Overviews and Transitions

In Praise of Naess's Pluralism

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Introduction

In this paper I discuss some of the advantages of philosophical pluralism over philosophical monism. Ken Wilber's all-quadrant, all-level (AQAL) model of reality provides a classic example of philosophical monism by claiming to have articulated a 'theory of everything.' Arne Naess, on the other hand, presents at least two challenges to Wilber's monism. First, he demonstrates that attempts to articulate a theory of everything leave out the implicit higher-order framework (or series of frameworks) within which the model itself stands. Second, the richness and diversity of total views which we observe in a cross-cultural analysis is considered part of the richness and diversity of the Earth's living systems.
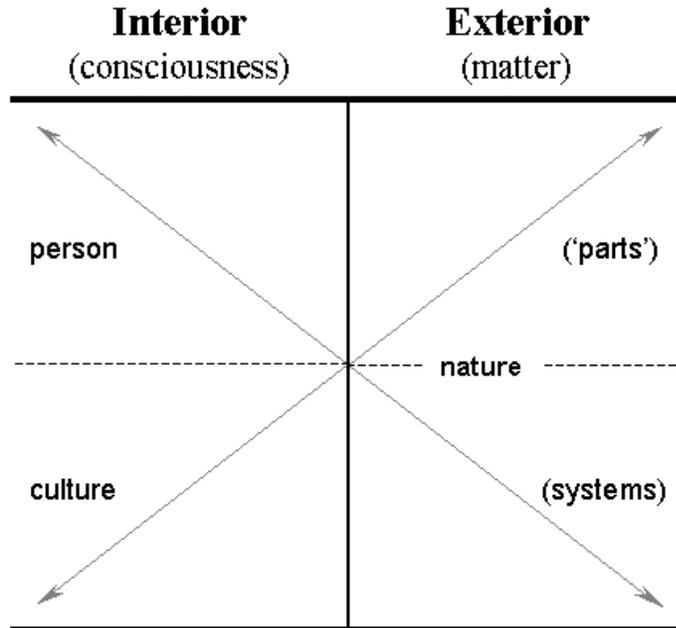
One of Arne Naess's more significant papers, "Reflections about Total Views," was published in 1964.[1] It is notable for several reasons. It is perhaps Naess's most sustained reflection on how one is able to arrange one's entire sense of reality for the purposes of articulation and communication. In doing so, we see Naess's open-ended, generous spirit of philosophizing. It is also noteworthy because it displays Naess's prescience of the dilemma posed by the modern-postmodern debate, that is, the debate between relativism and objectivism (i.e., absolutism). Næss's pluralism offers a foil to the hegemonic aspirations by the modern Western industrial worldview, as well as to the claim that any one particular worldview (or total view) will lead to ecological harmony whereas others will not.

Wilber's AQAL model

Ken Wilber is one of the leading transpersonal theorists in the United States. However, his ambitions have reached the public domain where he has been popularizing his attempt to integrate Eastern mysticism with Western science. In the history of ideas he may be considered as a system builder like, for example, Spinoza or Hegel. His AQAL model claims to be "a theory of everything" that not only synthesizes fragmented branches of knowledge into a single comprehensive framework, but also explains how the entire world works.[2] Very briefly, Wilber promotes a non-dual ontology with a quasi-Hegelian evolutionary theme. (Stan Rowe's article in volume seventeen of *The Trumpeter*[3] offers a very good, short but detailed overview of Wilber's system.) But, like all monolithic ideologies, it takes for granted a vast conceptual framework which itself is not articulated as part of the ideology. Spinoza, for example, tried to make his explicit by articulating seven axioms in his *Ethics.* But even these self-evident principles are considered penultimate rather than ultimate, and depend for their self-evidency upon certain other principles that are accepted as beyond question.[4]

Reality, according to Wilber, has two primary domains, interior (consciousness) and exterior (matter), which themselves have two aspects each, individual and social. These are what Wilber considers to be the four irreducible quadrants of reality (or simply "the Big Three"—person, culture, nature). Spirit (or pure Consciousness) manifests itself in matter as it evolves up through higher and higher levels of complexity from matter to body to mind to soul and finally back to pure Spirit (see Figure 1). The upper left quadrant shows the inner subjective development of individuals (e.g., mind/spirit/psyche); the upper right quadrant shows outer objective, physical development (e.g., brain); the lower left quadrant shows inner subjective development of the collective (e.g., cultural worldviews); and, finally, the lower right quadrant shows outer objective development of social systems (e.g., political systems, cultural patterns).

