Review/Essay on Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World. By Sean Esbjörn-Hargens and Michael Zimmerman. Integral Books/Shambhala Publications: Boston, 2009, 796 pages, \$45 USD, \$54 Canada Hardcover

Written by Mark A. Schroll

Introduction: From Flatland to Kosmos and Back Again

Mark A. Schroll, Ph.D.

"What would our science be like if its methods of inquiry resembled the life-promoting rays of our sun, as it shines onto the unopened bud of a flower coaxing it to open and unfold itself? This process oriented vision of inquiry is the way in which I want to frame the transdisciplinary perspective of transpersonal ecosophy." 1

When Alan Drengson wrote to me on August 22, 2009, asking if I was interested in reviewing Integral Ecology for The Trumpeter, I did not realize what I had got myself into by saying yes to this project. Robert Greenway had been telling me this book was coming out, as Greenway was invited to the gathering in Denver, Colorado, held in June 2002 to discuss the prospectus of Integral Ecology, and the founding of Integral Ecology as part of the Integral Institute; so I enlisted his help in writing this review. I soon realized two perspectives on this book would still be limited, thus I invited Katherine (Kate) MacDowell to join us. By the end of December 2009, Robert, Kate and I had engaged in several lengthy phone and email conversations; we concluded each of us would write separate commentaries. Robert's views are positive, yet with cautionary undertones, seeing Integral Ecology (IE) as a map with which to explore

the various competing perspectives that seek to address the eco-crisis.

Greenway introduces us to his view of IE with the question:

"Can a bigger map save us?" -- we might ask what we mean by "bigger," "map," and who or what it is that needs "saving.". . . "Bigger" means not just the application of one psychology, or limited philosophy or theology, but is built on the integral "everything in" work of Ken Wilber. Integral Ecology notes the almost complete absence of "interior" (as opposed to "exterior") modes of knowing in most psychologies (humanistic, depth, and transpersonal psychologies being notable exceptions). Now, finally, something far too long ignored in most of the various ecopsychologies, we have a detailed inclusion of not just "eco" or "ecology" as [a] metaphor for a vague gesture toward "nature," but included are summaries of a dozen schools of ecology and their various merits (Greenway, April 9, 2010).

Kate leans toward a critical perspective, providing a meta-theoretical inquiry of IE and its mapmakers; her complete assessment of IE follows this one. My own view is that IE does seek to promote a fully integrated inter and intra disciplinary inquiry that is codified within the paradigmatic approach referred to as AQAL, meaning all quadrants, all levels, all lines.

On April 28, 2010, Robert Greenway decided not to publish his review of IE, expressing concern that it was incomplete. I understand how he feels, in spite of this long review, there is much that is left out toward

having a complete assessment of IE. Readers of IE will understand Greenway's concern that most reviews written about it will appear limited, due to the fact as he points out "this book grows out of Ken Wilber's work -- his 35 year long attempt to reshuffle and codify everything" (Greenway April 9, 2010). Readers of IE who are familiar with Wilber's work will have a distinct advantage in both understanding and agreeing with the basic paradigmatic assumptions it makes. In the same breath it is also always valuable to step back and re-examine our fundamental presuppositions, which is the value of MacDowell's contribution to this review. In pointing out IE relies heavily on the assumption that its readers will be familiar with Wilber's work, IE would have been a much more complete book if there had been either an introductory chapter or appendix that summarized Wilber's work. References and partial summaries of Wilber's work are found throughout IE, yet what is really needed is a chronological summary of Wilber; a summary that includes information more recent than all of these scholarly works I list in the reference section²; together these add up to a helpful introduction.

An Introductory Overview of Wilber's Work

Both as a partial beginning toward providing a chronological summary of Wilber's work, and for readers of The Trumpeter who are totally unfamiliar with Wilber's work, I have chosen to provide some background discussion. This chronology was greatly inspired by my correspondence

with Greenway, and I have framed it as a dialogue. At its core, IE's model grows out of Wilber's Spectrum of Consciousness³ view of psychology that is developmental, structural, hierarchical, and systems-oriented, drawing equally on Eastern and Western schools; it was a book I flipped through 33 years ago in Omaha, Nebraska.

Robert Greenway:

Wilber, and subsequently Hargens–Zimmerman regard The Spectrum of Consciousness⁴ as very dated; it is not accurate to say that the IE model grows out of it. Rather it grows out of [Wilber's book] Sex, Ecology, Spirituality ⁵– where he introduces the AQAL model. [AQAL is more] clearly and simply introduced in Wilber's book A Brief History of Everything,⁶ and in my favorite The Eye of Spirit.⁷ [But overall,] the handbook Integral Life Practice⁸ is the simplest and clearest (Greenway April 18, 2010).

