Both Emmet Fox and Ken Wilber have the means to weave together the insights of many disciplines into a practical tool that can help others to see the world as a whole. This insight helps people to be liberated from their narrow and limited perspectives. In an attempt to summarise Wilber’s revolutionary thoughts (as in *Sex, ecology, spirituality: the spirit of evolution*, *Up from Eden* and *A theory of everything*), which is a challenge in itself, this chapter will focus only on an analysis of his thinking as far as it has a bearing on New Thought and Emmet Fox’s religious thinking. It therefore provides a theoretical framework for reading, understanding and interpreting Fox’s teaching.

### 4.1 GROWTH AND EVOLUTION

‘It’s a strange world’, Wilber comments. Just as ‘evolution became conscious of itself’, it simultaneously started ‘working to engineer its own extinction’ (Wilber 1995:3). Today’s fractured worldview is one that separates and divides everything – a world of dualism. To heal such a worldview is to replace it with one that honours the entire web of life and its interconnectedness.

The new system sciences are about wholeness and connectedness, whereas the essence of the modern systems sciences is growth and evolvement of these wholes. The three great realms of evolution have been termed differently throughout time and Wilber refers to them as the physiosphere (matter), biosphere (life) and noosphere (mind). Historically these three great domains ‘were one continuous and interrelated manifestation of Spirit, one great chain of being, that reached in a perfectly unbroken or uninterrupted fashion from matter to life to mind to soul to spirit’ (Wilber 1995:8). This All, the Kosmos (a Greek word meaning ‘the patterned
Whole of all existence, including the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual realms’), according to Wilber (2001:xi–xii), is a real theory of everything. But ‘Kosmos’ was reduced to ‘cosmos’, where body, mind, soul and spirit were reduced to matter alone – a very scientifc materialism. With this, the great chain of being began to fall apart.

It has been said that the sciences are ‘shot through with the notion of hierarchy’ and although viewed as undesirable, ‘hierarchy seems to be everywhere’. The opponents of hierarchy maintain ‘that all hierarchies involve a ranking or dominating judgment that oppresses other values and the individuals who hold them, and that a linking or nonranking model of reality is not only more accurate’, but also ‘kinder and gentler and more just’ (Wilber 1995:15). The opponents then propose what they call ‘the notion of heterarchy’ where ‘rule or governance is established by a pluralistic and egalitarian interplay of all parties’. In a ‘hierarchy, rule or governance is established by a set of priorities that establish those things that are more important and those that are less’. On one side one has the egalitarians with their views of ‘all creatures as equal nodes in the web of life’ and on the other are the sciences of wholeness and connectedness that maintain ‘that you cannot have wholeness without hierarchy’. It seems then that ‘hierarchy’ and ‘wholeness’ are ‘two names for the same thing’ and Wilber (1995:16) shows that this is ‘a colossal semantic confusion’. He reminds his readers of the actual meaning of the word ‘hierarchy’, where ‘hiero-’ means ‘sacred’ or ‘holy’ and ‘-arch’ means ‘governance’ or ‘rule’ – sacred governance or governing one’s life by spiritual powers. This type of hierarchy was ranked, because ‘each successive order was more inclusive and more encompassing and in that sense ‘higher’, but not more important or greater, as that would indicate judgement.¹ According to systems theory, then, ‘a hierarchy is simply a ranking of orders of events according to their holistic capacity. In any developmental sequence, what is whole at one stage becomes a part of a larger whole at the next stage.’

The term ‘holon’ was coined by Arthur Koestler as that ‘being a whole in one context is simultaneously a part in another’ (Wilber 1995:18). Not only is the whole more than the sum of its parts, but the whole can also determine the function of the different parts. When it is said that ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’, the ‘greater’ means ‘hierarchy’, according to Wilber (1995:18). Within the three great domains there is no hierarchy of one that is greater
or more important than the other; it is rather a ranking of orders of events according to their holistic capacity. For in any developmental sequence, what is whole at one stage becomes a part of a larger whole at the next stage. Hegel (in Wilber 1995:21) states that ‘each stage is adequate and valuable, but each deeper or higher stage is more adequate and, in that sense only, more valuable’. Wilber agrees with Koestler that the correct word for ‘hierarchy’ is actually ‘holarchy’, and he uses the terms interchangeably.

Everything within in the Kosmos constitutes holons. As Wilber would say, holons all the way up and holons all the way down. Should one destroy any holon, one destroys all the holons above it, but none below it. For example, should a molecule have been destroyed, the potential cell is also destroyed, but not the atom below. The moment that any part of any whole is repressed, it becomes pathological – sick. It then affects all the parts with which it is linked. When beings think they are only the whole, they begin to dominate and oppress others. On the other hand, when they think they are nothing more than mere mortals, they never reach their divine potentials. This is when the human turns pathological or becomes sick. It has been said before that humans are ‘cross-man’ – both hu-man and divine. The growth or development of this being then lies within the union of these two aspects, which is considered the healing process or becoming whole again.

Convinced that ‘reality is not composed of things or processes; it is not composed of atoms or quarks; it is not composed of wholes nor does it have any parts’. Rather, it is composed of ‘whole/parts, or holons’, Wilber (1995:32–78) offers the following twenty basic tenets (condensed into twelve). They act as a conclusion of the common patterns of existence that are operative within the physiosphere, the biosphere and the noosphere.

- *Reality as a whole is not composed of things or processes, but of holons.* This observation leads to what Wilber terms the ‘pure groundless Emptiness, or radically nondual Spirit’. He prefers to refer to the ‘sum total of events in the universe not as the “Whole” (which implies the ultimate priority of wholeness over partness) but as “the All” (which is the sum total of whole/parts)*.
• **Holons display four fundamental capacities: self-preservation, self-adaptation, self-transcendence and self-dissolution.**

  : The wholeness aspect of a holon is displayed in its capacity to preserve the autonomous and coherent patterns it exhibits.

  : The partness aspect of a holon is displayed in its capacity to accommodate, to register other holons, to fit into its existing environment.

  : Self-transcendence means that ‘the universe has an intrinsic capacity to go beyond what went before’. It is linked to the example that when ‘two hydrogen atoms are brought together with an oxygen atom, then a water molecule is the result’. This transformation is the creative process.

  : Self-dissolution means that holons, which were built up (through vertical self-transformation), can also break down. The constant tension between these forces can lead to forms of pathology.

• **Holons emerge.** ‘Owing to the self-transcendent capacity of holons, new holons emerge’ and an element of surprise is always involved.

• **Holons emerge holarchically.** ‘That is, hierarchically’, as Wilber puts it. As each deeper or higher holon embraces its junior predecessors (an atom includes particles and a molecule consists of atoms and particles, but not vice versa), it adds its own new and more encompassing pattern or wholeness to the existing one.

• **Each emergent holon transcends but includes its predecessor(s).** In this case ‘it preserves the previous holons themselves but negates their separateness or isolatedness or aloneness. It preserves their being but negates their partiality or exclusiveness’.
• **The lower sets the possibilities of the higher; the higher sets the probabilities of the lower.** Whenever a higher level of creativity emerges, it ‘goes beyond (but includes) the givens of the previous level’. However, even though a higher level “goes beyond” a lower level, it does not violate the laws or the patterns of the lower level. It cannot be reduced to the lower level; it cannot be determined by the lower level; but neither can it ignore the lower level’. In other words ‘a lower sets the possibilities, or the large framework, within which the higher will have to operate, but to which it is not confined’.

• **The number of levels which a hierarchy comprises determines whether it is ‘shallow’ or ‘deep’; and the number of holons on any given level we shall call its ‘span’.** When there were only atoms in the universe and not yet molecules, it could be said that ‘atoms had a small depth (3) but an enormous span, stretching, we presume, throughout the existent universe and numbering in the megazillions (thus, depth = 3, span = zillions). When molecules first emerged, they had a greater depth, a depth of four, but initially a very small span. The greater the vertical dimension of a holon (the more levels it contains), then the greater the depth of that holon; and the more holons on that level, the wider its span.’

