

How do we know what we know? – The “Thinking” of Rudolf Steiner and Ken Wilber’s IMP

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It was edited for the English translation. Appendices 1, 2 and 3 were not translated; instead, the original literature is referred to.]

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Appendix 1: The Primordial Perspectives of Being-in-the-World – The Integral Methodological Pluralism (see Excerpt A, p. 93, Excerpt C p. 6, Excerpt D)

See: <http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/kosmos/excerptA/intro.cfm/>

See: <http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/kosmos/excerptC/intro-1.cfm/>

See also: *Integral Spirituality, Chapter 1, Integral Methodological Pluralism*

Appendix 2: *Ken's current interest in perspectives, from Ken Wilber audio - The JKF Weekend 2003 No. 47*

See: <http://www.formlessmountain.com/audio.html>

Appendix 3: 8 Hori-zones or Event Horizontes (see excerpt D, p. 11)

See: <http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/kosmos/excerptD/part1.cfm/>

Introduction

This article is an attempt to compare Rudolf Steiner's theory of cognition as presented in his book *The Philosophy of Freedom* (PoF) with the Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP) as developed by Ken Wilber, as well as pointing out possible similarities while taking into account the differences.

First I shall give the reader a short introduction into Ken Wilber's IMP. Then Steiner's view, based on quotations from PoF, will be presented.

How do we know what we know?

Once we know what to make of the world, it will be a simple matter to direct ourselves accordingly.¹ (77)

Both Steiner and Wilber have focused on the basics of our knowledge and have researched how to explore these basics in order to create a solid foundation for all that follows.

Steiner's preamble (in the new edition of PoF, 1918) clearly states his purpose:

If anyone should be astonished at not finding in this book any reference to that region of the world of spiritual experience described in my later writings, I would ask him to bear in mind that it was not my purpose at that time to set down the results of spiritual research, but first to lay the foundations on which such results can rest.

The Philosophy of Freedom does not contain any results of this sort, any more than it contains special results of the natural sciences. But what it does contain is in my judgement absolutely necessary for anyone who seeks a secure foundation for such knowledge. What I have said in this book may be acceptable even to some who, for reasons of their own, refuse to have anything to do with the results of my researches into the spiritual realm. (xxiv)

Steiner points out that this is a central concern in different parts of his writings:

The theory of knowledge ought to be a scientific exploration of that which all other sciences presume without investigation: knowledge itself².

A comparison with Archimedes' lever points out the basic meaning of a theory of knowledge for all later research and also introduces the Steiner-central concept of „thinking“, which we will refer to in more detail later:

When Archimedes had discovered the lever, he thought he could lift the whole cosmos from its hinges, if only he could find a point of support for his instrument. He needed something that was supported by itself and by nothing else. In thinking we have a principle which subsists through itself. Let us try, therefore, to understand the world starting from this basis. (34)

Wilber approaches the matter similarly and builds his work on „orienting generalizations“, which is a compilation of similarities of research from all fields of knowledge.³ His main

¹ Unless stated differently, the quotations and page numbers originate from: Rudolf Steiner, *the philosophy of freedom*, Rudolf Steiner Press, translated by Michael Wilson. (1st German publication 1894).

² *Wahrheit und Wissenschaft*, p. 25

concern regarding map making (for example the integral approach) is, primarily, not about contents, but about possible structural and common characteristics of different contents. Only these – which could be a possible summary of Wilber – can build a base for a solid „ecumenism“ of the various areas of knowledge considering that all previous attempts to reach a consensus were not very successful. Wilber is looking for Archimedes' lever for the knowledge theory – just like Steiner 100 years earlier.

In Wilber's words:

So how can we describe the integral approach in simple terms? It's clearly going to be a bit of a new idea, so bear with me. We might start by calling it a "content-free cross-culturalism." Gulp. That's *simple*?

“Content-free” refers to the fact that virtually all previous approaches at unification have attempted to find some sort of unity on the level of actual content (whereas the integral approach does not). For example, most of the world's great religions have some version of the Golden Rule, and most universalists use those types of *common elements* to find their unity in the world's religions.

The integral approach does none of that. Or rather, all such similarities in content are looked upon as quite secondary, even trivial. This is why we call the core of the integral approach "content-free." It finds its similarities in certain *patterns* of content, not in the content itself⁴.