Figure 1: Wilber's All-Quadrant, All-Level (AQAL) Model[5]

Interior
(consciousness)

Exterior
(matter)

person

('parts')

nature

culture

(systems)

As Wilber sees it, humanity has reached a point in its evolutionary history where the ego has over asserted its autonomy, thus dissociating itself from the physical world of nature as well as ignoring the transcendental realm of Spirit. The ecological crisis, then, reflects a deeper spiritual crisis. Wilber claims that the self can evolve to the stage where it identifies with both 'lower' nature and 'higher' Spirit. In this state of non-dual awareness lies the panacea for all problems facing humankind: personal, social and political, and ecological.

Wilber's espousal of a non-dual ontology relies on two fundamentally distinct categories—mind (interior) and matter (exterior)—of which mind (Spirit) has ontological priority.

> Just as all of the lower is in the higher but not all the higher is in the lower (but rather "permeates" the lower), so all of nature is in Spirit but not all of Spirit is to be found in nature. Rather, Spirit permeates nature through and through, itself remaining behind nature, beyond nature, not confined to nature and not identified with nature, but *never,* at any point, divorced from nature or set apart from nature.[6]

Nature, then, does not have its own independent existence whereas Spirit is unqualified, being both immanent and transcendent.

> Spirit is *both* the highest *goal* of all development and evolution, and the *ground* of the entire sequence, as present fully at the beginning as at the end. Spirit is prior to the world, but not other to this world.[7]

Despite Wilber's resistance to Idealism, his view certainly bears one of its hallmarks, that is, the ontological priority of consciousness.[8] By comparison, other ontologies are seen by Wilber as flawed. For example, "virtually all deep ecologists and ecofeminists" are seen as regressing to an archaic form of spirituality where Spirit is equated with nature in one undifferentiated holistic reality.[9] The problem for Wilber is that ecofeminists and so-called deep ecologists only consider the immanent aspect of Spirit while rejecting anything transcendental. The more highly evolved individual is able to differentiate matter and Spirit, yet neither equates them nor completely dissociates them. Likewise with cultures; archaic hunter-gathers supposedly equated Spirit with nature—regressive in Wilber's model—whereas modern industrial culture completely dissociates Spirit from matter, which is seen as pathological. The 'best' ontology is the one Wilber promotes: the acknowledgement of Spirit which is both immanent and transcendent.

Like Naess, Wilber is reacting to the fragmentary nature of research precipitated, in many ways, by the mechanistic worldview and materialistic ontology that has dominated modern Western culture since the Enlightenment. "The single greatest task facing modernity (and postmodernity)," Wilber writes, is "the integration of the Big Three (person, culture, nature)."[10] Put simply, Wilber is offering a vision of reality which integrates exteriors (objectivity) and interiors (subjectivity). For Wilber, any truly unified theory must take into account not only the four quadrants of reality but all of the levels as well; otherwise it remains seriously incomplete.

This is a noble enterprise to be sure. There is much in Wilber's theory that speaks to our cultural malaise, and much that we can learn. However, perhaps it is too ambitious to call it a "theory of everything," for a vision of such vast proportions requires an equally vast conceptual framework that remains to a large extent implicit and unexamined, assumed to be self-evident, and simply taken for granted. Just as the scientific worldview rests on a set of assumptions and values which themselves are not proven by the system, so too, Wilber's model rests on a specific set of assumptions about the nature of humanity and reality. It's not that the scientific worldview is 'half correct' (because it only admits of material reality)—it is itself a total view, whole and more or less integrated.