• **Each successive level of evolution produces greater depth and less span.** ‘The number of wholes will always be less than the number of parts, indefinitely. Thus, greater depth always means less span, in relation to a holon’s predecessor(s)’. And the greater the depth of a holon, the greater its degree of consciousness, because ‘the spectrum of evolution is a spectrum of consciousness’ and ‘a spiritual dimension is built into the very fabric, the very depth, of the Kosmos’. The two scales are the vertical one of deep versus shallow, and the horizontal one of wide versus narrow. Agency (self-preservation) and communion (self-accommodation) refer to changes in the horizontal dimension. Self-transcendence and self-dissolution refer to changes in the vertical dimension. Wilber refers to the changes in the horizontal dimension as ‘translation’, and those in the vertical dimension as ‘transformation’. Thus, in transformation (or self-transcendence), whole new worlds of translation disclose themselves. These ‘new worlds’ are not physically located somewhere else; they exist simply as a deeper
perception (or deeper registration) of the available stimuli in this world. Translation is a change in surface structures (horizontal) ... [and it] shuffles parts ... [whereas] transformation is a change in deep structures (vertical) ... [and it] produces wholes.

- **Destroy any type of holon, and you will destroy all of the holons above it and none of the holons below it.** Within a holistic sequence, ‘each member includes its predecessor(s) but not vice versa, and thus each successive member is indeed more encompassing (or more holistic)’. For example, if all the molecules in the universe are destroyed, then all the cells will be destroyed too, as the cells contain the molecules. But the atoms and particles will not be destroyed. It is also true that the more fundamental a holon is, the less significant it is, and vice versa. ‘The less depth a holon has, the more fundamental it is to the Kosmos, because it is a component of so many other holons.’ In other words, without this fundamental ‘ingredient’ or ‘building block’, the other holons could not function. So

  less depth means more fundamental [and] the less significant it is to the Kosmos, because it embraces (as its own components) so little of the Kosmos. On the other hand, the greater the depth, or the greater the particular wholeness of a holon, then the less fundamental it is, because fewer other holons depend on it for their own existence ... [and] the more significant [it is].

- **Holarchies co-evolve.** ‘Holons do not evolve alone, because there are no alone holons (there are only fields within fields within fields)’. Co-evolution means ‘that the “unit” of evolution is not an isolated holon (individual molecule or plant or animal) but a holon plus its inseparable environment’.

- **The micro is in relational exchange with the macro at all levels of its depth.** ‘... as holons evolve, each layer of depth continues to exist in (and depend upon) a network of relationships with other holons at the same level of structural organization.’ Wilber refers to this as ‘same-level relational exchange’ and ‘every holon maintains its existence through relational exchanges with same-depth holons in the social (or macro) environment’.
• *Evolution has directionality*. Evolution has already been marked by creative emergence, symmetry breaks, self-transcendence, increasing depth, and now one can add increasing complexity, differentiation, variety and organisation.

Noting that ‘the Great Chain of Being was a Great Holarchy of Being – with each link being an intrinsic whole that was simultaneously a part of a larger whole – and the entire series nested in Spirit’ (Wilber 1995:31), it reminds us of the symbology that a chain is as strong as its weakest link, hence there is no purpose in judgement for reasons of supremacy.

### 4.2 THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

‘Mankind [said Plotinus] is poised midway between the gods and the beasts.’ Thus half beast and half god, ‘humankind is an essentially tragic figure with a beautifully optimistic future – if it can survive the transition’ (Wilber 1981:xix). And the story of humankind’s soul at the moment is somewhere between the beasts and the gods. Traditionally history was seen as ‘the unfolding of a pact between God and man, a movement ultimately to bring man and God together’. Wilber (1981:3, 9) sees it as ‘the story of the unfolding of the relationship between man and the ultimate Whole. It is going, not toward a final judgment, but toward that ultimate Wholeness.’

The path of transcendence ‘follows what is called the “Great Chain of Being”’. And it starts at the lowest rung, so to speak, and moves itself upward from there. Wilber explains this in a simplified diagram,\(^3\) which he calls ‘the ground unconscious’ or ‘the great chain of being’. Using a circle to demonstrate his point, he divides it into three sectors, namely the Subconscious (pre-personal), the Self-Conscious (personal) and the Superconscious (transpersonal). The average level of consciousness includes the first four levels, namely Nature, Body, Early Mind and Advanced Mind, whereas the most advanced level of consciousness refers to the Psychic, the Subtle, the Causal and the Ultimate. Evolution or growth moves through these eight levels from the physical to the spiritual.
For a complete exposition of Wilber’s eight levels within the great chain of being, see *Up from Eden: a transpersonal view of human evolution* (Wilber 1981). The following points act as a brief summary of each level.

- **Level 1 Nature.** It is also referred to as the physical nature and lower life forms, the pleromatic, material, uroboric-reptilian and archaic forms. This level reminds one of the kundalini, the serpent energy lying asleep at the base of the spine, waiting to be aroused and then to coil up through the different chakras toward higher levels. Even within this ancient stage of humankind’s development, all the higher states were already present as its potential, although unconscious.

- **Level 2 Body.** Within this level the forms include the highest bodily life forms, especially typhonic and magical (the symbol of half man and half serpent and where the self is separated from the natural world, but still ‘magically intermingled with it’). As humans emerged from the uroboric state, they ‘were beginning to awaken to their own separate existence, with all the potentials and all the perils therein’ – they were awakened to their vulnerability, their finiteness and their incompleteness. In order to live with this situation, man began to defend his increasingly separate self and tried to make it appear stable, permanent, enduring, immortal and cosmo-centric.

- **Level 3 Early Mind.** This is a phase that contains terms such as verbal, mythical, membership, paleological and bicameral. As humanity continued its awakening, the next step from a magical-typhonic consciousness was mythic-membership consciousness, and farming was the most obvious effect or vehicle of this deeper transformation in structures of consciousness. Language was the vehicle of this new consciousness.

  Because language transcends the present, the new self could transcend the body. Because language transcends the given, the new self could see into tomorrow. Because language embodies mental goals and futures, the new self could delay and channel its bodily desires. And finally, because language could transcend the physical, it could represent physical goods with mental symbols.
• **Level 4 Advanced Mind.** This next level refers to the rational, mental-egoic and self-reflexive phases and can be divided into the low egoic period, followed by the middle egoic, and then high egoic periods. Then follows the battle between the hero myths and the great mother myths. Instead of embracing and integrating the previous myths, the new myths repressed them with disastrous results. In this, the Western ego ‘demonstrated not just an awakened assertiveness, but a blind arrogance’.

• **Level 5 Psychic.** This level is called Nirmanakaya. It is also referred to as the shamanistic trance and includes concepts such as shakti, psychic capacities, the elemental forces (nature gods and goddesses), emotional-sexual transmutation, body ecstasy, kundalini, and hatha yoga. With the rise of consciousness from its lowest point of descent (root chakra) to the sixth chakra, the emphasis is on body and bodily energies. There has been a definite move from body to mind, from earth to heaven, from darkness to light and from matriarchy to patriarchy.

• **Level 6 Subtle.** Known as Sambhogakaya, it refers to angelic and archetypal visions and the saintly. It mentions the one God/dess, the Creator of all lower realms, shabd yoga, savikalpa samadhi and saguna Brahman. Here the emphasis is on the subtle realm of light and audible illuminations and subtle sounds. The Great Goddess from level 5 has now given way to God the Father in this level. However, there is still a remnant of dualism, the one of subject and object, one of Creator and creature. It is the one god⁴ who is worshipped … *Our Father who art in Heaven.*

• **Level 7 Causal.** The level of Dharmakaya relates to the unmanifest Void, Empty Ground, the Godhead; the identity of soul and God, transcendence of subject-object duality, coalescence of human and divine; jnana yoga, nirvikalpa samadhi, nirguna Brahman. The emphasis is upon transcending all of the foregoing by uprooting the separate-self sense altogether. Within this level the soul does not commune or worship with the oneness any more, it now becomes the oneness. There is no dualistic nature of God and me, but here God and soul are identical. It is to reach beyond God. *I and the Father are one.* In other words, ‘to reach Godhead, one must go beyond God altogether’. When Jesus moved from
Sambhogakaya (level 6 – dualism – *Our Father who art in Heaven*) to Dharmakaya (level 7 – oneness – *I and my Father are one*), he was crucified because it was considered blasphemous. In the early Christian Gnostic texts (Pagels 1981:xix), Monoimus, a Gnostic teacher, said: ‘Abandon the search for God and the creation and other matters of similar sort. Look for him by taking yourself as the starting point. Learn who it is within you ... If you carefully investigate these matters you will find him in yourself’. To know the self is to know God ...