Schroll: I realize Wilber's Spectrum of Consciousness⁹ is very dated, yet all of Wilber's work stems from this, granted with considerable revision. I agree that Wilber's start with the AQAL model, and his entry into discussions related to the eco-crisis begins with Sex, Ecology, Spirituality.¹⁰ Wilber was heavily immersed in writing this book in late August of 1993 when he received an award from the Association for Transpersonal Psychology (ATP) at their annual conference. Roger Walsh accepted this award, because (as he has done frequently), Wilber did not

show up. Walsh said Wilber was immersed in reading of books and papers (that eventually formed his thinking for Sex, Ecology, Spirituality¹¹ and later books). Walsh and Wilber have formed this symbiotic collaboration over many years of friendship, except that Walsh has gone on to explore shamanism and psychedelics, where (as I will point out in more detail later) Wilber, (Esbjörn–Hargens and Zimmerman) have not adequately addressed these areas.

The Eye of Spirit¹² (which is now in its third revision), grows out of paper's such as "The Problem of Proof"¹³ and many others. Prior to this was Wilber's book Eye to Eye"¹⁴ that has also gone through several revisions. Wilber continues to talk about the spectrum of consciousness in The Eye of Spirit¹⁵ in relation to integral psychology and the perennial philosophy. Thus with the exception of "integral ecology," everything that Wilber is writing about now is a revision of ideas he first began working on while living in Lincoln, Nebraska, in the mid to late 1970's and early 1980's.

Therefore, I did not purchase The Spectrum of Consciousness¹⁶ because it reminded me of my own unpublished notes, yet seeing that its author was from Lincoln, Nebraska, I wondered where it was he hung out —other than Love Library at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln? A year later I began reading the journal ReVision, edited by Wilber, and his books, beginning with The Atman Project.¹⁷

Fourteen years later on May 6, 1991, I had a brief encounter with Wilber as he got off his motorcycle in Boulder, Colorado, at the Naropa Institute parking lot; two days earlier I had a slightly longer conversation with Michael Zimmerman outside of Naropa. The occasion was the "Human In Nature" conference, May 4-7, 1991. It would be another four years before Wilber began to apply his "spectrum" model to the ecocrisis, whereas Zimmerman had previously addressed the eco-crisis employing Wilber's views. 18 Thus the ideas presented in IE have been brewing for some time. IE is a noble agenda that seeks to reconcile diverse perspectives into an AQAL model in the service of solving the eco-crisis; yet it is one thing to gather up disparate academic sources into an integral paradigm, it is quite another task to create this kind of coalition in practice. 19 Is Wilber (who tends to cancel appearances at conferences), Sean Esbjörn-Hargens or Zimmerman up to this task of organizing conferences where we can all engage each other in discussing these ideas? This concern is not addressed in IE. I also have many more concerns regarding how successful IE reconciles all of these disparate voices. Greenway also shares this concern regarding the communication across boundaries and levels, saying that:

The issue for this and many other matters mentioned in the IE book is how, other than measurable data, we can find relationships that pull the disparate populations together – inter-human, inter-cultural, inter-species, inter-levels of phenomena. Are we looking for a new "science" lurking about here? Are we bound by strict scientific method in order to find adequate bases for the levels of understanding needed? I believe the healing of the human-nature relationship is dependent on how we answer this question (Greenway, April 9, 2010).

I have addressed similar concerns in my paper "Toward a New Kind of Science and its Methods of Inquiry" that suggests a way to re-frame the subject/object divide and our methods of data collection.²⁰

Nevertheless, in reply to the concerns that I raised about Wilber not showing up at conferences, Greenway responded:

Greenway: "Yikes! This is pretty much in the past. Wilber has formed the 'Integral University,' and meets with folks (on his turf, of course) to hash over anything and everything. Note also that there's an online forum for IE" (Greenway, April 18, 2010). Schroll: This is a positive step forward. But, in response, the question I have is this: Do the meetings at the "Integral University" have an open call for papers/participation or is it by invite only? Who is organizing them? Does Wilber (for instance) allow questions to be raised about his departure from ATP? Concerning this, I reminded Greenway of his conversation with David Lukoff in Portland,

Oregon, in April of 2009, that many people in transpersonal psychology feel Wilber abandoned ATP after it helped him build his initial reputation.

I do fully support IE's attempt to reclaim "interiority"²¹ that they weave throughout this book, and bring this discussion into approaches that address the eco-crisis. I too have written on similar concerns regarding "interiority"²² and know how much further we have to go toward resolving these methodological and paradigmatic limits. Specifically (with regard to framing a coherent discussion regarding "interiority") when we seek to understand "ultimate reality," (epistemology determines our ontology), as Wilber pointed out in Quantum Questions^{23, 24}, a point that I will return to in a moment.

