attempting to “verify and confirm the stages of development postulated by Maslow” (McIntosh, 2007, p. 186). Maslow’s significant influence on Graves

...can be seen in Graves’s designation of the integral stages and beyond as “being levels,” with his idea of “being values” derived from Maslow’s description of the values and orientation of self-actualized people.... Out of all the developmental psychologists who have followed Baldwin, Graves is the most significant to integral philosophy because of his clear recognition of the systemic nature of the spiral of development. (McIntosh, 2007, p. 186)

Also, Graves’ advanced understanding greatly impacted Wilber’s evolving conception of developmental philosophy, which until then had rested on a “...combination of the stages of consciousness described by Piaget and his followers and the stages of culture described by Gebser”; through Graves, Wilber developed “a clearer recognition of the difference between postmodern and integral consciousness” (McIntosh, 2007, p. 187).

Finally, before considering Wilber’s contribution to “integral,” one must acknowledge the contribution of the philosophy of Habermas, whom McIntosh (2007) considers the “de facto founder of integral philosophy” because several important features “...of integral philosophy’s 21<sup>st</sup>-century synthesis find origin or amplification in his writing” (p. 187). However, because Habermas was an atheist and neo-Marxist, McIntosh (2007) does not consider him as an “integral philosopher” in the same manner as the spiritually oriented Whitehead or Teilhard; still, Habermas’ contribution to “integral” is invaluable because of his defense of the dignity of modernity against

...the antimodern onslaughts of Europe’s most ardent deconstructionist postmodernists; because of his insights into the correlation between the evolution of consciousness and the evolution of culture; because of his recognition of dialectically evolv-

ing stages that he sees emerging within objective, subjective, and intersubjective “worlds”; and because of the credibility he brings to these arguments as a result of his stature as one of the world’s most respected living professional philosophers, his ideas serve as a foundation for many of the essential tenets of current integral philosophy. (McIntosh, 2007, p. 188)

Habermas’ influence on the thought of Wilber is unmistakable, as McIntosh (2007) explains, for similar to Wilber’s theory of worldview evolution, Habermas views human history as

...evolving across three broad worldview stages—mythical, religious-metaphysical, and modern—which he correlates with Kohlberg’s stages of moral development in the individual. These are the same stages that Kohlberg labeled preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. Habermas recognizes the superiority of the modern/postconventional stage of evolution in the way that its worldview has differentiated the “value spheres” of science, morality, and aesthetics, separating them from their premodern fusion in religion, and resulting in a clearer understanding of objective standards of morality. (McIntosh, 2007, pp. 188-189)

McIntosh (2007) points out that it is “rather ironic” that while Habermas made such a significant contribution in “outlining the integral worldview’s objective-subjective-intersubjective metaphysical reality frame,” he claimed that his philosophy is strictly “postmetaphysical”; however, at the same time, he does not give an adequate explanation of “...how his notions of the dialectic teleology of history are postmetaphysical, nor does he explain why his ideas about subjective or intersubjective ‘worlds’ do not have ontological implications beyond the realm of language” (p. 190). Nevertheless, “despite his hostility towards spirituality,” remarks McIntosh (2007), “Habermas has demonstrated a remarkable grasp of some of the highest truths that philosophy has yet uncovered” (p. 190).<sup>16</sup>

## Wilber’s Contribution to Integral Philosophy

Reading Wilber, one will discover that most of his ideas can be found in other integral philosophers, systems thinkers, and developmental psychologists. However, Wilber’s genius lies in the way that he has threaded together hundreds of integral sources, drawing from the depths of Western and Eastern philosophical thought as well as from advances in developmental psychology and systems theory, to formulate a coherent synthesis that quite powerfully expresses a new philosophical direction. As McIntosh (2007) explains, Wilber has “...effectively updated evolutionary philosophy by skillfully incorporating many of the significant advances in science and philosophy that emerged during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (p. 191). Moreover, Wilber’s four-quadrant model reveals

...aspects of reality that heretofore have not been fully recognized or understood, and so in certain respects this new frame of reality does for the internal universe what Descartes’ philosophy did for the external universe during the Enlightenment. Wilber’s 21<sup>st</sup>-century integral synthesis provides the beginnings of the expanded reality frame that is serving to enact the next historically significant worldview to arise in humanity’s cultural evolution. (McIntosh, 2007, p. 191)

McIntosh (2007) considers Wilber’s most significant additions to evolutionary philosophy to be his incorporation of “the recent insights of systems science, developmental psychology, and postmodern philosophy” (p.