- **Level 8 Ultimate.** This last level, the absolute, the Svabhavikakaya, is viewed together with the previous level. Wilber (1981:263) labels it ‘level 7/8, Atman, Godhead – which is both One and Many, Source and Suchness, Only and All’. It includes concepts such as the ‘culmination of Dharmakaya religion; identity of manifest and unmanifest, or identity of the entire World Process and the Void; perfect and radical transcendence into and as ultimate Consciousness as Such, or absolute Brahman-Atman; sahaja yoga, bhava samadhi’.

Wilber (1981:263) does distinguish between level 7 and level 8 in that the level 7 ‘is the asymptotic limit of the spectrum of consciousness’ and level 8 is ‘the always prior and present ground of every level of the spectrum’. Level 7 is ‘the Source of all levels’, whereas level 8 is ‘the Suchness of all levels’. The causal is ‘the highest of all levels’ and the ultimate is ‘the Condition of all levels’.

The first three general domains were those of matter (nature), life (body) and mind (early and advanced). The next domain is the domain of the soul (including the psychic, known as nature mysticism, and the subtle, known as deity mysticism), and its first rule is that it is transpersonal. As Emerson puts it, ‘[t]he soul knows no persons’ (in Wilber 1995:279–280). The answer to who or what observes the individual self, according to Emerson, is the soul. It is as if

a light shines through us upon things. That which observes or witnesses the self, the person, is precisely to that degree free of the self, the person, and through that opening comes pouring the light and power of a Self, a Soul, that, as Emerson puts it, ‘would make our knees bend. To emphasize that the Soul, the
'aboriginal Self', is common in and to all beings, Emerson often refers to it as the 'Over-Soul', one and the same in all of us, in all beings as such (Wilber 1995:280–283).

At the psychic level 'the universalizing and global tendencies or reason and vision-logic come to fruition in a direct experience of a truly universal Self, common in and to all beings'. Then at the subtle level, ‘this process of Interiorization’ or ‘within-and-beyond' intensifies – a new transcendence with a new depth, a new embrace, a higher consciousness, a wider identity – and the soul and God enter an even deeper interior marriage, which discloses at its summit a divine union of Soul and Spirit, a union prior to any of its manifestations as matter or life or mind, a union that outshines any conceivable nature, here or anywhere else’ (Wilber 1995:292, 293).

The following domain is the one of spirit (including the causal, also known as the formless mysticism and the ultimate, the non-dual mysticism). From the previous level, the subtle, where the soul and God were united, one now transcends all of this, into a pure formless awareness within the causal – the Supreme Identity of Godhead. Meister Eckart expresses it as ‘I find in this breakthrough that God and I are one and the same’ (in Wilber 1995:301). In this formless and silent awareness, one ‘does not see the Godhead, for one is the Godhead, and knows it from within, self-felt, and not from without, as an object’. Arriving at pure Emptiness and the whole Kosmos, the ultimate stage, it is not-two (non-dual), but Absolute Consciousness. ‘Brahman is the World’ and ‘all this world is Brahman’. ‘When all things are nothing but God, there are then no things, and no God, but only this’ (Wilber 1995:309).

Is there a final omega point? Are we rushing towards the end of history? As Wilber (1995:311, 315) has stated, ‘no holon rests happy short of finding its own immediately deeper context, its own omega point, which means that each holon rushes to the End of its own History’. He states:

Uncreate Spirit, the causal unmanifest, is the nature and condition, the source and support, of this and every moment of evolution. It does not enter the stream of time at a beginning or exit at the end. It upholds all times and supports all places, with no partiality at all, and thus exerts neither push nor pull on history. As the utterly Formless, it does not enter the stream of form at any point. The Formless, in other words, is
indeed an ultimate Omega, an ultimate End, but an End that is never reached in the world of form. Forms continue endlessly, ceaselessly, holarchically forever’.

The higher evolutionary religion, the one in which one finds Nothing and All Things, has never took official root in the West. This Nothingness, the Void, does not mean a transcendent vacuum – it means seamless, not featureless; it transcends but includes all manifestation. The West, Christianity in large, could not accept this notion, as it sounded blasphemous, even devilish. The politically motivated individuals of that time, the early bishops and banker-priests, also realised that a God beyond God meant an end to their power, which was based on God number one … thus no more business! So Orthodox Western religion stopped at level 6, while the higher levels were entertained by the East (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Neo-Confucianism).

The becoming of a person, as seen through the above stages of the great chain of being, includes the material body (level 1) which is exercised in labour; the pranic body (level 2), which is exercised in breath, sex, and feeling; the verbal-membership mind (level 3), which is exercised in communication; the ego (level 4), which is exercised in mutual personal recognition and exchange of esteem; the soul (levels 5 and 6), which is exercised in psychic and subtle transcendence; the spirit (levels 7 and 9), which is exercised in absolute absorption in Atman. It is clear that the higher rests upon the lower, but the higher is not caused by or constituted by the lower. ‘The higher does not come from the lower, it comes from the ground unconscious via the lower.’ It is also true that ‘because the higher does transcend the lower, the higher can “repress” the lower’. On the other hand ‘the lower can “infect” the higher’ by erupting and therefore disrupting the higher functioning, as well as passing on its own distortions to the higher (Wilber 1981:274).

We are not only moving toward the ultimate Wholeness, ‘we also emerged from it, and, paradoxically, in its embrace we always remain’. In other words, ‘history is the narrative of man’s relationship to his own deepest Nature, played out in time, but grounded in eternity’. Wilber then states that at the very base of humankind’s consciousness lies the ultimate Wholeness. However, this truth has not yet been consciously realised by the majority and therefore we are always seeking it out there as something ‘other’. This ‘Other’ ‘is ever-present,
but unrealized; it is given, but rarely discovered; it is the Nature of human beings, but lies, as it were, asleep in the depths of the soul’. The basic Nature of human beings is an ultimate Wholeness, also known by the names Atman, or Buddha Nature, or Tao, or Spirit, or Consciousness, and even, but less frequently, used because of its loaded connotations, God (Wilber 1981:14–15).

It is when we discover our deepest Nature and realise that it is one with the All, that we will be relieved of the burdens of time, anxiety, worry and fear of death. It is within this discovery of the Wholeness that we transcend. It is when one forgets one’s true self, the Atman, within this search for transcendence that it results in forced symbolic substitutes such as sex, food, money, fame, knowledge and power. These substitutes are referred to as the Atman project. And ultimately the Atman project is the substitute for Atman itself. ‘Until the final resurrection of the true Self in superconsciousness, then, the false, individual, and separate-self sense is faced with two major drives; the perpetuation of its own existence (Eros) and the avoidance of all that threatens its dissolution’ (Thanatos). These positive and negative sides of the Atman project represent life and death.

4.3 THANATOS AND EROS

The ultimate nature of reality is Wholeness, or sunyata, ‘voidness’, ‘emptiness’ or ‘nothingness’. To repress this Wholeness, or set up a boundary or barrier between a separate self and the Wholeness requires a constant expenditure of energy. As a function of this boundary, Eros and Thanatos came into being. Eros is ‘the desire to recapture that prior Wholeness which was “lost” when the boundary between self and other was constructed’. In failing to unite these opposites, Eros is driven to find symbolic substitutes for the lost Whole. It is a hunger that can never be satisfied.

