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| **PUT AWAY YOUR CRAYONS, CHILDREN****A Response to Joe Perez****Andy Smith**Frank Visser is [disappointed with Ken Wilber](http://www.integralworld.net/visser75.html), and Joe Perez is disappointed with Frank Visser ["[Properly Integral](http://integralblog.com/properly-integral-a-response-to-frank-vissers-three-disappointments/)"]. Integrals used to say that everyone was partly right and partly wrong, and call for a debate of the differences, but Joe thinks Frank should take a test to see if he's even qualified to criticize Wilber. The test, designed to assess someone's level of development, seems to make use of the classification scheme of Spiral Dynamics (SD), and calls to my mind an old song from decades ago, which begins: I've a most unusual coloring bookThe kind you never seeCrayons ready? Crayons set?Very well, begin to color me I'll return to this little song later, and suggest my own test for Joe. But first, I will examine the specific points he made in his response to Frank. http://www.integralworld.net/images/smith54-2.jpg**Spiriting away Science**So there can be no question that Frank characterizes Wilber fairly when he says Spirit is essential to his explanation of the world. Frank's first criticism of Wilber is that his understanding of science is inadequate. There are actually many examples of this, which I, and others such as David Lane and Geoffrey Falk, have discussed in great detail in dozens of analyses of Wilber. I'm not at all sure that Joe is even aware of these articles. One of Ken's most outrageous views, which I discussed in the article “[We All Wanna Change the World](http://www.integralworld.net/smith46.html)”, is evident in his apparent support for a man who claimed to be able to change the molecular processes in living cells and molecular structure in matter simply by directing his thought processes towards them. But Frank focuses on Wilber's discussion of evolution, which of course has long been a symbol of the war between science and its detractors, and about which Wilber has expounded on at great length, since his entire system of thought is based on evolutionary change. Frank notes that Wilber mischaracterizes Darwinism when he implies that it depends entirely on chance, and brings Spirit into the picture to account for what he believes that Darwinism (and other evolutionary processes recognized by many scientists) fails to explain. After noting a Wilber quote that Frank finds fault with, Joe says: I would ask you to notice two things about the Wilber quote chosen by Visser. First, that Wilber describes Eros as a “perfectly realistic conclusion”. Second, Wilber says that “there is plenty of room” for Eros in his philosophy. Wilber nowhere invokes Spirit as an “explanation” for the universe. Frank has already pointed out that Wilber goes much further than this, that he does in fact invoke Spirit as an explanatory force [“[What Would Wilber Do?](http://www.integralworld.net/visser78.html)”]. There wouldn't be much point in his discussing it at such length if he didn't. What I want to add here is that I am quite astonished that Joe, who claims to be integral, and to be familiar with Wilber's work, could possibly be unaware of this. Spirit is absolutely essential to Wilber's view of just about everything—not only of biological evolution, for example, but of social evolution, of biological development, and of language, the latter issue having been discussed at length by Greg Desilet at this site. Indeed, Wilber's entire opus could be largely summarized as the attempt to reinterpret all modern views of the world—from the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities—taking into account the existence of Spirit. And though I've been highly critical of Wilber on many issues, and think he frequently goes way too far in what he attributes to Spirit, I've long admired him for bringing it into the conversation. If it were true, as Joe claims, that Wilber doesn't invoke Spirit as an explanation for the universe, there wouldn't be much of anything original in Wilber's work at all. What is *The Atman Project*, except a review of knowledge of human development, with the possibility of development to higher levels of consciousness added? What is *Up From Eden*, except an interpretation of existing knowledge of human evolution, with the possibility of experiencing higher levels of consciousness added? What distinguishes Wilber' view of language from that of postmodernists, except for his claim for an Absolute that anchors the meanings of words? So there can be no question that Frank characterizes Wilber fairly when he says Spirit is essential to his explanation of the world. But is Frank wrong to criticize this view, when Wilber applies it to evolution? Joe certainly thinks so, and takes the opportunity to mount an attack on science in general: It's not difficult to see the flaw in Visser's hand and Wilber's trump card. Basically he neglects the way that the particular constraints given to scientific research — e.g., its insistence that only that which is perceivable by the senses or their extension by instruments is real — mean that science doesn't really attempt to address metaphysical or spiritual truths at all. Wilber is not denying science its particular perspective on reality, only complementing it with methodologies of interiority which have within themselves the potential, it is claimed, to reveal Spirit. Science is frequently characterized in this way by people who consider themselves deeply spiritual. But this criticism underestimates the power of science. In fact, science frequently studies phenomena that can't be perceived with the senses. If this were not the case, we would not understand the physiological correlates of various emotional states, which can't be empirically confirmed, but are dependent on the first person reports of subjects. We would likewise not be able to study dreams and