Philosophical monism

Like all models of reality, Wilber's AQAL has an implicit framework within which the model stands. Many of the most philosophically interesting aspects of Wilber's model are the unarticulated beliefs and assumptions—the taken for granted framework—from which the AQAL model follows. For example, in order to arrange the two left hand quadrants (individual and social) to line up neatly and tidily Wilber uses the highly contentious assumption that developmental stages that may be identified in individuals can be transposed onto entire cultures. Therefore, so-called primitive societies are intellectually and spiritually less highly evolved than modern, Western industrial cultures. Gus DiZerega asked how Wilber can so confidently write about the supposed inadequacies of people about which we know so little, particularly archaic shamanic practices of which we have no data at all.[11]

Much of Wilber's methodology is revealed in the introduction to his magnum opus, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality.*

> If we take [the] largely-agreed-upon orienting generalizations from the various branches of knowledge (from physics to biology to psychology to theology), we will arrive at some astonishing and often profound conclusions, conclusions that, as extraordinary as they might be, nonetheless embody nothing more than our already-agreed-upon knowledge. The beads of knowledge are already accepted: it is only necessary to provide the thread to string them together into a necklace.[12]

This is an important passage in Wilber's writings for it displays part of the higher-order framework that is *not part of the articulated total view*. In order for the four quadrants to line up in so neat and tidy a fashion Wilber needs to assume a high degree of commensurability between 'already-agreed-upon knowledge,' as if they were all of one calibre, all one type of 'thing.' However, can truths really be strung together so easily? What is the degree of commensurability between truths from such widely disparate areas of research as, for example, astrophysics and depth psychology? Are all truths so tractable as to allow this effortless arrangement? It is exactly the ease with which these "beads of knowledge" can be strung together that many scholars have questioned. Jack Crittenden, a professor in Political Science at Arizona State University, is one of the few commentators to have written on Wilber's methodology.[13]

> What is his actual method? In working with any field, Wilber simply backs up to a level of generalization at which the various conflicting approaches actually agree with one another. Take, for example, the world's great religious traditions: Do they all agree that Jesus is God? No. So we must jettison that. Do they all agree that there is a God? That depends on the meaning of "God." Do they all agree on God, if by "God" we mean a Spirit that is in many ways *unqualifiable*, from the Buddhists' Emptiness to the Jewish mystery of the Divine to the Christian *Cloud of Unknowing*? Yes, that works as a generalization—what Wilber calls an "orienting generalization" or "sturdy conclusion."[14]

To establish a set of 'sturdy conclusions' Wilber selects what he feels is common and rejects the differences between so-called conflicting approaches. The metaphilosophical belief that if the commonalities which cut across cultural, methodological, and semantic differences can indeed be discerned, then they have somehow transcended the limitations of particular views. Only then, Wilber seems to believe, when we have elements which are undistorted by individual or cultural inflections, can we have durable truths, "already-agreed-upon knowledge." Yet, construction of this edifice requires a pre-established conceptual framework for the endeavour to even begin. Orienting generalizations, then, cannot function as pure objective facts. Mary Midgley, one of Britain's foremost philosophers, tells us:

> Facts are not gathered in a vacuum, but to fill gaps in a world-picture which already exists. And the shape of this world-picture—determining the matters allowed for it, the principles of selection, the possible range of emphases—depends deeply on the motives for forming it in the first place.[15]

The 'beads of knowledge' Wilber is attempting to string together appear to be universally applicable because they already fit a pre-established conceptual framework. As Midgley suggests there is a kind of unconscious (Næss might say spontaneous) selection process from a wide range of possibilities.

Problems arise when one overestimates the competency of one particular view. For example, after the monumental success of Newton's *Principia* (1687) hopes ran high that positive methods for obtaining knowledge had been established. By the eighteenth century a fairly wide consensus among the literati held that the methods used to produce such triumphant results in physics would equally apply to other areas such as art, ethics, and politics.[16] Similarly, Wilber proposes a universal framework which can be applied in all places at all times. Everything has its rightful place in the AQAL, everything is explained, nothing is unaccounted for. Like insects in a glass case, all specimens are meticulously arranged, pinned down, and on display.