191). For example, his theory of holons (whole/part systems), adapted from discoveries in systems science, effectively shows

...the similarities between the evolutionary structures found in the external realms of biology and cosmology, and the evolutionary structures found in the internal realms of human consciousness and culture. Moreover, this recognition of the whole-part structure of all evolutionary development reveals how systems manage to maintain their integrity in the face of increasing complexity. (McIntosh, 2007, p. 192)

Wilber also “skillfully illuminated the connection between developmental psychology and evolutionary philosophy” by clearly demonstrating how “these stages have shaped the historical evolution of human culture and how they are now defining the problems and opportunities of contemporary society” (McIntosh, 2007, p. 192). With respect to postmodernism, Wilber (following Graves) showed how the postmodernist way of seeing actually

...arises from a distinct worldview that occupies a position in between modernism and integralism. As a result of his enlarged understanding of postmodernism as a historically significant stage of consciousness, Wilber has been able to transcend postmodernism more thoroughly than Habermas by clearly recognizing postmodernism’s enduring contributions as well as its debilitating falsehoods. (McIntosh, 2007, pp. 192-193)

Finally, McIntosh (2007) considers Wilber’s most important contribution in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century synthesis of integral philosophy to be his willingness to describe the “big picture,” what he calls

...“the Great Nest”—matter, mind, and spirit—and in his framing of the evolving universe with his four-quadrant model of evolution... Using this four-quadrant map of universal development, Wilber shows how the evolution of culture is intimately connected with the evolution of biology, the evolution of individual consciousness, and the evolution of the external structures of human society. (p. 193)

## **The Redemption of Postmodernism**

Rosenau (1992) divides postmodernism into “two broad, general orientations” or “camps”: the affirmative postmodernists and the skeptical postmodernists. Without this distinction, it is quite difficult to grasp hold of this kettle of slippery fish, which is often purposefully esoteric or ambiguous and resists all attempts at definition, representation, or categorization. Also, as Rosenau (1992) relates, this distinction helps to “facilitate an understanding of apparent contradictions within postmodernism” (p. 16). Accordingly, since I have thus far mostly referred to the skeptical side of postmodernism, I should also give some attention to the “affirmative” side of postmodern consciousness, which is recognized in Wilber’s stages of consciousness theory as the foundation upon which integral consciousness emerges.

Although the “affirmatives” largely agree with the skeptics’ criticism of modernity, they are, nonetheless, more optimistic about the postmodern age and the future, and are more oriented toward process. Affirmatives see truth as “personal and community specific”; and though “theory” may be reduced in stature, they “...neither reject it altogether nor call for an absolute equality of all theories. For the affirmatives theory is unsystematic, decentered, heterological, and makes no claim for a privileged voice” (Rosenau, 1992, p. 22). Regarding modern representation, though the affirmatives dispute its authenticity, they “retain the possibility

of epistemological representation because they see no way to do without it” (p. 23). However, according to Rosenau (1992), both skeptics and affirmatives challenge those versions of

...modern social science that claim objectivity, causality, a materialist reality, and universal rules of inquiry. Skeptical post-modernists argue that reality is pure illusion: everything is intertextual, not causal or predictive. Their preferred methods include anti-objective, introspective interpretations and deconstruction. Relativism and uncertainty characterize their views. They doubt the value of reason and contend it is impossible to establish standard criteria for judging the intellectual production.... Affirmative post-modernists also indict modern social science. Their own understanding of reality is constructivist or contextualist... Positive value orientations and specific normative goals openly guide the affirmatives’ version of social science. Methodology depends on emotion, intuition, and imagination. Although ambivalent about reason, few affirmatives are willing to abandon it altogether. They sometimes evaluate knowledge claims on the basis of normative preferences or community standards. (p. 23)

It seems that while the affirmatives share much of the skeptics’ critique of modernity, at the same time, they are desperate not to fall into the nihilist abyss while under the skeptic’s deconstructive scalpel. Yet their attempts at reconstruction are often flimsy, provisional, and contradictory. Certainly, their sense of universal pluralism has holistic aspirations, but because they also detest any hint of modernist hierarchy, they are incapable of perceiving the “glue” by which to recognize *the inherent integral structure of the whole*. In other words, only through the apprehension of integral consciousness is it possible for the reconstructive effort to succeed; without it poststructuralism is a fool’s task, a tightrope walking and juggling act hypnotically drawn to the skeptic’s abyss below while desperately struggling to maintain balance. Can that metaphor possibly represent a viable approach to the future or FS? Is there any possibility for the redemption of postmodernism or poststructuralism within the social sciences?