other phases of sleep, which are also dependent on first person descriptions. More recently, the same approach is being applied to spirituality itself, that is, to states of higher consciousness. Indeed, any study of consciousness in the hard sense—of qualia, of raw experience—is dependent on first person observations, rather than sensory data accessible to third persons. It would be more accurate to say that science can't study any phenomena that can't in some manner be linked to sensory or empirical observations. I agree with Joe that this is not a trivial limitation. But guess what? Neither can any other approach. As soon as Wilber, or Joe, or anyone else, wishes to communicate their experiences to other people, they have to depend on sense data. I can only know what Wilber, or Joe, or anyone else claims to have experienced through listening to their claims, and the process of listening—whether to verbal reports, or by reading written ones—depends on sensory stimuli. This requirement, as Wilber well knows, inevitably flattens or distorts the phenomenon attempting to be described, but this is something we all have to live with. Ironically, Joe ends his criticism of Frank, as I alluded to earlier, by challenging him to take a developmental assessment, which is also based on verbal reports. I will return to this point later. But what about the claim that science doesn't address metaphysical truths? I wouldn't put it quite that way. Science's recent forays into areas such as spirituality, politics and economics suggests that it can to some extent investigate the metaphysical assumptions we all live our lives by. It would be a fair criticism—and this might have been Joe's underlying point—to say that science itself is bound by certain metaphysical assumptions. It can't escape them. But again, so is any other approach to knowing. Indeed, Wilber to some extent models his claims to knowledge after science, saying they should be verified by a community. The developmental assessment created by Suzanne Cook-Greuter that Joe thinks so highly of is also validated by a community. Why? What proof is there that communal verification is indication of genuine knowledge? What's sauce for the goose here is sauce for the gander. If science is claimed to be limited by its metaphysical assumptions, then so is Wilber's work. Again, I refer the reader to Greg Desilet's articles here for a much more detailed discussion of this. Joe concludes discussion of this issue by saying: One of these two philosophers allows science and spirit to co-exist and mutually inform one another through divergent methodologies and the other thinker insists only on room for one and defiantly jumps on the other's back. Is it any wonder that some of us out here in the gallery see only one “Integralist” in the room? Frank can speak for himself, but I believe all he is saying is that Spirit is not necessary to understand evolution, that in fact it doesn't add anything to our understanding of the process. This is very different from saying that Spirit doesn't exist, or that it might not make its presence evident in other ways—what Joe refers to as mutually informing scientific evidence. But how it does, or can, inform sense evidence is a critical question, and when Wilber claims that Spirit is a driving force in evolution, he weakens his entire body of work, because by bringing Spirit into an area which has no need for it, he encourages independent thinkers to conclude there is no need for believing in its existence at all. Another example of this, that I alluded to before, is Wilber's apparent belief that Spirit—or at any rate, some force more powerful than the ordinary human intellect—is capable of manipulating physical and biological structures and processes. As with evolution, he provides no indication of how this could even be possible. He seems to regard Spirit as some magic force that can suspend or counteract laws of nature that it has taken the most powerful human intellects centuries to uncover. In my view, all we can say with any certainty about Spirit at this point is that there is a higher form of consciousness accessible by human beings through certain practices. The notion that this higher consciousness, through the actions of some individual, can intervene in the physical world and alter the normal course of material processes is sheer speculation. There is no compelling evidence for this, nor has Wilber or anyone else proposed a coherent explanation of how this would be possible. With regard to evolution, one might argue that Spirit is manifested in these processes, that what we have come to regard as their normal course may actually reflect the existence of Spirit, but there is no need for this postulate. It appears to be extraneous, a violation of Occam's razor. Our current understanding of evolution does not require it, and proposed in this form, it's hard to see how one could ever design a test to confirm it. **Critiquing the Critics**As a scientist, I'm not aware of any discussion of Wilber's views on science in any peer-reviewed journal, and frankly, I can't imagine that there even could be. Frank's second major point is that Wilber doesn't respond to his critics. Joe attempts to dismiss this by saying: I think a basic fact-finding on the matter would reveal that Wilber has written many hundreds of footnotes and other writings responding to critics, and adjusted his thought in five major iterations based largely on his attempts to honor and transcend legitimate criticisms. It's hard for me to think of another major public intellectual who has been more willing to change. Very few of Wilber's footnotes are in direct response to his critics. More frequently, he provides more detail of his argument, and may take into account something new said by one of his sources. Yes, Wilber has changed his views considerably over the years, but with a few notable exceptions (and even in these cases, he claims he changed