The late Oxford scholar Sir Isaiah Berlin has cautioned against the use of all-embracing systems which over-simplify the world. Likewise, Midgley has concerns about the degree of parsimony in systems such as Wilber's. "There are always many alternative ways of simplifying things and we have to choose between them."[17] Systematization is a tool by which *we arrange the world abstractly* according to some particular need (or needs). Systems themselves illuminate only those facts which they have brought to light while turning our attention away from others, and tend to insist on seeing all else in terms of those facts.[18] Here is Berlin's definition of philosophical monism: the basic conviction that all reality, and branches of our knowledge of it, form a rational, harmonious whole, and that there is ultimate unity or harmony between human ends.[19]

Berlin notes that monism has been the *philosophia perennis* of the West since the time of Plato.[20] Especially since the Enlightenment, Western culture has vied for the single all-purpose theory which explains everything. From Richard Dawkins' over-simplified claim that life on Earth is simply the product of selfish genes to the search by many physicists for a grand unified theory, there has been no shortage of attempts to provide the one map onto which all our experiences can be charted. Wilber certainly follows this trend. His self-styled theory of everything claims to provide a more comprehensive framework that transcends the "half-truths" of many other maps.[21]

Philosophical monism is neat and tidy. Monists approach new challenges using what Midgley calls the "the jigsaw principle." Problems from various existing physical sciences, such as neurology, quantum mechanics, genetics, or the study of evolution, become like puzzle-pieces that are believed must eventually fit perfectly together.[22] However, there is a basic conviction in pluralism that reality, and our systematizations of it, does not always, and need not ever, form a rational, harmonious whole. The pluralist believes that many problems simply won't fit together into one big map because they belong to completely different puzzles. Rather than attempting to provide a master template into which all the jigsaw pieces must eventually fit, as Wilber does, the deeper challenge seems to be deciding which maps are appropriate under which circumstances. Additionally, it may be perfectly justifiable to create a new map for a puzzle-piece that doesn't seem to fit into any existing map. A vital job of the pluralist, then, is to look for relations and patterns between maps, and to relate those patterns in ways which show us why all the various maps are needed, why they are not just contradicting each other, why they do not just represent different alternative worlds, and, most of all, how they give

meaning to our lives.[23] But it does not follow, as Wilber seems to think, that the maps must be arranged in a static structure. The many different sets of relations between maps are more likely to be dynamic and undergo constant revision as the challenges of life present themselves. Indeed, one of Naess's primary motivations as an environmental philosopher has been a refusal "to look for a single environmental philosophy or one environmental ethics."[24] Philosophical monism tends to lead to conformity, calcification, lack of imagination and open-mindedness, and uncritical attitudes—a kind of passivity which is unbecoming to anyone engaged in philosophical activity.[25]

Naess on total views

By "total view" Naess means something akin to 'worldview,' but the German phrases *Lebens- und Weltauffassung* or *Lebens- und Weltanschauung* have a more dynamic sense which seems to be closer to the meaning which Naess has tried to convey. There are similarities to "paradigm" as popularized by Fritjof Capra: "a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions, and practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organizes itself".[26] However, Naess applies "total view" to individuals as well as cultures. Here, then, is a tentative definition.

> Total View: a conceptual framework and its elements which comprise a particular sense of reality. The conceptual framework functions largely unexamined, unarticulated, and taken for granted, but still is composed of a set of internally coherent and mutually supporting fundamental beliefs, ideas, values, concepts and categories about the nature of reality and one's place in it.[27]

Because a total view adopts *particular* positions in such areas as ontology, epistemology, semantics, and methodology, it cannot be a total or complete system in any absolute way. A total view

> need not—and psychologically cannot—comprise all beliefs if they are required to be articulated. Which beliefs are needed and which are not in order to form a total system depends to a large degree upon the kind of system envisaged. . . . What is to be taken as basic would again be a question of what kind of system is envisaged.[28]

Examples of total views include world religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as the many Indigenous peoples' spiritualities. Philosophical systems such as those articulated by Spinoza and Hegel are also considered total views. Wilber's AQAL

model would appear to be one of the most ambitious attempts to articulate a total view in recent times. As Alan Drengson has pointed out, in a cross-cultural comparison there is considerable diversity at this level of ultimate philosophies or religions (i.e., total views).[29] Naess admits that his own total view, Ecosophy T, is heavily "Spinozistic," that is, inspired by (among other elements) the epistemology and ontology of Spinoza.[30]