The perspectives of Being-in-the-World – Wilber's Integral Methodological Pluralisms (IMP)

Each one of us has his own particular place from which he surveys the world. (87)

With phase V⁵ of his work Wilber presents an „IMP“, aiming to put all research methodologies of humanity into an „explanation frame“, thus emphasizing both greatness and limits of each respective methodology. This would be a break-through in the science of knowledge. The main features of the IMP will be explained in appendix 1. Wilber takes the four quadrants as a starting point (the reader's knowledge of which I assume), differentiating between interior/exterior, individual/collective, and again differentiating within the quadrants between inside/outside, thus reaching 8 main zones/methodologies or event horizons, from which all ways of knowledge and methodologies are derived. (Appendix 2 includes a personal account on how Wilber developed the IMP. A technical description of perspectives/zones as a combination of perspectives follows in appendix 3⁶). These 8 perspectives can be combined differently. One possible combination would be comparing methods without a third person's perspective (zone 1 and 3) with those comprising such a perspective (zones 2,4,5,6,7,8). If we describe the former „percept“ (perception) and the latter „thinking“, then we are on our way to Steiner, with whom we shall occupy ourselves in a minute.

This “percept” as zone 1 and 3 includes subjective (and intersubjective) perception and description of this moment's phenomenology, i.e. my (our) thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, something I am aware of within my self.

³ For explanation of this „orienting generalizations“ see Jack Crittendens foreword to Wilbers *The Eye of Spirit*.

⁴ From: *why do religions teach love and yet cause so much war?*, published on www.beliefnet.com

⁵ Ken Wilber has, as yet, divided his work into five phases, using Latin numbers for description

⁶ In order to describe „what happens“ Wilber has developed his own mathematics for the original perspectives of being-in-the-world (see excerpt C appendix B, published on www.shambhala.com).

Opposed to that all other zones/event horizons bear an element of distance, a third person's perspective, which is why, despite the many differences between them, they can be described using the expression „thinking“, in the sense of an observing reflection, an overview, a look from above, which enables recognising associations and structures, something that is not possible with the methods of zones 1 and 3, since these are “too close” to the phenomena. By means of „percept“ I immediately taste reality, „thinking“ describes it, and both are crucial for a theory of knowledge.

Absolute and relative knowledge

An often used metaphor for two sides of reality and cognition – which, in nonduality, can be “experienced” as not-two – is that of an ocean and its waves. The ocean has a wetness which can be experienced, this is the absolute knowing, ONE TASTE, emptiness, formless, the un-nameable, un-born, eternal I-I. Once this taste is known, then, in a sense, all is known, because each and every single wave of the ocean, be it big or small, is equally soaked by this wetness. But still – and that is the domain of relative knowing – each wave has its own and unique characteristics, which distinguish it from all other waves. The experiencing and naming of each wave of an ocean that is developing and evolving, continuously bringing forth new waves, always permeated by the same wetness, is the domain of relative knowing.

Absolute knowing cannot be achieved, it is the base and essence of each moment, the clearance and opening in which all other phenomena appear, and is often described as an awakening, as a recognition of that which has always been present. Spiritual traditions describe it by means of pointing out instructions, metaphors and parables. Relative cognition requires a going with the time, since the world is developing, suitable research methodology and practices, and an inter-exchange with others, who have equally dedicated themselves to this research, the examination and validation of results.

In the following passage Wilber connects absolute („satori“) and relative (perspective) knowing⁷.

Is there any perception that is not a perspective? Yes, I believe so, and it has to do with satori or nondual awareness (or pure Emptiness - consciousness without an object, which is therefore consciousness without a perspective), which I will explore in later excerpts. The conclusion of this integral reformulation of the wisdom traditions is that samsara (or the world of Form) is composed of perspectives, and nirvana (or Emptiness) is pure perception without an object or perspective. The union of Emptiness and Form is thus the union of perception and perspective, where in my pure perception I am one with everything that is arising (although as expressed through my own individual perspective, with which I am no longer exclusively identified). Finding Emptiness is a freedom from all perspectives (a nirvana free of samsara); a union with Form is finding the Fullness of perspectives that alone can express this Freedom (the nonduality of nirvana and samsara). Wisdom is transcending perspectives, compassion is embracing them all.

Let us now turn to *The Philosophy of Freedom* (PoF):

“Thinking” in the PoF

⁷ (from: excerpt C, note 7)

In thinking we have a principle which subsists through itself. Let us try, therefore, to understand the world starting from this basis. (34)

To live in reality, filled with the content of thought, is at the same time to live in God. (215)

As I wish to demonstrate below, Steiner, in the PoF, uses the expression „thinking“ in (at least) two different ways, which I will name differently:

Thinking-A (for absolute knowledge), Thinking-R (for relative knowledge).

The former conforms to the „thinking“ of „I think, therefore I am“. It is the experiencing of the Higher Self, the I-I or I AM, the ground of being, as described above. Thinking-A “perceives” the absolute Being.

Thinking-R is the becoming aware of coherences, patterns, structures and orders of the relative world (as described above, this conforms to all zones/perspectives/methodologies, which include the perspective of a third person, meaning zones 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). This thinking overlooks from a distance (time, space) the phenomena, which are gained perceptively by adopting perspectives 1 and 3 (for example introspection and meditation), and arranges them according to their context. This thinking explores the relative Being.