mostly because of his own insights, not because of anyone's criticism) this change does not involve backtracking or reversing older claims, but rather—much as the brain and other structures have evolved—by tacking on additions, based on new work of others. In fact, one of my major criticisms of Wilber in relatively recent years is that he doesn't so much attempt to synthesize the knowledge of others as simply accumulate it. His opus resembles a house that has had new rooms and even floors added on over the years, but in which for the most part all the older rooms, and certainly the original foundation, wiring, plumbing, and so on, have remained intact. No attempt has been made to blend or harmonize the new additions with the older structures; they are simply attached to them, so that the edifice sprawls in all directions. Joe goes on to justify Wilber's ignoring of Integral World authors: Ken's just sorta, well, picky about who he engages with. You can imagine why if you've read some of the attacks on Integral World (unfortunately [not atypical](http://www.integralworld.net/corbett9.html) is Joe Corbett's diatribe calling Ken Wilber a “big selfish asshole”). Note the double standard evident here. Ken has been known to use such language himself, but when he does it, it's all fair, because it was part of a “classic genre” and “needed to be said”: In an over-the-top missive in the classic genre of “blog rant”, Ken made some really powerful, stinging points that needed to be said. They were the teal/turquoise elephants in the room. Even giving Joe his double standard, though, this is cherry-picking at its finest. Out of hundreds of articles posted at Integral World, focus on a really rare one that somewhere in its entire text calls Wilber a bad name. While completely ignoring the overwhelming majority of articles providing respectful criticisms of Wilber that go unaddressed. A more reasonable response would be to point out that Integral World is not peer-reviewed, and therefore the quality of argument is likely to vary considerably. Wilber, being a busy scholar, doesn't have the time to wade through all this material, separating the wheat from the chaff. I think there is some merit to this point; to be fair, in the early years of Frank's site, when there was much less material commenting on or criticizing Wilber, Ken did reply to some of it. But there are a lot more articles there now, and much of Ken's dialogue with the authors he did respond to in earlier times did not seem to be very fruitful. Nevertheless, there are several good reasons why I believe he shouldn't ignore Integral World criticisms now. I'll mention just two of them here. First, like it or not, most criticism of Wilber is to be found at Integral World, or at other internet sites that are also not subject to independent review (e.g., Edward Berge's [Progressive Participatory Enaction](http://integralpostmetaphysicalnonduality.blogspot.nl/)). Despite the claims by Wilber and his followers that integral studies are being accepted by universities, relatively few academics at major institutions have paid any attention to him. As a scientist, I'm not aware of any discussion of Wilber's views on science in any peer-reviewed journal, and frankly, I can't imagine that there even could be. Wilber's treatment of science is carried out at the level of popular writing; there is nothing in it that is original enough to warrant either publication in an academic journal, nor the interest of most scientists. But the situation is not much different in other areas that Wilber has written about. Joe is well aware of this, but astonishingly, implies that this is because integral hasn't been marketed enough: One looks about at the paucity of Integral ideas in the intellectual marketplace and really has to be incredulous at the notion that Integral has been *over-marketed!* It doesn't seem to occur to Joe—even as he implies that Frank, and science in general, lack special insight into evolution that Wilber has—that there might be any other reason why integral ideas haven't had much impact in the intellectual community. As if the author of dozens of books has not been given a fair hearing. As if any intellectual with an interest in any of the areas that Wilber has written about has not had the chance to become acquainted with him and come to his or her own conclusions. Lack of marketing is a bullshit excuse, a way of denying an uncomfortable truth: that Wilber's work, though it may have great value in bringing together many different areas of knowledge, is only original to the extent that he argues for a major role of Spirit in all these areas, and the vast majority of academics simply don't buy into this view. One could say much the same about Wilber as Egil Asprem said in his review of Rupert Sheldrake [“[Scientific Delusions, or Delusions About Science?](http://www.integralworld.net/asprem.html)”]: The problem is that he comes bursting through doors that are already wide open. I cannot avoid thinking that the accusation of scientific dogmatism is *itself* inherently dogmatic. It reads a bit too much like a predictable response to those who, having applied the sceptical attitude Sheldrake claims to cherish to his own pet theories, have walked away unconvinced. So while there is no guarantee that all of the criticisms of Wilber found at Integral World are made with academic rigor, this site remains the most comprehensive and wide-ranging collection of such criticisms. It has long been his best source of feedback. Indeed, as I pointed out in my review of Jeff Meyerhoff's book *Bald Ambition*, [“[Contexutalizing Ken](http://www.integralworld.net/smith20.html)”] Wilber attracts precisely the kind of critics he deserves. Since his ideas, being published in books directed to a general audience, escape any academic-level peer-review process, he has no right to expect that those who criticize those views should be subjected to that process, either. And