Total views are complex systems of exquisite unity and functional integrity. They are already whole, unified and 'complete' in the sense that there is

> a character of totality implicit in most of our everyday reasoning and action, even if this does not show itself as an explicit total view about the world. Such an assumed unity seems to be a prerequisite if a person's particular arguments and acts are not to seem meaningless and pointless. There must be this connection with other mutually supporting arguments, beliefs, and attitudes, even if the person [him- or herself] may be unaware of the mutually supporting elements.[31]

A total view has meaning (i.e., it makes sense) *because of its unity*—the interrelatedness of the concepts and categories; however, "the character of wholeness refuses to reveal itself in what we grasp and formulate in discursive thinking."[32] This suggests that the functional coherency of one's total view is of a completely different order than language is able to accommodate entirely. In other words, systematizations are formalizations—abstract models—of cognitive orders. One's actions can be political gestures since behaviour reveals in more or less subtle ways a great deal of the vast conceptual framework which one takes for granted.[33]

There is a paradox here: since there is no such thing as a completely neutral total view, it will always leave something out. Yet, one needs to assume the complete and comprehensive adequacy of one's total view in order to function in the world. "A mature, integrated human being somehow has to assume an integrated way of thinking and acting."[34] As Naess admits, each of our particular views is *a kind of monism.* "We shall, when using 'total' or 'complete,' take them to be abbreviations for 'near total' and 'nearly complete,' postponing any discussion of just what would have to be added, if anything, in order to reach totality or completeness."[35]

Although one observes considerable differences among ultimate philosophies and religions[36] it is important to note that at the level of sets of fundamental principles most articulations "are not precise enough even to make comparisons or to search for inconsistencies.

Mists do not collide."[37] These positions, outlooks, or worldviews, are considered fundamental because they are not justified in any formal sense of the term, nor are they derived from anything 'more fundamental.' They are assumed to be *total* views because they each "claim to know something that is true of the whole world, or of whatever is most fundamental within a certain area of it."[38] For example, Buddhists may hold a doctrine of *anatman* (no permanent self) whereas Christians may believe that the soul spends an eternal afterlife in heaven.

Rather than debate about which is the 'correct' set of fundamental principles (which itself assumes that there is one way understand reality), what is much more pressing, and of much more value to effecting ecological politics is to work out consequences for adopting certain kinds of values and actions over others. There is no need to look for a single environmental philosophy or one environmental ethics. For example, it is more important to discuss the consequences of expanding a Western consumer ethos across the globe rather than trying to convince all human beings to adopt a non-dual ontology. What is suggested, then, is that there is sufficient comprehensiveness in many of the already existing total views to allow humanity to behave in ecologically viable ways. There is no need to search for a 'more total' view which accommodates them and integrates them into something 'higher' or 'better.'

The principles of the deep ecology movement are themselves not fundamental; they are grounded in a rich plurality of deeper religious and/or philosophical principles. They are *derived* from these fundamentals. What may be surprising to some is that "closely similar or even identical conclusions may be drawn from divergent or even incompatible premises."[39] Conversely, because of semantic elasticity inherent in general terms like *god*, *nature*, and *progress*, divergent or even incompatible conclusions may be drawn from similar or even identical premises! Naess believes that "it is one of the central tasks of environmental philosophers to study the different [total views], but not to try to reduce the ultimate differences."[40] One of the results of this exercise is that it preserves an indeterminate set of derivational possibilities, and hence a diversity of moral and political consequences.