Thanatos, on the other hand, is ‘the power of sunyata, the power and push to transcend illusory boundaries, but it appears, to a self that will not surrender its boundaries, as a threat of literal death and physical mortality’ (Wilber 1981:157, 158). In reaching this boundary, which is Thanatos, one has the choice of either submitting to it (being transcended), ‘or one will have to
find something else to do with that “death wish” – one will have to find substitute sacrifices\(^6\) (Wilber 1981:158).

As long as this separate-self sense exists, the more it represses death and its terror. On the other hand, to transcend the death terror, one must transcend the self.

That is, there is nothing the separate self can do to actually get rid of death terror, since the separate self is that death terror – they come into existence together and they only disappear together. The only thing the separate self can do with death is deny it, repress it, dilute it. Only in the superconscious All, in actual transcendence, is the death terror uprooted, because the separate self is uprooted as well (Wilber 1981:62–63).

The desire to have more life (Eros) ‘is driven by the correct intuition that in reality one is the All. But, when applied to the separate self, the intuition that one is the All is perverted into the desire to individually possess the All. In place of being everything, one merely desires to have everything. That is the basis of all substitute gratifications, and that is the insatiable thirst lying in the heart of all separate selves’. Wilber states that ‘the denial of death’ in the same way is based upon the correct intuition that one’s prior Nature is indeed timeless, eternal, immortal beyond history. But when that intuition of timelessness is applied to the separate self, it is perverted into the desire to simply live forever, to go on going on, to avoid death everlastingly. Instead of being timeless in transcendence, one merely substitutes the desire to live forever. In place of eternity one substitutes death denial and immortality strivings (Wilber 1981:63).

As the Atman-Spirit, one is timeless, for there is no past, no future, and no time. So in denying death, one is demanding a future. This separate self is creating a picture of time where it can continue forever. And ‘time is not merely a denial of eternity [it is] a substitute for eternity, for it allows one the illusion of continuing and continuing and continuing … It is a form of the Atman project, of substituting a pretend everlastingness for the reality of the timeless Present. And as long as there is a separate self, it needs time …’ (Wilber 1981:64–65)

With every transformation up the ladder of consciousness there is the choice of further transformations, or an individual ‘continues to translate both his self and his world according to the basic structures of that level’. In other words, ‘translation is a change in surface structures’
or the ‘moving around on one floor’. Transformation, on the other hand, results in changing
deep structures, or ‘is moving to a different floor altogether’. Translation’s purpose is to
‘maintain the given level of the self system’ or to hold it stable and its aim is ‘to ensure that
Eros outweighs Thanatos – that Life wins out over Death’ (Wilber 1981:77–78). When
‘Thanatos exceeds Eros, translation fails and transformation ensues. As one floor “dies”, a
different floor emerges.’ This transformation can be toward higher structures or lower
structures, progressive or regressive.

The shaman was considered the first great voyager into realms of the superconscious. The
true shamanistic experience gives us insight into the processes of translation and
transformation. It does not produce a breakdown to lower states, but an actual breakthrough
to higher modes of being, resulting in ‘greater physical stamina and vitality of spirit. The
shaman is the man who knows and remembers, that is, who understands the mysteries of life
and death.’ The shaman’s transformation entails ‘nothing less than the death and
transcendence of the separate-self sense. Death, Thanatos, Shiva, and Sunyata – the very
thing all separate selves are dedicated to resist, the very thing that translation is geared to
avoid, the very thing that freezes cold the heart of mortal beings – just that is what the shaman
accepts and passes through.’ The experience is that ‘Thanatos exceeds Eros, crisis ensues,
mere translation ceases, and transformation to higher orders of consciousness results … The
shaman is the man … who understands the mysteries of life and death’ (Wilber 1981:79–82).

4.4 FALL FROM SOURCE: INVOLUTION AND EVOLUTION

How did we fall from Source? In the big play of events we can imagine Spirit temporarily
‘forgetting’ itself by throwing itself outward as far as possible, and thus ‘losing’ itself in
successively lower levels. Each level then is created by a forgetting of its senior level, so that
ultimately all levels are created by a forgetting of Spirit. This ‘downward’ movement, whereby
‘Spirit’ ‘playfully loses and forgets itself in successively lower levels, is called involution’
(Wilber 1981:317). We are reminded that Spirit is not lost at each level, just forgotten.
This forgetting of the previous level leads to the ultimate forgetting of Source itself and results in separation from the Godhead and the creation of a separate-self consciousness. Wilber (1981:317) puts it concisely by remarking that

in ‘involution’, each level is (1) a successive ‘moving away’ from Godhead, (2) a successive lessening of consciousness, (3) a successive forgetting or amnesia, (4) a successive stepping down of Spirit, (5) a successive increasing of alienation, separation, dismemberment, and fragmentation, (6) a successive objectification, projection, and dualism.

So once involution is completed, then evolution can begin. Wilber (1981:320) refers to this explosive limit of involution as the Big Bang – a point where ‘matter was flung into existence out of its senior dimensions, or, ultimately, out of Spirit’. The former is the enfolding of the higher into the lower, whilst the latter is the unfolding of the higher from the lower. Stated otherwise, the higher is already in existence within the Ursprung as its own potential; however, when it emerges, it has to pass ‘through’ the lower and not ‘from’ the lower.9

The one feature of the evolution process was its holistic growth. As Jan Smuts (1987:86, 99) has stated, and as referred to by Wilber, ‘Wholeness is the most characteristic expression of the nature of the universe in its forward movement in time. It marks the line of evolutionary progress. And Holism is the inner driving force behind that progress.’ He states that the whole is in the parts and the parts are in the whole and that they influence and determine each other throughout the evolutionary process.

In further comparisons between involution and evolution, ‘involution proceeded by successive separations and dismemberments’, whereas evolution ‘proceeds by successive unifications and higher-order wholes’. And whereas ‘involution proceeded by successive forgetting or amnesia, evolution proceeds by successive remembering … Evolution is holistic, because “to evolve” is simply to re-member that which was dis-membered, to unify that which was separated, to recollect that which was dispersed. Evolution is the re-membering …’ (Wilber 1981:321). It is not an accident or a fortunate chance, but it is labouring toward Spirit and is driven by Spirit itself.
We are not transforming into higher levels, according to Wilber (1981:323–324), because as long as ‘the death of that level’s self-sense was not accepted, then consciousness remained stuck at that level. And because the self is stuck to that level, identified exclusively with that level, it then defends that level against death, against transcendence, against transformation.’ He then asks: ‘Why, then, does the self-sense not relinquish its present level, accept its death, and thus rise to the next higher level of consciousness, ultimately to find true Spiritual Eternity’? His answer is that ‘the lower is created (in involution, and recreated moment to moment) as a substitute gratification for the higher, and ultimately, for Atman itself. The self does not relinquish the lower, so as to find the higher, because it thinks the lower is already the higher.’ When the self at any level accepts the death of the lower, then it could differentiate itself from it, and thus transcend it – and so proceeds evolution, the remembering more and more, unifying more and more, transcending more and more, dying to more and more. ‘When all deaths have been died, the result is only God.’

Schelling (in Wilber 1981:325–326) maintained that ‘history is an epic composed in the mind of God. Its two main parts are: first, that which depicts the departure of humanity from its centre (Spirit) up to its furthest point of alienation from this centre (the movement of involution), and secondly, that which depicts the return (evolution).’