to address the problem of identifying and responding to the strongest and most thoughtful of these arguments, why haven't Wilber's followers done some of the heavy lifting for him? Why haven't they read some of the articles critical of Wilber at Integral World, provided Ken with the gist of them as they understand it, then with or without Ken's help, formulated a reply? It wouldn't have been that difficult for some Wilber followers to focus on the relatively small number of us who have published frequently here—in a post back during the Wyatt Earp period, Frank identified about a dozen critics he thought had something worthwhile to say—read a few of our articles, and critiqued them. Indeed, it sounds as though it would make an excellent dissertation project for someone in integral studies. But to my knowledge, no one has ever done this. Some of us have criticized each other, in the process frequently even defending Wilber. We're by no means monolithic in our views. But no one who is strongly supportive of Wilber seems interested in examining this criticism. Why not? Ironically, the person who loses the most here is Ken Wilber. I can't speak for other critics, but I've moved on. I really don't care if he or anyone else pays any attention to my articles. But if Ken had listened to some of his critics, his work might have been strengthened in ways that would have allowed academics to take him more seriously. **Crybabies?**If there is so much truth in Wilber's views, why do they need to be sheltered from legitimate criticism (or even illegitimate criticism, for that matter)? Frank's third point is that integral followers of Wilber don't even seem to care about these problems. Again, Joe's reply assumes a double standard: Those of us riding the second-tier or integral or evolutionary wave, we are like babies. We are the future. And we are trying to walk for Pete's sake. Oh, you poor things! No new idea or discovery or technology or whatever in history has ever been given slack because it was unappreciated, but Wilber's integral needs this extra help? Does it even occur to Joe that by saying this he's admitting the weakness in his position? If there is so much truth in Wilber's views, why do they need to be sheltered from legitimate criticism (or even illegitimate criticism, for that matter)? Why aren't they strong enough to overcome such obstacles? We Wilberians (if I must use the term) see Ken Wilber as perhaps the most important thinker who sees what is all around us and is helping to move us forward. Integralists of all affinities, Wilberian or otherwise (a nod to Don Beck and Spiral Dynamics), are all pushing the envelope forward. This is difficult work, and we get very little support from traditionalists, modernists, and postmodernists. On some days it feels like they're pushing us down every chance they get. We have a long ways to go before we can rest, and we need to believe in ourselves and our fellows. Does Joe even understand that essentially the exact same statement, with just a change in names, could be made by any quack religion or cult trying to gain traction? I'm not accusing the integral movement of being that, but by pleading for special treatment, they're certainly putting themselves in that company. Political parties are also famous for this you're-either-with-us-or-against-us attitude, but if integral is to be more than another social movement, is actually to be based on a different worldview, a new understanding of existence, this attitude simply isn't appropriate. If you want it to be a cult, fine, but if you expect academia to take it seriously, you not only don't avoid criticism, you seek it out. In other words, just the opposite argument should be made. Any new idea or movement should be subjected to the greatest possible criticism, just because it's more likely to wrong. Surely Joe is aware of the adage, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence? One can argue about how extraordinary Wilber's claims are, but they do differ in some respects enough from mainstream views that have been tested over decades or even centuries that they need to be criticized to the greatest extent possible. **Don't Follow the Leader**Being a leader is undoubtedly practical, and also highly prestigious. Who doesn't want to be a leader? Well, mostly those who are secure in their understanding of who they are. In a second blog posting [“[A Challenge to Frank Visser](http://integralblog.com/a-challenge-to-frank-visser/)”], Joe challenged Frank to take a developmental assessment. Before passing judgment on the appropriateness of this for settling a debate, I want to spend some time examining these assessments. One of the suggested tests was [StAGES](http://www.pacificintegral.com/new/homepages/stages/), developed by Terri O'Fallon, which costs a minimum of $400 to take. The other test suggested by Joe I believe is Suzanne Cook-Greuter's [MAP test](http://www.cook-greuter.com/SCTi-MAPForm.htm), which costs $1000. Joe did indicate that Frank was free to use some other test, but based on the information available for these two, I imagine that others are not cheap. Beyond the cost, I have some serious reservations about these tests, in addition to criticisms raised by others who have responded to this debate—including some people who have actually helped develop and administer these tests. Though I can't access the StAGES test, it seems to be heavily based on Wilber's AQAL. O'Fallon describes it as “the first statistical validation of Wilber's theory”. Since I have been highly critical of AQAL, this makes me wonder if the test is biased, such that one can't score at a high level unless one believes in AQAL. If that is not the case, I'm not really sure how the test can validate AQAL. I was able to access the MAP test, so I can say a little more about that. Right off the bat, I have a major problem with it. The MAP test is based on the Leadership Maturity Framework, or LMF, that