As mentioned above, Integral Theory respects the achievements of postmodernism and has identified it as a stage of consciousness that has evolved out of modernism. Wilber (2000) identifies pluralistic relativism to be one of postmodernism’s high developmental achievements, “stemming from the postformal levels of consciousness,” and he refers to postformal cognition as “network-logic or vision-logic—Gebser called it *integral-aperspectival*—and it is vision-logic that drives the best of postmodernism” (p. x). The truths of postmodernism include:

...constructivism (the world is not just a perception but an interpretation); contextualism (all truths are context-dependent, and contexts are boundless); and integral-aperspectivism (no context is finally privileged, so an integral view should include multiple perspectives; pluralism; multiculturalism). All of these important truths can be derived from the beginning stages of postformal vision-logic, and postmodernism at its best is an elucidation of their profound importance. (p. x)

However, as Wilber (2000) points out, this stage of consciousness is not the highest. As numerous studies have shown, when vision-logic matures

...into its middle and late phases, pluralistic relativism increasingly gives way to more holistic modes of awareness, which begin to weave the pluralistic voices to-

gether into beautiful tapestries of integral intent. Pluralistic relativism gives way to universal integralism. Where pluralism frees the many voices and multiple contexts, universal integralism begins to bring them together into a harmonized chorus. (p. xi)

Yet, the trap that pluralistic relativism so often falls into, explains Wilber (2000), is that having so heroically developed beyond a rigid universal formalism within the modernist consciousness,

It became suspicious of any universals at all, and thus it tended to fight the emergence of universal integralism with the same ferocity that it deconstructed all previous systems. It turned its critical guns not just on pre-pluralistic stages (which was appropriate), but also on post-pluralistic stages (which was disastrous). Deconstructive postmodernism thus began to actively fight any higher stages of growth, often turning academia into a charnel ground of deconstructive fury. Little new was created; past glories were simply torn down. Little novel was constructed; previous constructions were merely deconstructed. Few new buildings were erected; old ones were simply blown up. Postmodernism often degenerated into the nihilism and narcissism for which it is now so well known, and the vacant, haunted, hollow eyes of professional academia, peering through the smoking ruins, told the tale most sadly. (p. xi)

Integral Theory explains how each stage of consciousness has its own pathologies and how the recognition of these pathologies initiates a process through which a platform for transcendence is created. One could say that at least one way the transformation of consciousness is realized is through the evolution of critical awareness; thus, just as the postmodernist consciousness came about through a critical awareness of the pathologies of modernism, so integral consciousness emerges through a critical awareness of the pathologies of postmodern consciousness. However, one difference that “integral” makes is that it is able to recognize the historical contributions that *all* levels of consciousness (traditional, modern, and postmodern) have made thus far. As Wilber (2003) related in an interview, if representatives of all four levels of consciousness were to sit together at the same table, all of them except integral would be at each others’ throats. This does not mean to imply that all points of view are equal; nevertheless, every point of view has some validity and deserves respect for its positive contributions to the evolution of consciousness and culture.

## Conclusion

The 2008 special issue of *Futures* showcased the impact of Integral Theory when applied to futures research and work. Because Integral Theory is still relatively new and has revolutionary potential, the enthusiasm of some of the futures researchers and practitioners in the way that IF was presented was misinterpreted as zealous ideology.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the critical evaluations of other futures methods by some of the IF authors, meant in good faith as constructive criticism, is certainly open to discussion about the validity of those criticisms; however, shallow attacks based on rhetorical devices and skeptical, deconstructive tactics—as employed in the rebuttal issue of 2010—will not advance the integral discourse. Finally, one should take more of a long-term perspective and realize that IF is still in an experimental, nascent stage of development; thus, it should be given some leeway rather than summarily dismissed and caricatured.