What Wilber and others are stating has been confirmed in Eastern traditions, as well as by cultures, tribes and groups such as the Native Americans, to which Roy Littlesun belongs. These statements were already revealed in shamanism for example. Roy Littlesun (2003:53), using the symbol of the romantic heart, illustrates the processes of involution and evolution by first focusing on the bottom point of the heart. This represents the Ultimate (Spirit). Then there is a movement away from this point – alienation and forgetting (involution). When the two sides of the ‘heart’ reach its extremes, it remembers and actually pulls in and returns to oneness (evolution). It is a process of involution, then evolution and maybe involution again – forever expanding? Although Wilber does not mention the possibility of multiple cycles of these processes, the writer is nevertheless convinced that there has been more than one cycle of involution and evolution and that this is not the last one either. This idea of continuation finds resonance in the traditional prophecies of the Hopi people of the American
South-West. They believe that 'the human race has passed through three stages of life since its origin' (Kaiser 1991:41). The first of these worlds was destroyed by fire, the second by ice and the third by a flood. The destruction of these worlds is the reason that a periodic purification and renewal of the world appear necessary. Some scholars and Hopi prophets believe that this world, the fourth one, will be the last world as the number 4 is a sacred number. The majority take the view that there will be a fifth world and even more, hereby supporting the continuation of cycle upon cycle.

One of Wilber’s (1995:107–111) concerns is that theorists looked at the universe from the outside. ‘They are all the outward forms of evolution, and not one of them represents how evolution looks from the inside, how the individual holons feel and perceive and cognize the world at various stages.’ Knowing oneself may lead to knowing the interior of other holons, which are now part of the self. ‘But I can know the outer world because the outer world is already in me, and I can know me. All knowledge of other is simply a different degree of self-knowledge, since self and other are of the same fabric, and speak softly to each other at any moment that one listens. The greater the depth of evolution, the greater the degree of consciousness.’ The within of things is known by many theorists as consciousness. Different names have been given with slightly different meanings. Wilber refers to the within of things as consciousness (depth), and the without of things as form (surface).

It is also true that any evolution brings with it new and emergent possibilities and therefore new and potential pathologies because revolution always comes from the within and manifests itself in the without. If any level turns pathological (becomes sick through daily choices and actions), then it risks destroying its divine potential.

Involution, the ‘illusionary separation of all things from Godhead’, is the theological fall (not that it prevents enlightenment, but marks the initial illusory separation of all things from God), whereas evolution, the awakening and re-membering of the Ultimate, is the scientific fall. It was when self-conscious beings awoke to ‘their vulnerability, separation, alienation, and mortality’ that this led to the final emergence from Eden. On the other hand, ‘that which prevents the return to God is not God’s creation per se but mankind’s ignorance of only God’
Referring to original sin, Wilber argues that it is not something that the separate-self sense ‘does’. It ‘is’ the separate-self sense, period. Another point to ponder is ‘this world is not a sin; forgetting that “this world” is the radiance and Goodness of Spirit – there is the sin’ (Wilber 1995:329). ‘Sin’ for Plotinus (in Wilber 1995:338) ‘is not a “no” but a “not yet” – we have “not yet” realized our true potentials, and so we are given to “sin”. Sin is thus overcome not by a new belief but a new growth. An acorn is not a sin; it is simply not yet an oak.’

Plotinus then states that ‘those who would find an “other world” apart from “this world” have missed the whole point. There is no “this world” or “other world” – it is all a matter of one’s perception. There is not even any “going up” or “coming down”. No movement in space takes place. Spirit and Soul are everywhere and nowhere. We are in “Heaven” whenever “we in heart and mind remember God”; we are “immersed in Matter” whenever we forget God. Same place, different perception.’ As mentioned by Plotinus, ‘we will arrive at the All without change of place’ (in Wilber 1995:343). Fox shares this sentiment when he reminds his readers that ‘you do not “meet God” on the next plane any more than you do on this plane. God is everywhere. Of course, He is fully present on the next plane just as He is on this plane …’ (Fox 1979a:211). God is no more in heaven than he is on earth. The sentiment is that you either know him or you have forgotten, but you need not go anywhere to find him.

‘The Great Dualism of all dualisms’ as Wilber (1995:345–347) has suggested, ‘is between “this world” and an “other world”. Reality – the “real world” – is neither this world nor the other world.’ Wilber suggests that one should remember the following when one entertains the idea of Reality: ‘The One is the Good to which all things aspire. The One is the Goodness from which all things flow. The Absolute is the Nondual Ground of both the One and the Many.’ Reality is not the summit (or omega), or the source (or alpha), but it is Suchness. According to Wilber, the West has produced ‘two utterly irreconcilable Gods’.

The ascending God that takes all things back to the One [and] the descending God that delights in the diversity of the Many. The Ascending program demanded a withdrawal from all ‘attachment to creatures’. It recommended ascetic, sometimes harsh discipline, always orientated toward a withdrawal of attention from the senses, from the body, form the earth, and above all from sexuality … This ‘oneness strategy’ was
introspective and highly introverted. [The Descending program on the other hand] summoned men and women to participate, in some finite measure, in the creative passion of God, and to collaborate consciously in the processes by which the diversity of things, is achieved. It placed the active life above contemplation. It was altogether extroverted (Wilber 1995:356, 363).

Plato (in Wilber 1995:320, 326) echoes this thinking and his two movements can be summarised as ‘a descent of the One into the world of the Many – Spirit immanent in the world’; and an ‘ascent from the Many to the One – Spirit transcendent to the world’. Wilber interprets Plato’s final stance as that ‘Spirit is more perfect in the world than out of it’. Having integrated the path of Ascent with the path of Descent, he gave equal emphasis to the One and the Many. Or in Wilber’s words, ‘flee the Many, find the One; having found the One, embrace the Many as the One. The way up is the way down.’

In conclusion, Wilber (1995:327) summarises it as follows:

The path of Ascent is the path of the Good; the path of Descent is the path of Goodness. The Many returning to and embracing the One is Good, and is known as wisdom; the One returning to and embracing the Many is Goodness, and is known as compassion. Wisdom knows that behind the Many is the One [and] compassion knows that the One is the Many … the integration of Ascent and Descent is the union of wisdom (which sees that Many is One) and compassion (which sees that One is Many).

4.5 THE PATH OF RETURN TO WHOLENESS

It has been suggested to us that ‘recollection (or remembrance of Source) is thus the path of Return, the path of Ascent’. This recollection, also known as ‘mindfulness’, ‘is the beginning of virtually all paths of contemplation, the aim of which is the remembering that one’s true nature is Buddha-nature, that Atman is Brahman. Enlightenment or awakening (bodhi, moksha) is not a bringing into being of that which was not, but a realizing of that which always already is.’ Huang Po said: ‘Do not pretend that by meditation you are going to become Buddha, you have always been Buddha but have forgotten that simple fact’ (Wilber 1995:329).

If one has forgotten (become pathological), or become stuck on any level, a peak experience can help one to disidentify with the present stage and move to the next stage in one’s
development. Meditation is such a skill. It is considered a peak experience of the higher levels that assists humanity in its awakening to these levels. Thus Wilber (2001:139) regards it as ‘an important part of a truly integral practice’. He also views meditation as ‘an absolute ethical imperative, a new categorical imperative’. This tool is instrumental in assisting a person who is willing to accept the death of its present level to differentiate from that level, and thus transcend the mental-egoic structure, and to arrive at an exalted plane of consciousness (Wilber 1981:340–341). He also removes the skeleton from the closet by telling people that there is nothing occult or ‘spooky’, let along psychotic, about true meditation. Actually, to further the evolution of humanity, meditation is of critical importance. ‘The Christ’ (1986:7,104) reminds humanity that ‘meditation is connection to the original Source ... to God’s frequency’. It is like building ‘a bridge from your heart to the soul energy created by God’.

Whereas many theorists regard meditation as an escape and egocentric, even narcissistic, Wilber (1995:256–257) believes that ‘the more one can go within, or the more one can introspect and reflect on one’s self, then the more detached from that self one can become, the more one can rise above that self’s limited perspective, and so the less narcissistic or less egocentric one becomes’. Put differently, ‘the more one goes within, the more one goes beyond, and the more one can thus embrace a deeper identity with a wider perspective’. And this is what meditation is. It ‘involves yet a further going within, and thus a further going beyond’. And ‘every within turns us out into more of the Kosmos’.