Joe refers to. In her description of it, Cook-Greuter strongly implies that the qualities that make an effective leader are the same that are frequently associated with being more evolved or spiritual, e.g., “self-aware, wise and compassionate”. The Psychopath Test: A Journey through the Madness IndustryThis notion is not simply inaccurate, many would argue that just the opposite is the case. Several researchers have suggested that leaders in various walks of life have many of the signal qualities that characterize psychopaths, including a strong competitive drive, a grandiose view of their own importance, an ability to ignore/belittle the wants and needs of others to serve a greater cause, and a low reaction to stress ["[The Startling Accuracy of Referring to Politicians as 'Psychopaths'](http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/07/the-startling-accuracy-of-referring-to-politicians-as-psychopaths/260517/)"]. In his book [*The Psychopath Test: A Journey through the Madness Industry*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/redirect.html?ie=UTF8&location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.com%2FPsychopath-Test-Journey-Through-Industry%2Fdp%2F1594488010&tag=skim1x139064-20&linkCode=ur2&camp=1789&creative=9325), Jon Ronson claims that CEOs are four times as likely to be psychopaths as ordinary people. We're not just talking about history's most nefarious leaders, such as Stalin and Mao Ze Dong, who ordered the deaths of millions for the sake of their cause; or the Wall Street moguls whose greed played a central role in nearly destroying the U.S. economy. Churchill ordered the French fleet to be destroyed; Truman dropped the atomic bomb. More recently, Presidents Bush and Obama approved the use of torture. Steve Jobs, often held up as the paragon of the creative, successful entrepreneur, had no problems making use of overseas laborers working under wretched conditions, and was known to behave like a two year old when his employees didn't do exactly what he wanted. My point here is not that all leaders are bad people, or even that all the individuals I just named were or are bad people. Many leaders may have some very admirable characteristics. But the qualities necessary to be a great leader—particularly the belief that one is superior in some key aspect to other people, and the need to focus exclusively on dominating others in some narrow but highly competitive environment—unquestionably have to make it difficult for them to realize the transcendence of self and the well-rounded development essential to the spiritual path. If Cook-Greuter seriously believes that we should look to leaders as models of the human evolutionary future, I have to wonder about her view of spirituality. I suspect, though, that Cook-Greuter, and the integral movement in general, emphasize leadership because it sells. I'd guess that not many people are willing to shell out hundreds or thousands of dollars for an assessment of their level of spiritual development. Many, though, might be willing to pay a lot to learn what it takes to become a successful leader—literally hundreds of best-selling books testify to that—because after all, if they do become one, they can quickly recoup their investment. Being a leader is undoubtedly practical, and also highly prestigious. Who doesn't want to be a leader? Well, mostly those who are secure in their understanding of who they are, and are impervious to the pressures of wealth, fame and status. Nevertheless, Joe suggested MAP, that is, a developmental assessment based on LMF, so I'm going to play along. I'm going to assume it is designed as an assessment of all-around development, and criticize it from that perspective. MAP—and I think this is true for StAGES and other developmental tests—asks the individual to complete various sentences or phrases. Many of these phrases—e.g., “When I am criticized”, “I am”, “If I had more money”, “When I get mad”—clearly are very easy to fake answers to, i.e., it's not difficult to guess what a “higher” answer would be, and provide that rather than a real indication of the individual's beliefs or actions. (Though based on how much they charge for their services, I'm not quite sure what the “highest” answer is for money). Of course, you have to have a little knowledge of integral (or what effective leaders do) to know what the “right” answers are, but the point is, you can get such knowledge simply by reading books about integral (or leaders), without actually living that life. And this raises a second issue. A test that can be completed simply by filling out a form and sending it in for scoring does not measure an individual in action, as s/he actually lives life. It depends on the individual's providing honest answers to his or her actions in certain situations. Beyond the fact that no one is or can be completely honest about oneself—no matter how sincerely one tries—such answers provide a very incomplete view of someone. Part of this is because the questions are not very comprehensive. I saw none in the MAP test that addressed physical abilities, for example, that in fact addressed any form of human behavior lower than emotions, none that specifically addressed asocial forms of behavior—what we think, feel and do when we're alone—and almost nothing that addressed some of the many facets of intellect. Again, this may be because the test is designed solely to identify leadership abilities, but this just underscores from how narrow a perspective leadership ability is viewed, how little relevance that perspective has to a fully integrated person. Moreover, even considering just the limited range of the situations that were addressed, even the most honest verbal answer to a question can't provide a complete indication of what a person actually does in that situation. My understanding is that each phrase is to be completed with a single sentence, and given that the test is supposed to take about