It is a mistake to underestimate the impact and potential Integral Theory holds for FS. To once more quote from Voros (2008):

[Futures inquiry is,] by its very nature, a broadly inter-, trans-, multi-, meta-, coun-

ter-, and even anti-disciplinary activity... it is well suited to the conscious use of more inclusive and integral frameworks... based on a meta-paradigmatic integral meta-perspective—an approach which attempts to take the broadest possible view of the human knowledge quest, and of how this knowledge can be used to generate interpretive frameworks to help us understand our images of what potential futures may lie ahead. (p. 199)

Indeed, one could even say enthusiastically that Integral Theory represents biblical “manna from Heaven,” for finally FS has a framework to pull all of the disparate, fractured pieces together into a comprehensive, integrated vision of the future.

Of course, epistemological pluralism in FS is vital, which is reflected even in the way that “futures” is still the favored label, while the singular “image of the future” has, for the most part, been discarded by most futurists. Yet epistemological pluralism alone is unsustainable because it lacks structural coherence. Hence, if an integrated image of the future is continually dismissed, ridiculed, and denied (in such a manner as is evidenced in the 2010 rebuttal issue), FS will become more and more vulnerable to postmodernist/poststructuralist skeptical criticism. Is that really the way forward for FS? Where is the “integrity” of FS? What is the “glue” that holds it all together? Heretofore this question could not be answered, but now it can. Even while epistemological, ontological, and methodological pluralism are upheld in the spirit of freedom and diversity, at the same time, the image of the One Common Future of the One People of One Planet beckons for attention. It’s the age-old philosophical struggle of the One and the Many—the Ascenders and Descenders, the Romantics and the Idealists, the Eco and the Ego—that *no longer needs to be a struggle*, for both are two sides of the same coin, so *both* are recognized as vital within the IF framework. Only now can we “have our cake and eat it too!” We can have epistemological pluralism within FS and at the same time strive toward an integrated vision of the common future of humanity—as one people of the one planet.

### *Acknowledgment*

This work was supported by the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2011.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the Integral Operating System and the four-quadrant model, see Wilber (2006a).

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note here (especially in light of some critiques of Slaughter in the 2010 rebuttal issue), that Dr. Slaughter applied Integral Theory first as a critique of his own work *before* applying it in critique of these other futures methods.

<sup>3</sup> One can compare this to the role of “affirmative action” in U.S. sociopolitical history. In order to bring about the necessary correction and social adjustment, the policy of favoring minorities was enacted, even though it violates the traditional American value of equality through equal opportunity.

<sup>4</sup> The following criticism only applies to specific 2010 contributions as indicated; for example, Gidley’s piece (2010), which I believe contains an enlightened, fair appraisal of Wilber’s version of “integral,” can certainly be described as “constructive criticism” that goes beyond postmodernism by not engaging in deconstructivist “guerilla warfare” tactics. There are other instances of fair criticism as well (though sometimes mixed with postmodernist rhetoric).

<sup>5</sup> If anything, resorting to ad hominem attacks, negative stereotype portrayals, caricatures, scare tactics, and straw man arguments is itself evidence that postmodern consciousness is incapable of responding to Wilber’s criticisms of its radical relativism; thus, does it resort to such disingenuous rhetorical devices rather than accept the evolutionary imperative to rise to a higher stage of integral consciousness, which indeed incorporates the “epistemological pluralism” advanced by postmodernity and poststructuralism.

<sup>6</sup> As Rosenau (1992) relates:

The postmodern view—there is no truth, and all is construction—is itself the ultimate contradiction. By asserting this statement postmodernists assume a position of privilege. They assert as true their own view that ‘there is no truth.’ In doing so, they affirm the possibility of truth itself. Few post-modernists escape this dilemma, but those who try (Derrida and Ashley are examples) relativize everything, including their own statements. They say that their own views are not privileged. They warn their readers that the views they express are only their own and not superior to the opinions of others. But even this relativist position, once stated positively, implicitly assumes truth. It assumes truth in the statement that what they are saying is not more veracious than any other position. There is simply no logical escape from this contradiction except to remain silent. (p. 90)

<sup>7</sup> Wilber’s view (2000) is that Plato has been historically maligned through the use of the “dualist” label. Wilber refers to Inge’s study (1929/1968) on Plotinus, writing, “...and thus Inge (among others) concludes flat-out that ‘Platonism is not dualistic’” (p. 666).