It is true that there are objections to transpersonal experiences and that insights during meditation are considered merely subjective. In addition, it cannot be publicly validated. Another objection is ‘that mystical or contemplative experiences, because they cannot be put into plain language, or into any language for that matter, are therefore not epistemologically grounded, are not “real knowledge”’. Wilber (1995:266) argues that ‘direct spiritual experience is simply the higher reaches of the Upper-Left quadrant ... [still to be discussed] and those experiences are as real as any other direct experiences, and they can be as easily shared (or distorted) as any other experiential knowledge’. It is indeed a challenge to rationally explain a spiritual occurrence, as one’s ‘this-worldly’ experience cannot yet accommodate one’s next ‘other-worldly’ phase. It is like an atom, which cannot yet get excited, or comprehend the life of
a cell, although it has the potential within it. Note too that this ‘other world’ is not located elsewhere in physical space-time, but here, in deeper perceptions of this world.

When one explains a transpersonal statement to someone for the first time, Wilber, quite humorously, reminds us that you may get ‘that deer-caught-in-the-headlights blank stare’, or ‘And did we forget to take our Prozac today?’ If one is not willing and able to actually experience these developments, then these transpersonal experiences remain an invisible other world. One cannot philosophise over them. One has to test them by taking up the experimental method of contemplative awareness, developing the requisite cognitive tools and then directly looking for oneself. Emerson (in Wilber 1995:268) states that ‘what we are, that only can we see’. Wilber uses the example of the familiar Oriental concept of ‘Emptiness’. People there, having had the experience, know the meaning of the word. However, for someone in the West this may bring about a blank stare, unless, of course, this individual had the same experience. One can explain the Buddha nature to someone, write about it, talk about it, theorise and philosophise over it, but one cannot run around trying to catch the Buddha in order to show it and prove it valid. Ultimately, if you want to know it, you have to do it.

A thought that does come to mind is that it is difficult and even confusing to have any discussion of any nature, as one always has to define a concept or has to make sure that all involved share the same understanding of it. The question that arises is why we don’t just ‘shut up’ and move or transcend into a sphere or dimension where things need not be proved, investigated or even dissected, but where things are known? Is this what we are aspiring towards? Is this the level of consciousness awaiting us when we have mastered the transformation of this level, or is this too a ‘cop-out’?

4.6 A THEORY OF EVERYTHING
These words immediately call up the question of attempting the impossible. Wilber (2001:xii) himself says that this is a task beyond any single human mind – a task that is inherently undoable – it is like the unreachable pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. In attempting a theory of everything, he believes that ‘a little bit of wholeness is better than none at all, and an integral vision offers considerably more wholeness than the slice-and-dice alternatives’. Such an integral vision – or a genuine theory of everything –

attempts to include matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit as they appear in self, culture, and nature. A vision that attempts to be comprehensive, balanced, inclusive. A vision that therefore embraces science, art, and morals; that equally includes disciplines from physics to spirituality, biology to aesthetics, sociology to contemplative prayer; that shows up in integral politics, integral medicine, integral business, integral spirituality .... (Wilber 2001:xii).

The word ‘integral’, which means to integrate, to bring together, to join, to link, to embrace, is not seen in the sense of uniformity, but in the sense of ‘unity-in-diversity, shared commonalities along with our wonderful differences’. In searching for an integral culture, Wilber looked at the waves of existence as explained by developmental and integral psychology. From these it is clear that the ‘growth and development of the mind’ is seen ‘as a series of unfolding stages or waves’. One of these models is Clare Graves’ spiral dynamics (carried forward and refined by Don Beck and Christopher Cowan – both were involved in discussions that led to the end of apartheid in South Africa). What Wilber (2001:5–6) is proposing

is that the psychology of the mature human being is an unfolding, emergent, oscillating spiraling process marked by progressive subordination of older, lower-order behavior systems to newer, higher-order systems as an individual’s existential problems change. Each successive stage, wave, or level of existence is a state through which people pass on their way to other states of being. When the human is centralized in one state of existence, he or she has a psychology which is particular to that state. His or her feelings, motivations, ethics and values, biochemistry, degree of neurological activation, learning system, belief systems, conception of mental health, ideas as to what mental illness is and how it should be treated, conceptions of and preferences for management, education, economics, and political theory and practice are all appropriate to that state.
Within this model (spiral dynamics),\textsuperscript{12} eight major ‘levels or waves of human existence’ are outlined. These stages are called ‘memes’, ‘a basic stage of development that can be expressed in any activity’. They are not rigid, but ‘flowing waves, with much overlap and interweaving, resulting in a meshwork or dynamic spiral of consciousness unfolding’ (Wilber 2001:7). A brief description follows of the eight levels, their qualities, the percentage of the world population at each wave, as well as some examples of where each level can be found within groups, and the percentage of social power held by each:

1. **Beige: Archaic-Instinctual.** Survival Sense – sharpen instincts and innate senses. At this level of basic survival, food, water, warmth, sex and safety have priority. The distinct self is barely awakened or sustained. It forms into survival bands. Approximately 0.1 per cent of the adult population is represented (first human societies, newborn infants, senile elderly, mentally ill, street people, starving masses, shell shock); this group holds 0 per cent of the social power.

2. **Purple: Magical-Animistic.** Kin Spirits – seek harmony and safety in a mysterious world. Animistic thinking and magical spirits (good and bad) that swarm the earth leaving blessings, curses and spells, determine events and form ethnic tribes. Here the spirits exist in ancestors and bond the tribe. Ten per cent of the population is indicated (belief in voodoo-like curses, blood oaths, family rituals, magical ethnic beliefs and superstitions, strong in third world settings, gangs, athletic teams); 1 per cent of the power is represented.

3. **Red: Magical-Mythic.** Power Gods – express impulsively, break free, be strong. The emergence of a self distinct from the tribe is experienced in powerful, impulsive, egocentric and heroic ways. The typical magical-mythic spirits, dragons and beasts, as well as the archetypal gods and goddesses, are to be found here. This meme is about power and glory. It is the basis of feudal empires and it points to 20 per cent of the population (the ‘terrible twos’, rebellious youth, feudal kingdoms, villains, gang leaders, soldiers, wild rock stars); this group represents 5 per cent of the power.
4. **Blue: Mythic Order.** Truth Force – find purpose, bring order, insure future. The meaning of life is determined by an all-powerful Other or Order that enforces a code of conduct upon its followers with either severe repercussions or positive rewards. This is the basis of ancient nations with the emphasis on law and order and just one right way. Forty per cent of the population is specified (Puritan America, Confucian China, Dickensian England, Singaporean discipline, totalitarianism, patriotism, religious fundamentalism); this group has 30 per cent of the social power.

5. **Orange: Scientific Achievement.** Strive Drive – analyse and strategise to prosper. In this meme where everything is oriented towards materialistic gain and individualistic truth, the basis is formed for the development of corporate states. It is characterised by 30 per cent of the population (The Enlightenment, Wall Street, colonialism, materialism, secular humanism, liberal self-interest, middle class emergence, cosmetic and fashion industry); 50 per cent of the power is owned by this group.

6. **Green: The Sensitive Self.** Human Bond – explore inner self, equalise others. Here the human spirit is freed from dogma and greed, and there is a shift in consciousness towards feelings of caring, warmth, sensitivity and cherishing. Being against hierarchy and emphasising dialogue and relationships, it becomes the basis of value communities. It is egalitarian, pluralistic, diverse, multiculturalistic and has relativistic value systems. Ten per cent of the population is represented (postmodernism, humanistic psychology, liberation theology, Green Peace, ecofeminism, human rights issues); 15 per cent of the power is reflected.

7. **Yellow: Integrative.** Flex Flow – integrate and align systems. As a second-tier awareness, the emphasis is on flexibility, spontaneity and functionality. Pluralism is shifted into integralism and relativism into holism. Knowledge and competency supersede power, status or group sensitivity. Only 1 per cent of the population is indicated; this group embodies 5 per cent of the power.
8. **Turquoise: Holistic.** Whole View – synergise and macro-manage. This is another second-tier consciousness and here a ‘grand unification’ (theory of everything) becomes possible as multiple levels are interwoven into one conscious system. The emergence of a new spirituality is often the result. A mere 0.1 per cent of the population is involved; 1 per cent of the power belongs to this group.