Indices for Thinking-A and the connection between Thinking-A and Thinking-R

Thinking gives us reality in its true form as a self-contained unity, whereas the multiplicity of percepts is but a semblance due to the way we are organized. (212)

I think, therefore I am. All other things, all other events, are there independently of me. Whether they be truth, or illusion, or dream, I know not. There is only one thing of which I am absolutely certain, for I myself give it its certain existence; and that is my thinking. (29)

There is a Wilber essay on Descartes⁸, where he suggests „Consciousness, hence being“ for the translation of „cognito ergo sum“.

The percept of my „I“ can always come up in my consciousness while I am having other percepts. (49)

I do not merely see a tree, but I also know that *it is I* who am seeing it. (49)

Through my perceiving, that is, through this specifically human mode of perceiving, I, as a subject, am confronted with the object. The connection of things is thereby interrupted. The subject restores this connection by means of thinking. (100)

This is why, in actual life, feelings, like percepts, appear *prior* to knowledge. At first, we have merely a feeling of existence ... (114)

The highest level of individual life is that of conceptual thinking without regard to any definite perceptual content. We determine the content of a concept through pure intuition from out of the ideal sphere. Such a concept contains, at first, no reference to any definite percepts. (128)

⁸ Sidebar E, The Genius Descartes Gets a Postmodern Drubbing, published on www.shambhala.com

Of course, my „I“ takes notice of these perceptual contents, but it does not allow itself to be *determined* by them. (133)

In our knowledge we are concerned with questions which arise for us through the fact that a sphere of percepts, conditioned by place, time, and our subjective organisation, is confronted by a sphere of concepts pointing to the totality of the universe. My task consists in reconciling these two spheres, with both of which I am well acquainted. (92)

When we observe our thinking, we live during this observation directly within a self-supporting, spiritual web of being. (121)

Examples for the comparison of percept (observation, phenomena, mere appearance, feeling) and thinking-R (causes, connection, threads, linking, organization)

Spinoza, and all who think like him, overlook the fact that man not only is conscious of his actions, but also may become conscious of the causes which guide him. (6)

One is the phenomenological awareness of something (zones 1, 3), such as an act or an observance, the other is causes, which are identified when the act is viewed from a distance (perspective of a third person, objectively) (zones 2,4,5,6,7,8). Both are important.

But inability to discriminate has before now caused endless confusion. There is, after all, a profound difference between knowing why I am acting and not knowing it. (7)

Mere observation can trace the parts of a given event as they occur, but their connections remains obscure without the help of concepts. (22)

An event or an object which is merely observed does not of itself reveal anything without its connection with other events or objects. This connection becomes evident only when observation is combined with thinking. *Observation* and *thinking* are the two points of departure for all spiritual striving of man ... (23)

In the *occurrence* of the world phenomena, thinking may play a minor part; but in the forming of a *view* about them, there can be no doubt that its part is a leading one. (23)

Thinking is able to draw threads from one element of observation to another. (44)

The mere appearance, the percept, gives me no content which could inform me as to the degree of perfection of the organization. (73)

Thinking alone links all these percepts to one another and shows them to us in their mutual relationship. (75)

Our whole being functions in such a way that from every real thing the relevant elements come to us from two sides, from *perceiving* and from *thinking*. (67)

The full reality of a thing is given to us in the moment of observation through the fitting together of concept and percept. By means of a percept, the concept acquires an individual form, a relation to these particular percepts. (84)

To form a link between something subjective and something objective is impossible for any process that is „real“ in the naive sense, that is, one that can be perceived; it is possible only for thinking. (76)

Our thinking is not individual like our sensing and feeling; it is universal. It receives an individual stamp in each separate human being only because it comes to be related to his individual feelings and sensations. (69)

.... and at the same time these trans-individual laws are experienced individually. Remarkable, how Steiner relates the individual feeling with the trans-individual thinking, as in this excerpt:

In thinking we have that element given us which welds our separate individuality into one whole with the cosmos. (70)

Thinking is the element through which we take part in the universal cosmic process; *feeling* is that through which we can withdraw ourselves into the narrow confines of our own being.(86)

This passage expresses the differentiation between the zones: the „closer“ feeling, zone 1, 3, without the distance and perspective of a third person, opposed to the “thinking” of perspectives 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, each with a part of third person’s perspective.

... it becomes clear that *in the act of knowing*, man, on the edge of the world of ideas, lives his way into something which is the same for all men, but that when, from this world of ideas, he derives the intuitions for his acts of will, he individualizes a part of this world by *the same activity* that he practices as a universal human one in the spiritual ideal process of knowing. (153)

Again it becomes clear that experience will always remain individual and unique, even if it is about universal deep structures, patterns, laws. Gravity is universal, but is experienced individually. Neuroses are a common phenomenon, but they are experienced individually; the pluralistic Zeitgeist is a cultural phenomenon, but every one (on this level of awareness) goes through his/her own personal pluralism; a national identity concerns a whole nation, yet the personal experiencing of nationality is entirely individual.