forty-five minutes to answer thirty-six questions, there wouldn't seem to be enough time to do much more. But how can one begin to describe in a single sentence, for example, what one does or feels when one gets angry? To begin, my anger manifests itself in many ways, depending on the context. When I get angry while sitting at a computer and reading something I don't agree with (and why don't I agree? Is it about integral ideas, about politics, about sports…?), that is very different in certain ways from the anger I feel waiting for some idiot ahead of me in a line at the supermarket, or from the anger I feel when some inanimate object responds to me in a way I don't like, or when I do something I judge to be stupid…The list goes on and on. And for each of those very different situations, there is far more to my response than I could possibly do justice to in a single sentence. There are different phases, each of which deserves a fairly extensive description. And my anger even in any particular triggering situation depends on further context, what I have been doing previously, my mood at the time, and numerous other factors. Finally, the assessment is highly subjective, i.e., depends on the views of the person rating the answers. Cook-Greuter, interestingly, makes this very criticism of StAGES, while apparently believing her test escapes this problem because it's been “vetted and examined by a community of peers” (that metaphysical assumption at the basis of science again). But how do we know that this community of peers is capable of assessing someone? I might respect the assessment of experts on the degree to which a child has developed, but when we're considering stages beyond the ordinary adult, who's to say who knows and who doesn't know? This is particularly true of StAGES, which claims to assess development to very high stages beyond those most people realize, but also to a large extent MAP. Just from looking over the phrases on the MAP test, and reading the StAGES website, as well as for other reasons, I can be quite sure I have had experiences that neither of these experts has had, or at least didn't think were very relevant to their test, so how can they possibly be qualified to provide a total assessment for me? There are some aspects of my being that others can see much more clearly than I can, but other aspects that no one has any clue about. Indeed, though I haven't seen the StAGES test, I'm mystified how O'Fallon believes she can provide anything remotely approaching a complete assessment of higher stages through any amount of verbal information. **It's not on the MAP**There is nothing in the MAP test that indicates that a high score qualifies someone to speak more authoritatively about evolution. I think Joe's central criticism of Frank is that there is more to integral than debating scientific ideas. Of course. But at least there are clear-cut rules for doing this, and regardless of how much more than science Wilber's system may be, if it can't get science right, that has to be a very serious flaw. And as any good critic knows, if someone has obvious flaws in one area that he's unaware of, there's a very good possibility that he has flaws in others areas, even if the critic lacks the expertise in those other areas to conclude this for certain. Even if a developmental assessment were able to provide a good indication of one's spiritual advancement—and the discussion above should make it clear I'm highly skeptical that it can—I don't see how it would be relevant to the points that Frank has made. Frank isn't arguing that Joe or other Wilber followers are completely lacking in spiritual advancement. He's saying they aren't aware of flaws in Wilber's views of science, particularly evolution, and that they aren't willing to listen to people who point out these flaws. What exactly is a developmental assessment supposed to prove? Suppose Joe scored much higher on the assessment than Frank (because despite all the attempts by the test's developers to soft-pedal this, the test does rank people as higher and lower). Though I can't comment on StAGES, there is nothing in the MAP test that indicates that a high score qualifies someone to speak more authoritatively about evolution than someone with a lower score. There isn't a single phrase in the test that has any relevance whatsoever to this issue. The only phrase that even comes close to assessing intellectual abilities in general is “education” (and maybe not even that, depending on how the individual responds to it). MAP test exampleWhat about Frank's charge that integrals won't respond to their critics? Well, one of the first phrases I see in the test is “When I'm criticized”. Joe's position strongly implies that his or Wilber's answer to or completion of this phrase would be something along the lines of “I don't pay much attention because I know I'm right” or “I'm picky in replying because one critic one time called me a bad name” or “I point out to the critic that I already have responded to other critics (though I actually haven't much).” Now I don't know how Cook-Greuter's community of peers scores the test, but I'm guessing that none of those answers would, in fact, be scored very highly. Finally, there is Frank's third point, that integrals don't seem to care about the intellectual issues. I don't see anything on the MAP test relevant to that—that would help decide between Frank's view and Joe's resistance to Frank's view—but since MAP, as I noted earlier, pretty much ignores the intellect, I suppose Joe could argue that the developers of this test might tend to agree with him. But he wouldn't get any credit for that, based on the test phrases. So I feel very confident in saying that the MAP test isn't relevant to Frank's points. Even if Joe were to score much higher, and he were to claim he was more integral than Frank, Frank's points would still stand. In fact, and this is what I find most troubling about Joe's