9. **Coral: Integral-Holonic.** This meme has been included to show its slowly emerging aspect.

The first six levels (beige, purple, red, blue, orange and green) are subsistent levels marked by first-tier thinking. Within these levels the memes cannot fully appreciate the existence of other levels. First-tier thinking is pluralistic, relativistic, subjective and this leads to narcissism, an ‘excessive interest in one’s own self, importance, abilities, etc; egocentrism’ (Wilber 2001:17). With a revolutionary shift in consciousness, ‘being-levels’ emerge with second-tier thinking (yellow and turquoise). Because of this integralistic and holistic approach, second-tier thinking appreciates all others as part of the whole. This leads to an increase in consciousness.

For a human to develop, a decrease in narcissism, and an increase in consciousness must take place. Carol Gilligan (in Wilber 2001:19–22) gives three stages through which one moves: the selfish stage (pre-conventional or egocentric or ‘me’); then the care stage (conventional or sociocentric or ‘us’) and then the universal care stage (post-conventional or worldcentric or ‘all of us’). In this development, one moves from the egocentric, through the ethnocentric, to the worldcentric stage, each time decreasing in narcissism and increasing in consciousness. This is a spiral of compassion moving from an egocentric self to a compassionate self – operating by mutual recognition and respect. As one moves up the ladder of hierarchies, one is looking for a development that is envelopment. ‘Each successive wave “transcends and includes” – transcends its own narrowness to include others.’ This is called a ‘nested’ hierarchy or ‘growth’ hierarchy or even an ‘actualisation’ hierarchy. These differ from ‘dominator hierarchies’, which lead to oppression. The theory of spiral dynamics adds that ‘all of this becomes increasingly conscious at second tier level’ (Wilber 2001:25–26).
Something that blocks the way to an integral embrace is Boomeritis. It is defined as ‘that strange mixture of very high cognitive capacity infected with rather low emotional narcissism’.

The factors that facilitate personal transformation are fulfilment, dissonance, insight and opening. First, an individual has to fulfil the basic tasks of any given level or stage. Once the individual has completed that basic task, he or she will be ready to move on. The next stage, dissonance, means that a person must be dissatisfied with the present level, be willing to let go of it, to die to it, before transformation to the next level can take place. This shift brings the necessary insight into the situation and finally there is an opening to the next wave of consciousness. To bring all of this about, one needs an integral vision, as well as an integral practice (Wilber 2001:34–36).

In evolution there are four strands, the individual, the social, the interior and the exterior. The exterior of the individual holon includes the development from a particle to a human. The exterior of the social holon is the process from superclusters to groups/families and nations. The interior development of the individual holon stretches from prehension to concepts. And the interior development of social holons includes the vegetative to archaic and through to the mental. Because holons share common exteriors, they share common interiors (or worldspaces). It is not merely about ‘I’ any more, but about how ‘we’ feel.

At this stage Wilber introduces the four quadrants in which he places all the matters that were discussed above. His model is divided into two upper quadrants, representing the individual holons, whilst the lower two sectors, represent the social holons. The right-hand path is the exterior, which can be seen. The reply to the question of ‘What does it do?’ is that it seeks explanations. The left-hand path is the interior, which must be interpreted. The response to the question of ‘What does it mean?’ is that it seeks to understand. The left-hand and the right-hand paths are both needed for a balanced or ‘all-quadrant’ view. Wilber states clearly that every holon has the four aspects or four dimensions or four quadrants (interior-individual; exterior-individual; interior-social; exterior-social) within it. The gross reductionists reduced everything to the upper-right quadrant and then continued within that quadrant to reduce the higher-order systems down to the atomic or sub-atomic particles. This is a purely
materialistic, mechanistic and atomistic view. On the other hand there are the ‘flatland holists’, the systems theorists and the structural/functionalists. They reduced everything in the left-hand quadrant to the right-hand sector. Although this method is not as ‘gross’ as the previous one, they are exemplars of subtle reductionism. This ‘ended up being a divisive and dualistic ontology’.

To summarise Wilber’s example, UL (upper-left) is the interior-individual, the intentional, and represents the subjective truthfulness. It is about the ‘I’, which includes the self and consciousness. Altered states can also be placed here. This section includes first- and second-tier thinking, starting at instinctual and ending in the holistic self; UR (upper-right), the exterior-individual, the behavioural, is the objective truth. It is the domain of ‘IT’ and relates to the brain and organism. It stretches from organic states to the neocortex and beyond; LL (lower-left) is the interior-collective, the cultural, and refers to intersubjective justness. ‘WE’ dominates this sector and includes culture and worldview. The concepts of premodern, modern and postmodern are nested in this quadrant; LR (lower-right), the exterior-collective and social, relates to interobjective functional fit. This is the field of ‘ITS’ and refers to the social system and environment. The development from foraging through horticultural, agrarian, industrial to informational belongs in this category. The Big Three represents the right-hand side with the ‘IT’-language; the upper-left quadrant with the ‘I’-language and the lower-left with the ‘WE’-language. ‘We are inescapably situated in relation to the Big Three, each of which has its own validity claim and its own standards, and none of which can be reduced to the others’ (Wilber 1995:145).

Wilber (2001:103) believes that:

One of the greatest problems and constant dangers faced by humanity is simply this: the Right-Hand quadrants are all material, and once a material entity has been produced, it can be used by individuals who are at virtually any level of interior development. For example, the atomic bomb is the product of formal-operational thinking (orange), but once it exists, it can be used by individuals at lower levels of development, even though those levels could not themselves produce the bomb. Nobody at a worldcentric level of moral consciousness would happily unleash the atomic bomb, but somebody at a preconventional, red-meme, egocentric level would quite cheerily bomb the hell of pretty much anybody who got in its way.
A lack of integral development may mean the end of humanity. In asking how human souls can be changed, Wilber (2001:106) suggests that ‘you have to go where law can’t get you ... You have to go, that is, to the interior quadrants and the growth of the soul, the growth of wisdom, the growth of consciousness, an interior growth in the Left-Hand quadrants that will keep pace with the growth in Right-Hand technologies.’ The integral transformative practice suggests that the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual waves must all be experienced within the Self \( I \), Culture \( WE \) and within Nature \( IT \). Take the Self as an example. First within the physical, the individual can include activities such as weightlifting, diet, jogging and yoga. In the emotional field, one can engage in qi gong, counselling and psychotherapy. The mental level can participate in disciplines such as affirmation and visualisation. And lastly, within the spiritual dimensions, meditation and contemplative prayer can be practised (Wilber 2001:138).

In creating a theory of everything, one has to create a holistic indexing system, and the above example should include all the maps that would embrace all-quadrants, all-levels and all-lines. These maps will help us to ‘open our minds, and thus our hearts, to a more inclusive and compassionate embrace of the Kosmos and all of its inhabitants’. As Wilber (2001:111–112) states, there is not just one level of reality with the other views all being primitive and incorrect versions of that one level. ‘Each of those views is a correct view of a lower yet fundamentally important level of reality, not an incorrect view of the one real level.’

During one’s development, a person can experience an altered state of consciousness or a peak experience of the higher realms (including psychic, subtle, causal and non-dual levels) at almost any stage – meaning at purple, red, blue, orange, green, or yellow levels. Such a person would interpret these higher experiences in the terms of the level at which the person currently resides. And this calls for cross-level combinatorial analyses. This provides us with a grid of over two-dozen very real – and very different – types of spiritual experience. As we all start at level 1 (square 1 or at the beige meme), we will all experience everything, and because of this, there is no reason for judgement. Wherever most of humankind are at present (knowingly at the lower levels), there seems to be the real activities.
4.7 CONCLUSION

For over a thousand years, roughly from the time of Augustine to Copernicus, the mythic-rational structure emphasised the ascending current where the ‘great omega point was promised’, but never delivered. This left the West with ‘a truly peculiar spiritual hunger, a hunger found nowhere else, really, with quite the same sort of desperate face’. Then there was a change to the Path of Descent and ‘instead of an infinite above, the West pitched its attention to an infinite ahead’ (Wilber 1995:409–410).