Philosophical pluralism

Total views do not have to be seen as mutually exclusive, nor does it follow that there is only one 'correct' view, or that there is one which is more comprehensive than all the rest. This basic conviction lies at the heart of both Naess's and Berlin's pluralism:

> that no one grand synthesis will accommodate all ideas and values about the nature of reality into one coherent whole. There is an irreducibility among the (sometimes extremely) different systems by which human beings understand themselves and their place in the universe.[41]

Pluralism offers a viable alternative to the seemingly irreconcilable differences which characterize the modern-postmodern debate. One of the great strengths of postmodernism in the twentieth century has been its questioning of the ideal of pure objectivity and claims to absolute truths. Indeed, as Richard J. Bernstein points out, the current debate between objectivism and relativism has become "the central cultural opposition of our time."[42] However, the impasse which characterizes the entire modern-postmodern controversy is a "grand and seductive Either/Or"[43] whereby *either* objectivism *or* relativism are felt to be the only mutually exclusive options. Bernstein writes that this debilitating dichotomy is itself simply a construct which is "misleading and distortive,"[44] and that evidence for a rearranging of the categorical structures and patterns within which we think and act is starting to emerge.

Naess was sensitive to this problem several decades ago, and expressed a solution in a rather technical way:

> If two positions cannot be compared as to truth, if they cannot be refuted in the sense of [Karl] Popper, the one does not, in relation to available conceptual frameworks, have a greater validity than the other. Neither can we say that both are lacking in validity, because that would leave us without anything to start with. I propose putting it as follows: All noncontradictory, fundamental positions (points of view) have the same non-zero status of validity.[45]

Whereas Wilber shoehorns all fundamental positions into the AQAL model, Naess takes a much more sophisticated approach. Naess assumes, tentatively, that because metaphilosophical propositions are not formally systematized it is not possible to compare them by using the 'lower order' conceptual frameworks. The claim here is that we do not have the luxury of a metasystematic position from which to assess either their validity or the nonvalidity. Every assessment is made from

within a particular total view. Rather than reject outright, Naess chooses a more generous option, that is, he allows them all to be valid, at least initially so as to open avenues of research and discourse. (This choice itself requires yet another metaphilosophical proposition!) By comparison, Wilber's assumption of the complete commensurability among vastly different orders of truths appears crude. Furthermore, the assumption that not only does Wilber understand *all other philosophical systems* but that they are all partial next to the AQAL framework is an immodesty of astonishing proportions.

Conclusions

Wilber has made a valiant attempt to integrate the greatest number of 'orienting generalizations' from as many different and disparate areas of research as possible into a single map—the AQAL model. Despite his claim to have articulated a "theory of everything" his model is simply one *particular* way to understand reality. Since attempts to articulate a total view leave out the implicit higher-order framework(s) within which the model itself stands, it becomes increasingly difficult (if not impossible) to advance an all-embracing system or metatheory which can accommodate all other theories, perspectives, and views. One of the lessons we learn from Næss is that the more we claim to know the more we have to assume. A theory of 'everything' would, paradoxically, have to assume everything.

However inclusive any philosophical system wants to be it will be a kind of monism if it is going to be consistent and make sense. We all have biases. We all take sides in debates, the side which tends to harmonize with our own pre-established beliefs about the world. What Wilber's AQAL model shows is a system of mapping reality if you choose certain ideas over others. For example, promoting non-dual ontology as superior to all other ontologies is a form of homogenization. It closes off creative possibilities with respect to ontology, and forces a choice when that choice need not be made (nor may it even be possible to make absolutely).

A. O. Lovejoy believed that out of the many different cosmologies, individuals tend to gravitate towards a particular, but very general, description of the nature of things, a

> characterization of the world to which one belongs, in terms which, like the words of a poem, awaken through their associations, and through a sort of empathy which they engender, a congenial mood or tone of feeling on the part of the [individual].[46]

For lack of a better term he called this proclivity "metaphysical pathos," a general "disposition to think in terms of certain categories or of particular types of imagery" as opposed to any others. One feels oneself 'at home' with a particular philosophical system. Naess noted a similar phenomenon when he compared the philosophical systems of Spinoza and Descartes,[47] whose radically different philosophical systems were not unrelated to their radically different personalities. It may be said, then, that the degree of difference between any two total views reflects a degree of difference between personal characters.

Pluralism is closely related to diversity, and the differences we find among the rich array of total views are a potential source for much creative insight. Naess has an interesting analogy that may be particularly illuminating here.