<sup>8</sup> Throughout this text, I use the terms *postmodern* and *poststructural* as if they were interchangeable. However, though they do overlap considerably, the two terms are not completely synonymous. This is obvious when considering the literal meanings in which postmodern means “after” modern and poststructural means “after” structural; hence, from a literal definition, “modern” provides a much larger context or “picture” than does “structural,” which actually refers to a school of thought within modernism. Also, as Rosenau (1992) points out, postmodernists are more “...oriented toward cultural critique while the post-structuralists emphasize method and epistemological matters. For example, post-structuralists concentrate on deconstruction, language, discourse, meaning, and symbols while post-modernists cast a broader net” (p. 3).

<sup>9</sup> As Rosenau (1992) explains,

Postmodernists typically reject modernism’s “Grand Narrative” (Hassan 1987a, p. 91), meta (master) narratives (Lyotard, 1984), and narratives that claim to be scientific and objective, that serve to legitimate modernity and assume justice, truth, theory, hegemony. These modern meta-narratives are the same narratives the skeptics reject as logocentric, linear, totalizing; these modern narrators speak with authority (such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Jesus, Luther, and Mohammed) in “an all-knowing voice from afar and above, stripped of all human subjectivity or fallibility” (Richardson, 1988, p. 203). (p. 85)

<sup>10</sup> According to Rosenau (1992), in a postmodern world, theory

...is no longer “innocent” in the sense of being detached; truth ceases to be naïve in the sense of neutrality and objectivity. For the skeptical post-modernists this means abandoning truth and theory and embracing a philosophical relativism in their place. Language, they argue, transforms truth and theory into largely linguistic conventions, and for the skeptics this means that it is impossible to say anything with confidence. A pluralism of more or less equal views exists, in which the skeptics consider all to be interesting and worthy of attention. (p. 22)

<sup>11</sup> As Kariel (1988) writes, postmodernists strive “...for no extrinsic objectives... Play suffices; it’s intrinsically satisfying” (as cited in Rosenau, 1992, p. 135).

<sup>12</sup> For example, as Rosenau (1992) relates, some Marxist critiques say that postmodernism

...is fit with the culture and ideology of the new conservatism and the global wave of religious fundamentalism. Its pessimism and its anti-bureaucracy—its opposition to hierarchy, state power, and administrative regimes—go along with specific conservative social policies such as de-regulation, privatization, and the reduction of social welfare. (p. 158)

<sup>13</sup> As some critics charge,

[Deconstruction makes] no positive methodological contribution. It is *destructive* (Habermas, 1987a, p. 161); it does not *construct* knowledge. If, as skeptical post-modernists contend, all interpretations are equally interesting and the arbitrary character of language precludes judgment about the adequacy of any given interpretation, then all these interpretation-dependent social science fields are in jeopardy. The role of deconstruction in geography and anthropology is an example of what post-modernists in these fields themselves identify as “guerilla activity.” Their post-modern activity is designed to show these fields to be “mere fictions.” The post-modern revision from within aims openly to fragment these disciplines altogether, to make room for interpretive attempts (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 26; Gregory & Walford, 1989). (Rosenau, 1992, pp. 123-124)

<sup>14</sup> McIntosh (2007) writes that after reading through most of Wilber’s sources for himself, he could see that integral consciousness is a “self-organizing dynamic system with a ‘life’ of its own. Integral philosophy is more than just ‘Ken Wilber’s philosophy’...” (p. 156).

<sup>15</sup> Similarly, I might also add the writings and works of Krishnamurti, who was also involved in education, having established a number of schools based on the application of his teachings. Whether one would consider Krishnamurti’s philosophy as integral or as primarily postmodern is another question.

<sup>16</sup> In a Sounds True interview, Wilber (2003) referred to Habermas as his favorite contemporary philosopher.

<sup>17</sup> As Hines and Collins (2010), futurists and outside observers, comment on the “debate about Integral Futures,” because of the “evangelical fervor” of some of the IF practitioners and/or proponents, who consider “Integral methods part of the new wave of futures studies at a more advanced or ‘higher’ level than existing futures studies,” a “perception” arose that Integral Futures “has become a new orthodoxy to which other methods must conform” (pp. 12-13).

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