Wilber (1995:415) continues in this vein: ‘after more than two millennia, it had finally come to this: the path of liberation ended up the sin of pride. The Great Chain, the map of what we could become, became a map of what we should not even try. The Great Chain was used to deny the Great Chain. The way out of the Cave was used to imprison men and women in it.’ It was only when half of the story became the ‘whole’ story that the nightmare known as modernity was birthed.

There is at least an optimistic tone in Wilber’s prediction regarding the level of development within humanity. The consciousness of today’s beings has at least started to look toward the superconscious future. However, and here one finds a note of despair, he thinks they are very far from arriving, but nonetheless it is a beginning. Some individuals have started off with their ‘learner’s permit’, reading, studying, writing and attending classes, and others have at least begun to put all of this into practice. Although he regards the growth as nowhere near the Millennium, he is encouraged by the glimmerings of a New Age. For him it would constitute a real New Age ‘if everybody truly evolved to a mature, rational, and responsible ego, capable of freely participating in the open exchange of mutual self-esteem’ (Wilber 1981:349).

For Wilber (2001:140) it is not about accepting someone else’s theory, or belief. He is saying:

Here are some of the many important facets of this extraordinary Kosmos; have you thought about including them in your own worldview? Everybody is right. More specifically, everybody – including me – has some important piece of truth, and all of those pieces need to be honored, cherished, and included in a more gracious, spacious, and compassionate embrace, a genuine Theory of Everything.
Within the great chain of being, humanity is aiming to reach the ultimate, the Emptiness.

Emptiness is neither a Whole nor a Part nor a Whole/Part. Emptiness is the reality of which all wholes and all parts are simply manifestations. In Emptiness I do not become Whole, nor do I realize that I am merely a Part of some Great Big Whole. Rather, in Emptiness I become the opening or clearing in which all wholes and all parts arise eternally. Emptiness, and Emptiness alone, redeems all IOUs. In Emptiness alone, my debt is paid to the Kosmos, because in Emptiness, I-I am the Kosmos. Redemption of debt, erasure of guilt, a balancing of the Kosmic books, a release from transfinite insanity. Not in Emptiness, but as Emptiness, I am released from the fate of a never-ending addition of parts, and I stand free as the Sources and Suchness of the glorious display. [And] as Plotinus knew and Nagarjuna taught: always and always, the other world is this world rightly seen (Wilber 1995:505–506).

Ken Wilber (1981:xvi–xvii) reminds his readers that

we are part and parcel of a single and all-encompassing evolutionary current that is itself Spirit-in-action, the mode and manner of Spirit’s creation, and thus is always going beyond what went before – that leaps, not crawls, to new plateaus of truth, only to leap again, dying and being reborn with each new quantum lurch, and often stumbling and bruising its metaphysical knees, yet always getting right back up and jumping yet again. One and the same current moves throughout the All.

Even although Wilber stated repeatedly that an attempt towards a theory of everything is actually impossible, he made an impressive contribution to such a comprehensive view. He brought to light all the various theories of the different ages and, without forcing anyone to accept his theory, made scholars and readers aware of the enormous scope of life, the great chain of being. He challenges adherents of various worldviews to relate to the possibility of an encompassing vision.

His conclusion to A theory of everything acts now as a closure to his work and thought within this study:

And then the true Mystery yields itself, the face of Spirit secretly smiles, the Sun rises in your very own heart and the Earth becomes your very own body, galaxies rush through your veins while the stars light up the neurons of your night, and never again will you search for a mere theory of that which is actually your own Original Face (Wilber 2001:141).
NOTES

1 According to Aboriginal wisdom, the mutant world’s hierarchy operates as a triangle, with one person at the top and the others supporting him, below. This, they believe, results in unhealthy competition and supremacy. The Aboriginal race ‘has always operated more on the scale of a flat puzzle instead of a triangle’. They feel ‘that everyone fits into the puzzle and that everyone is a vital part of it. Without any one person we would be incomplete.’ As everyone is important to them, they take turns in leading and then again in following. For ‘one is not better than the other. There is a time and place for both’ (Morgan 1998:227–228).

2 In *The sky people*, Brinsley Le Poer Trench (1960:23–49) stresses the difference between the two creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis 1, God (Elohim) created man in his own image: ‘male and female created he them’. These beings are called the Sons of God or they are referred to as the galactic races (those from the sky). This represents the divine nature of man. In Genesis 2, Lord God (Jehovah Elohim) formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostril the breath of life; and man became a living soul. These beings, referred to as Jehovah’s Adam, were called hu-man and they had an earth-animal chemical body. This mingling of the two types indicates the conflict within man as we are partly from the stars and the Elohim and partly from the earth and the Jehovah. In other words, man is divine and human. Indeed, a cross-man.

3 See appendix A for a diagram of the great chain of being.

4 The monotheistic religion of Moses, the God of Israel.

5 Vera Stanley Alder (1979:76), author of *From the mundane to the magnificent*, was told by her teacher, Raphael, that: ‘To be a god one has first to know oneself as a god and then to behave as one!’

6 Murder is a form of substitute sacrifice or substitute transcendence. As Wilber explains, it is the deepest wish of the self to ‘kill itself’ for that will bring about transformation, but in failing to do this act, a substitute is found and killed instead. Killing another is to buy time for the separated self. And underneath the killing act lies the real desire to be transformed. Murder is thus delaying the process of the separated self’s own death and thereby its freedom.
Although she uses different terminology to describe the processes of involution and evolution, Patricia Diane Cota-Robles (1997:15) echoes the sentiments of Ken Wilber. She reminds her readers:

> The only reason we believe that other people know more than we do is because we have forgotten who we are. We look at our limited fear-based human egos, and we think that distorted fragment of our outer personality is our total Being. In reality we are ALL magnificent, multifaceted, multidimensional reflections of our Father-Mother God ... We already have within us all of the knowledge, skill, talent, courage and strength to succeed God Victoriously ... We are Gods and Goddesses standing on the threshold of the greatest leap in consciousness ever experienced in ANY System of Worlds.

She admits that the reasons that we have forgotten all of this are complex. However, we agreed to an experiment and have acquired many ‘vehicles’ in the ‘dropping down from there to here’. She gives a unique, detailed and mind-challenging explanation of the whole involution process. In short, she explains involution as ‘energy flowing from the Heart of God through our Heart Flames into the physical world of form’. In other words, involution is a flow from Ultimate Spirit into physical and material form, every time forgetting our true divine potential. Then, ‘Cosmic Law dictates through the Law of the Circle that once the energy has reached its final destination in the physical plane, it must return to its Source’. And this is the process of evolution (Cota-Robles 1997:81–82). As this is a critical moment in the history of our evolution, she agrees that it is imperative that we should remember who we are, so that we can accomplish what we have come to earth to do.

Virginia Essene, who transcribed the notes from the Master known as ‘The Christ’ (1986:158), published as *New Teachings for an Awakening Humanity*, states that when we only lived in God’s mind, all things were known to us and by us. It was only after the descent into materiality that we were no longer connected in the same way. ‘The Christ’ then reminds humanity that the Fall was actually a ‘detour out of communication and direct awareness of all that is known to the Creator’.

See appendix B for a sketch of the processes of involution and evolution.

See appendix C for a sketch and explanation of Roy Littlesun’s heart/love symbol.

Traces of this thinking can be found in the early chapters of the Old Testament with its many gods, proceeding to the one god and eventually ending up in the New Testament with the one and only god in the person of Jesus.
12 See appendix D for this diagram. It is an adaptation (compiled by the writer for easy reference) of Wilber’s spiral of development.

13 See appendix E for the all-four-quadrant diagram.