suggestion to take a developmental assessment, this is an argument from authority, rather than from merit. Even if the MAP test were specifically designed to measure overall intelligence, and even if Joe scored as a genius, no academic would accept that result as having any relevance at all to a specific issue such as the role of Spirit in evolution. We don't accept an answer because the person who provides it is known to be highly intelligent; we accept it because of the facts and logic supporting it. If Joe is such a genius, he ought to be able to provide convincing evidence and arguments for his views. As a hard-core integral, Joe will probably claim that he can provide such evidence and arguments, but others can't understand them. In another blog posting [“[The Integral Critic’s Dilemma: Beams And Struts Or Soft And Squishy?](http://integralblog.com/the-integral-critics-dilemma-beams-and-struts-or-soft-and-squishy/)”], Joe quotes Wilber from the famous Wyatt Earp episode: many of the ideas these critics offer are in fact at a green or orange altitude, and not even teal or turquoise altitude, where they could at least begin to see the integral patterns that connect. These critics simply cannot see these phenomena, which are “over their heads,”… Turquoise can see green and its facts, but green cannot see turquoise and its facts, and thus this cross-level altitude problem jams any real dialogue in that capacity—and yet all that green does is scream for dialogue, dialogue, dialogue Or as the old song might go: This is the man who just wants always to be fed,Color him red.These are the folks who read Bibles all the way through, Color them blue.These are the thinkers who held It and touched It, and lost It somehowColor them irrelevant now.These are the critics who act so arrogant and mean,Color them green.We are the second tier who know things and feel things and sense things and are things that no one else sees!Color us turquoise, please.This is science, what I once depended upon,Color it gone. Humor me, Joe. You suggested Frank take a very expensive test that as far as I can see doesn't measure anything relevant to what he was debating you about. I suggest you take a test that is faster, simpler, should by your very own standards measure how advanced you are, and is absolutely free! Give me an example of a turquoise fact that you can see, but someone at green can't see. Don't reply that since green can't see that fact, it wouldn't recognize it as a fact. Wilber argues that blue can't recognize scientific evidence for the fact of evolution. But blue is still aware of this scientific evidence, blue is aware of the concept of evolution. In the same way, I want to know what exactly turquoise sees as a fact that green also sees, but not as a fact. Be very specific, because some blue critics of evolution clearly see the phenomenon very specifically, as shown in their long detailed criticisms of the evidence for it, even though they don't appreciate it as a fact. Oh, and one other thing. Though Wilber doesn't much emphasize this, people at lower levels such as blue have no trouble at all accepting most scientific facts other than those associated with evolution. I've never met a religious fundamentalist whose beliefs made him afraid to fly on an airplane, or who claimed that there really are no satellites in orbit above the earth. It seems that even the most deeply religious people completely trust science as far as physics goes. And probably with regard to medicine, too, and chemistry and communication and…well, you get the idea. So while you're at it, provide me also with examples of how turquoise facts have proved to be useful, so useful that everyone accepts the perspective that discovered these facts. After all, the most compelling validation of science has not come from evidence that only specialists can understand, but rather from technology that everyone can confirm actually works. In the same way, I would expect that if some at the turquoise level had insights that those at lower levels lacked, they would be able to support this contention by creating or at least predicting phenomena that would be completely beyond comprehension without these higher insights. And again, I expect you to be very specific, because we all know how specific technological phenomena are. The point of this exercise—actually, one of several points—is that the notion that people at the various lower or first-tier levels of SD (if one believes that these levels exist and have much significance) see different facts is far overblown. Everyone understands what a fact is, and everyone understands, in principle, what constitutes scientific evidence for facts: experience verified by a community of peers. If this were not the case, we in America could not take a dozen people at random off the street and ask them to determine whether someone is guilty or not guilty of a crime. To be sure, only fairly intelligent people with specialized training are capable of understanding most modern scientific evidence. But this has little to do with whether someone does or does not believe in evolution. There are some very intelligent people with advanced degrees—e.g., Wilber's anti-Darwinist hero Michael Behe—who believe in intelligent design, and there are large numbers of people who have very little understanding of science, who know nothing of the finer points of modern evolutionary theory, who nonetheless accept that theory. One's view on evolution is shaped far more by one's values than by one's ability to see and understand facts. People who deny evolution do so because they believe it implies that humans are not special creations of an all-knowing, all-powerful God. This belief reflects a certain set of values. People who accept that we are the outcome of a long evolutionary process do so because they have come to terms with a world not created by God or some other Absolute. This reflects a different set of values. It may