Specific Comments Regarding Integral Ecology

In IE, Wilber, Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman have done the hard part of slogging through and summing up all the problems with "Flatland." This pretty much gets an A+ from me. Flatland is a reference to Edwin A. Abbott's²⁵ classic portrayal of two-dimensional ontology, and how an expanded epistemology provided an awakening to the reality of multidimensionality. Still there are places in IE's discussion of interiority that bother me, such the critique of rationalism and romanticism. Clearly

rationalism is in the Flatland camp, yet only because it has become associated with empiricism.

Greenway: "I don't think this is accurate. Wilber, for example, extols rationalism and empiricism – sees it only as 'Flatland' to the degree that it is oriented toward materialism, and not evolution that transcends" (Greenway, April 18, 2010).

Schroll: Here I am not quite sure what Greenway meant, so I welcome comments from readers in clearing this up. Specifically in reply to Greenway, that "Wilber only sees "Flatland" as it is oriented toward materialism, and not evolution that transcends," this would imply that Wilber has changed his position on the very basis of his model that he set forth in The Atman Project,26 and then extended to anthropology in Up From Eden²⁷. It would therefore be my understanding that if Wilber has abandoned involution and evolution, then he has become a dualist. I do not think Wilber has abandoned this view, yet here I am responding to Greenway's previous comment. Specifically too one of the problems in antiquity with the views of Plotinus was that he did not posit any means for transcendent forms to "enfold" back into matter. This limitation of Plotinus was pointed out to me in 1985 by Werner Leinfellner, a philosopher of science that I studied with at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (Leinfellner, a pioneer of scientific philosophy, theory of science, as well as game theory and decision theory in the tradition of the Vienna Circle, is the co-founder of the International Wittgenstein-Symposium in Austria, and has retired back to his native Vienna. Leinfellner was a founding editor, and Editor in Chief of Theory and Decision: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Advances in Decision Science from 1980–1986. It was while completing this review and looking up the accuracy of this information that I learned Leinfellner had passed away April 8, 2010). In response to this critique from Leinfellner, I pointed out that David Bohm does have such a feedback system between the implicate (involution) and explicate (evolution) orders. We shall come back to this point toward the end of this review.

Meanwhile I am bothered that Wilber, Esbjörn-Hargens and
Zimmerman view all Romanticism (which for them includes NeoPaganism and Panentheism) as also part of Flatland. Characterized by the
pre/trans or pre/post fallacy of egoic narcissism. This is true of many
romantics, but there is Emerson's "oversoul" and Kate MacDowell (who
can be characterized as modern Neo-pagan) has taken an interest in
Bohm's work and its ontology. Still, Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman
aptly sum up many of the past heated discussions about "transcendence"
when they write:

Most environmentalists abjure talk of transcendence and Spirit because they are moderns at heart—they agree that all being is material being. And because transcendence seems to be a uniquely human capacity, environmentalists fear that acknowledging transcendence will only encourage an anthropocentrism that justified heedless destruction of natural phenomena.²⁸

Clearly there continues to be a lot to be worked out regarding the discussion and reconciliation of rationalism/romanticism, neo-paganism, panentheism, the perennial philosophy, the primordial tradition, science, anti-science, pseudo-science and scientism.

Another way of approaching this discussion of Flatland that is totally left out of IE is Abraham H. Maslow's hierarchy of needs model.²⁹ I view Maslow's stages (physiological, safety, love, belongingness, and selfesteem) as equal to what Wilber, Esbjörn–Hargens and Zimmerman refer to as Flatland. Maslow's hierarchy is another useful way to address stages of psychological growth, where both these stages and Flatland in general can be thought of as "deficiency motivation" or as our focus on "deficiency needs."

Greenway:

In so far as one understands Wilber's map to fully underlie IE, Maslow is anything but left out. Wilber quotes him extensively, [and] praises [Maslow] as a major pioneer. He then proceeds to place Maslow's hierarchy [with]in [the] context of a dozen other hierarchies. IE either implies this indirectly, or states it directly (Greenway, April 18, 2010).

Schroll: In response to Greenway, yes there is a discussion of hierarchies or more specifically Wilber's multiperspectival 20 tenets of "the evolutionary development of holons." But I did not find a discussion of Maslow in IE. If there is a reference to Maslow in IE, I would welcome someone pointing out where this is. Until then my response to Greenway is this; although Wilber has praised Maslow as a major pioneer, and includes Maslow's hierarchy within his work, to leave Maslow out of IE is an even bigger oversight then my original criticism. Esbjörn–Hargens and Zimmerman do give themselves an out in the form of encouraging IE's readers to fill in all of the gaps.