> Some points of view (like some animals) are clearly vulnerable from some other points of view (or some other animals), but why imagine that one definite point of view (one kind of being) would not be vulnerable from *any* other? What value would there be in having something defeat all others? Philosophical geniuses are normally believed for a short time, but then are gently dethroned and left with the label "of considerable historical importance."[48]

In other words, just as there is a direct relationship between an ecosystem's biodiversity and its integrity, so too can the diversity of ideas, perspectives, thought patterns, values, and moralities add to the integrity of the human psyche—individually and culturally. As Naess has written: "The richness and diversity of philosophical and religiously ultimate premises suitable for action in the ecological crisis may be in itself considered part of the richness and diversity of life forms on Earth."[49] These two quotes have the timbre of a Spinozistic ontology, particularly in light of the claim Spinoza makes in the *Ethics:* "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things."[50] This is a different kind of non-dual ontology than the one Wilber adopts. For Spinoza the unity (God) and the diversity (nature) both have equal ontological status. Naess writes that, for Spinoza, there are "two aspects of Nature, those of extension and thought (better: non-extension) . . ., both [of which are] complete aspects of one single reality, and *perfection characterizes both.*"[51] There is no ontological priority given to God (Spirit), there is no transcendental realm which is 'more real,' or that has 'more being.' Since an assessment of Spinoza's ontology requires the adoption of a particular view, it will be compared with other specific ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and so on.

A comparison of Wilber's and Spinoza's ontologies requires the inspection of metaphilosophical claims that are themselves *not systematized.*[52] At this juncture, because the metaphilosophical positions are not systematized, there does not appear to be available a common framework which is wide enough to accommodate the different positions. In the spirit of genuine concern for dialogue we give both an equivalent, non-zero validity. And these differences are, in Naess's opinion, not only valuable but to be expected and respected. As opposed to philosophical monism, which imposes its schematic onto the entire world, pluralism accommodates a broad mosaic of positions with no fixed boundaries or definite set of interconnections.

Naess sees the constant re-evaluation of ideas (often in the form of deeper questioning) as necessary for any kind of healthy philosophical progress.

> The greatness of a philosophical text consists largely in its capacity to elicit and lead the creativity of generation after generation… Philosophers may look for the best interpretation of a text, but in metaphilosophical hermeneutics and also in the history of ideas, variety is considered a cultural asset. A trend towards a uniform, not to say monolithic, way of conceiving reality, may be an ominous sign of stagnation of the total human enterprise on this planet, a sign of cultural conformity.[53]

The following four points may serve as important counterpoints to the philosophical monist.

1. Ideas (particularly philosophical) should inspire contemplation leading to creative interpretations.

2. There can be no one best interpretation of a text (which does *not* mean that all interpretations are equally good).

3. A plurality of differing interpretations is healthy and viable (and perhaps necessary for the survival of our species given the challenges of the impending ecological crisis).

4. It is in the nature of human beings to conceive reality in a plurality of ways.

Notes

[1] Arne Naess, "Reflections on Total Views," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* 25, pp. 16–29 (1964). Thankfully, Alan Drengson has included this major work in vol. 10 of the *Selected Works of Arne Naess,* pp. 467-482.

[2] Wilber's most accessible work is the short and highly readable *The Marriage of Sense and Soul.* For a more detailed account of his 'theory of everything' see *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality,* 2nd ed., Boston: Shambhala, 2001.

[3] "Transcending This Poor Earth – á la Ken Wilber," The *Trumpeter,* 17-1 (2001), http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/content/v17.1/rowe.html.

[4] See Næss, "Possibilism and Reflections on Total Systems," The *Trumpeter,* Special Festschrift Issue, (Winter 2006), pp. 31-34.

[5] See the AQAL diagram in *The Marriage of Sense and Soul,* pp. 64–65, or in *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality,* p. 193; all quotes from *SES* are from the first edition, Boston: Shambhala, 1995.

[6] Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality,* p. 289.

[7] Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit,* p. 39.

[8] See the entry for "Idealism" in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy.*

[9] Wilber, *SES,* p. 50.