be possible to identify and classify such people using a developmental assessment, just because such assessments do attempt to measure one's values—not, as I alluded to earlier in my discussion of MAP, the capacity to see and weigh various facts. So when Joe submits to one of these assessments, as he says he has, it is measuring his values. If he scores highly, it probably signifies, among other things, that he believes in the importance of a Spirit that is not evident in a purely sensory or material view of the world. A high score—certainly not on the MAP test—does not demonstrate that he has actually experienced this Spirit, let alone that his experience has shown him that Spirit guides evolution. It simply indicates that Joe thinks there should be a Spirit. This is not to say that Joe has not experienced Spirit very deeply, and that this experience has not had a profound impact on his life, including on his values. But measuring values is not a very effective way, certainly it's a very incomplete way, of measuring the degree to which one has experienced Spirit. At best, it goes about it indirectly, measuring what might or not be the result of such experience. How would one measure experience of Spirit? Just because Spirit is a higher level (or higher tier in the SD system), not simply a higher stage, a phrase completion test would be a very crude measure of it. As I pointed out in one of my very first critiques of Wilber, the relationship between Spirit and ordinary consciousness is quite different from the relationships among various stages of ordinary consciousness—a view that Wilber eventually came around to when he adopted SD and accepted the distinction between tiers and stages (an example of how when he does change he doesn't credit any of that change to criticism). However, if one were limited to such a test, here are some of my suggestions: Our sensory awarenessLightThe speed of our emotionsWhen we sleep at nightSufferingOthersThoughtsWho's who?Our perception of timeLogical conclusionsWhat gets us high?PerfectionCompletionWhere arguments endWhen we sitRight and wrongTalkingMovingOur energy levelWhat we have to doWe areI emphasize again that this is an extremely crude, off-the-cuff stab at assessing something that is very difficult to measure with any phrase completion test. But phrases of this kind may get at some aspects of the spiritual experience that distinguish it from ordinary human experience. And one might refer to some of these experiences, loosely, as facts, not accessible to the ordinary consciousness. Because to reiterate, at this point, we are talking not about a higher stage, but a higher level, where individuals really do begin to see the world differently. But in my experience these facts, if one wants to call them that, in no way contradict or conflict with the facts of our ordinary world, as currently understood by science. Indeed, I have found that much of what I have experienced that is beyond the capabilities of ordinary consciousness has simply confirmed what science—with its vast number of researchers and resources—has recently discovered about ourselves.[1] Spirit, to a large extent, provides a way for an individual to validate and actually experience what otherwise can only be known intellectually through the collective efforts of large numbers of specialists. This makes a great deal of sense if one understands—as Ken never has—that society is a higher plane of existence than the individual. So I think Joe is going to be hard put to come up with a fact apparent to turquoise that is not recognized by someone at a lower level like green—not only not recognized, but denied to the point where any dialogue is impossible. If he can't have a debate with Frank, it's not because of his privileged access to facts that Frank is unaware of, but because he has different values. A developmental assessment might indeed help identify what those value differences are, but it will do nothing to settle the debate. Wilber's own discussion of lines of development makes it clear that even if we agreed that Joe's values were higher than Frank's, it would not necessarily follow that his understanding of facts was. The debate was framed by Frank as one about issues of fact, when he questioned whether: 1. Spirit guides evolution;
2. Ken responds to criticism;
3. integrals care about criticism.

Joe has quite visibly tried to turn it into a debate over values, arguing that 1. an understanding of evolution in terms of both Spirit and science is preferable to one based on science alone;
2. Wilber's critics aren't worth replying to; and
3. integrals should be sheltered from criticism.

In the process, he has mostly ceded, or at least not responded to, Frank's original points. Joe's message, as I hear it, is: facts don't matter, only values do. **ENDNOTE**[1] For example: 1. most of our thought processes are unconscious;
2. we do not identify with a unified self, but with a variety of different selves;
3. there is no free will in the sense of a self that exists outside of the cause-and-effect of processes that occur in the brain;
4. most of our immediate experience of our surroundings is preconstructed from memories and expectations.

Most educated people today probably accept a), and may have some understanding of 2) and 3). But very few people, including scientists themselves, actually experience these truths, whereas they should be kindergarten-level lessons for anyone with some experience in self-observation. There are many other, more specific findings of science that can be validated easily by contact with higher consciousness, e.g., the incompatibility of certain cognitive processes with other processes, and the effect of energy limitations on cognition.  |

**Comments**

(1 hours ago) **DAVID CHRISTOPHER LANE** said:

This is a deeply engaging point by point rejoinder. Very fair, high-minded, and exceptionally articulate. I learned much going through this essay. Thanks!