Beyond this, Wilber, Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman do a good job of summing up what they refer to as Kosmos, yet here is where they also (in my reading) misinterpret a few things. Kosmos of course originates with the work of Pythagoras, but it seems the ecstatic mystical visions associated with Dionysus is left out of Wilber, Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman's framing of Kosmos. It is a cultured view of Kosmos, with (I

guess) meditation as the primary vehicle to states of consciousness that bring us into direct contact with Kosmos. Shamanism is mentioned a few times throughout IE, yet the actual methods that shamans use to commune with Kosmos is vague; especially when it comes to discussing psychedelics. In particular, Esbjörn–Hargens and Zimmerman should have left out the brief paragraph that appears on page 208, because including it weakens their entire argument about multidimensionality; specifically they tell us:

Psychedelics as a category is often considered similar to shamanism. However, psychedelics is a more general category that has no indigenous roots and refers primarily to the use of drugs such as mushrooms or LSD to expand consciousness and connect with nature.

This is simply wrong, and shown to be wrong in one of the best books on shamanism I have ever read—Singing to the Plants: A Guide to Mestizo Shamanism in the Upper Amazon.³² Let alone R. Gordon Wasson's³³ discovery of the mushroom cult in Mexico that calls Esbjörn and Zimmerman's comments into question. Unless of course we attempt to argue (as Wilber, Esbjörn–Hargens, and Zimmerman have) that the indigenous use of psychedelics such as mushrooms is not an authentic representation of shamanic practices. Likewise it was Harner's research with the Jivaro (who now wish to be called Shuar), and his drinking avahuasca to understand their religious worldview that put Harner on the

path to develop Core Shamanism.34 Let alone the fact that when Albert Hofmann visited Maria Sabina with tablets of psilocybin synthesized in his laboratory, she responded by saying that "the pills had the same power as the mushrooms, that there was no difference."35 I am also left to wonder (given IE's comprehensive inquiry) if this deeper inquiry into shamanism's use of psychedelic plant medicines was simply an oversight, or if it might be related to Wilber's view of psychedelics that he discussed in his interview with John Horgan.³⁶ There is much more to this story, but its complete discussion exceeds the limits of this review. As an aside in terms of Maslow's work, Kosmos would be associated with self actualization, and transcendence, which equate to Being-motivation and Being-needs. This corresponds (to some extent) with Arne Naess' concept of Self-Realization.³⁷ Likewise it was Thomas B. Roberts who in the first issue of ReVision pointed to Maslow's often overlooked psychological stage of transcendence.³⁸ More recently (harking back to my previous comment that epistemology determines our ontology when discussing "ultimate reality") Roberts thoroughly discusses the need for a multistate paradigm, versus EuroAmerican science's current single-state paradigm in his book Psychedelic Horizons.³⁹ In sum, I give Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman's discussion of Kosmos a grade of B.

Finally, the "back again" (which is addressed to some extent in chapter 11 and Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman's case study section) is the need for "real ecology" and "a real environmental activism" that is guided by this integral ecological orientation. Two philosophical ways that I would suggest to get us "back gain" from Kosmos, from Transcendence, from our expanded multidimensional perspective, and get our feet back on the ground, can be found in the Ten Ox Herding pictures in Zen where once enlightenment is obtained the monk rides back into town to practice—goes back into the world.⁴⁰ Similarly Shamans enter ecstatic states to obtain wisdom that they "bring back" for healing others and their communities. We climb the mountain of personal growth and transformation (Maslow's hierarchy) not to remain in some blissed out state of ecstatic trance, but so we can come back down the mountain with insights for others and to guide our own lives. In other words, an enlightened vision for environmentalism, a "transpersonal ecosophy"41 Plus in metaphysical terms, this "back again" is the "as above, so below" view—the Tibetan idea of rebirth of souls into new bodies where we spend our life remembering the wisdom of the past and the knowledge of the present to guide our actions and create a better future. This is Wilber's idea of evolution (Flatland - outbound) and Involution (Kosmos inbound). This is Bohm's idea of the Explicate Order - Flatland and

Implicate Order -Kosmos, and then its re-emergence as the whole process starts anew.

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- Mysticism." This paper (which came out a few months prior to Quantum Questions) became Quantum Questions first chapter. Then there is Wilber's clarification of the New Age Movement, as distinct from conversations on the "holographic paradigm" that he first discussed in The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes. (1982). Boulder, Shambhala. But to date that I know of Wilber has yet to address the criticisms of Gordon G. Globus (1986) in the paper "Physics and Mysticism: Current Controversies." ReVision, 8 (2): 49–54.
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- 41. Schroll, M. A. 2009, pp. 8–10. My discussion of transpersonal ecosophy and Maslow's work will be thoroughly explored in a forthcoming issue of International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, due out sometime in the summer of 2011. The theme of this issue is "The Deep Ecology Movment and Ecopsychology's Historical Roots in Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology: Envisioning Transpersonal Ecosophy."