[10] Ibid., p. 455.

[11] Gus DiZerega, "A Critique of Ken Wilber's Account of Deep Ecology and Nature Religions," *The Trumpeter,* 13.2 (1996), p. 62.

[12] Wilber, *SES,* p. ix.

[13] Jack Crittenden, "What is the Meaning of 'Integral'?" This piece was used as the Foreword to *The Eye of Spirit* (Boston, Shambhala, 2001), but also appears on several websites, for example http://integralinstitute.org/history.htm.

[14] Jack Crittenden, Forward, *The Eye of Spirit,* 3rd ed., Boston: Shambhala, 2001, p. xiii.

[15] Mary Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion,* revised ed., London: Routledge, 2002, p. 2

[16] See Isaiah Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism,* p. 22. See also Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal," *The Proper Study of Mankind,* pp. 1–15.

[17] Mary Midgley, *Science and Poetry,* London: Routledge, 2001, p. 8.

[18] See Roger Hausheer, "Introduction," *Against the Current: Essays In the History of Ideas*, edited by Henry Hardy. London: Hogarth, 1979, p. xxi.

[19] Isaiah Berlin, "The First and the Last," p. 58, and Roger Hausheer, "Introduction," *Against the Current,* p. xvi.

[20] See Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism,* p. 67.

[21] See, for example, *SES,* pp. 6, and 346.

[22] Midgley, *Science and Poetry,* p. 10.

[23] Ibid., p. 82.

[24] Naess, "The Encouraging Richness and Diversity of Ultimate Premisses in Environmental Philosophy," *The Trumpeter,* 9.2 (1992), p. 53.

[25] Ibid.

[26] *The Web of Life,* New York: Anchor Books, 1996, p. 6.

[27] See Naess, "Reflections About Total Views" *SWAN,* vol. 10, and "Possibilism," The *Trumpeter,* Special Festschrift Issue, 2006.

[28] "Possibilism," p. 35.

[29] See Alan Drengson, "An Ecophilosophy Approach, the Deep Ecology Movement and Diverse Ecosophies," The *Trumpeter,* 14.3, (1997), p. 110.

[30] For example, see "The Spirit of the Vienna Circle Devoted to Questions of Lebens- and Weltauffassung," *SWAN,* vol. 8, pp. 286-288. Naess was first exposed to Spinoza at the age of 17, and has studied his writings in their original Latin for most of his life.

[31] Naess, "Reflections About Total Views," *SWAN,* v. 10, p. 470.

[32] Ibid., p. 475.

[33] Ibid., p. 468.

[34] Naess, "The Encouraging Richness," p. 57.

[35] Naess, "Possibilism." P. 32.

[36] See Alan Drengson, "An Ecophilosophy Approach," p. 110.

[37] Naess, "A Plea for Pluralism in Philosophy and Physics," *SWAN,* v. 9, p. 135.

[38] Naess, "Reflections," p. 471.

[39] Naess, "The Basics of Deep Ecology," *The Trumpeter,* 21.1 (2005), p. 62.

[40] Naess, "The Encouraging Richness," p. 53.

[41] See Isaiah Berlin, "The First and the Last," p. 57, and *The Roots of Romanticism,* pp. 138, 146–147.

[42] *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* University of Philadelphia Press: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania , 1983, p. 7.

[43] Bernstein., *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* p. 18.

[44] Ibid.*,* p. 19.

[45] "A Plea for Pluralism," *SWAN,* v. 9, p.127.

[46] Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936, p. 11.

[47] See "Reflections," p. 475-477.

[48] "How My Philosophy Seemed to Develop," *SWAN,* v. 9, p. 305.

[49] Naess, "The Encouraging Richness," p. 60.

[50] II.7, Samuel Shirley, trans.

[51] Naess, "Spinoza and Ecology," *Speculum Spinozanum,* p. 419, Naess's italics.

[52] See Naess, "The Limited Neutrality of Typologies of Systems," *Inquiry,* 20 (1977), p. 68.

[53] Naess, "The Encouraging Richness," p. 55. Besides philosophical texts we may also add a good many other types of texts including historical and literary.