If we take mere percepts by themselves, we have no reality but rather a disconnected chaos; if we take by itself the law and order connecting the percepts, then we have nothing but abstract concepts; it is, however, contained in thoughtful observation, which does not one-sidedly consider either concept or percept alone, but rather the union of the two. (312)

Thinking leads all perceiving subjects to the same ideal unity in all multiplicity. The unitary world of ideas expresses itself in them as in a multiplicity of individuals. As long as a man apprehends himself merely by means of self-perception, he sees himself as this particular man; as soon as he looks at the world of ideas that lights up within him, embracing all that is separate, he sees within himself the absolute reality living and shining forth. (215)

Examples for the meaning of identifying the backgrounds (reasons) of what we perceive and what drives us (driving force)

... our motives are always permeated by thoughts. Love, pity, and patriotism are driving forces for actions ... (11)

A tour through the IMP zones can clarify as follows: „driving forces“ of action can be recognized in:

- Zone 2: individual structures of awareness (e. g. Freud)
- Zone 4: collective structures of awareness (e. g. Graves). Patriotism would be an individual and/or collective structure of awareness („driving force“)
- Zone 5: cognitive-biological circumstances (e. g. Maturana, Varela, von Dittfurth)
- Zone 6: patterns of behaviour (e. g. Watson)
- Zone 7: social-autopoietic patterns (e. g. Luhmann)
- Zone 8: system structures (e. g. Marx)

.. as long as I am merely referring to the general fact that the percept is partly determined by the organization of myself as subject. The matter would appear very different if we were in a position to say just what part is played by our perceiving in the bringing forth of a percept. (48)

That exactly is the aim of a basic theory of cognition: which factors influence our perception?

As object of perception I am subjected to continual change. As a child I was one thing, another as youth, yet another as man. Indeed, at every moment the percept-picture of myself is different from what it was the moment before. These changes may take place in such a way that it is always the same man (the type)⁹ who reveals himself in them. (142)

Phenomena come and go, structures of awareness can last much longer, becoming so much more unchangeable and unconscious, that the person is only a stencil, „experienced“ through structures he is not aware of (for example egocentric, patriotic, rationalistic, etc.).

The difference between zone 1 (phenomenology) and zone 2 (structuralism)

... while I am thinking I pay no heed to my thinking, which is of my own making, but only to the *object* of my thinking, which is not of my making. (27)

One gives me the phenomena, the other the „rules“, which the phenomena obey. To know both is important. Wilber likes to use chess as an example. The phenomenologist describes the phenomenon, the structuralist tries to find out the rules of the game. This is one of the central subjects in Wilber's book "Integral Spirituality" and a central subject in post-metaphysical spirituality: which phenomenon were and are described by spiritual traditions and according to which perception background (individual or collective) were/are they interpreted?

The first observation which we make about thinking is therefore this: that it is the unobserved element in our ordinary mental and spiritual life. (26)

⁹ In German: stencil person, which also means template, stereotype, stencil

The reason why it is impossible to observe thinking in the actual moment of its occurrence, is the very one which makes it possible for us to know it more immediately and more intimately than any other process in the world. (27)

„Intimacy“ is phenomenology’s characteristic (zone 1), a knowledge resulting from familiarity, as is the case with our own thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations. Detaching ourselves from them shows us the backgrounds of our thinking, which we do not become aware of through phenomenological perception alone.

When we make thinking an object of observation, we add to the other observed contents of the world something which usually escapes our attention. (30)

This passage makes clear that each perspective has its own content of reality, which cannot be „created“ by any other perspective (Wilber calls the attempt to do that „absolutism“ – see below):

For everyone, however, who has the ability to observe thinking – and with good will every normal man has this ability – this observation is the most important one he can possibly make. (29)

If one demands of a „strictly objective science“ that it should take its content from observation alone, then one must at the same time demand that it should forgo all thinking. For thinking, by its very nature, goes beyond what is observed. (42)

Again it is emphasized that the phenomenon of an observation are one thing, while their association through thinking are something entirely different. The latter surpasses pure phenomena (yet is based on them).

If I, or someone else, reflect upon such an action afterwards, we can discover what moral principles come into question with regard to this. (135)

That we speak of thoughts (ethical ideas) as objects of observation is fully justified. For, although during the activity of thinking the products of thinking do not appear at the same time in the field of observation, they can nevertheless become objects of observation afterwards. And it is in this way that we have arrived at our characterisation of action. (170)

Again the step from an „intimate“ inner perception (zones 1, 3) toward a reflective outer awareness (of inner matters - zones 2, 4) is taken. A step from phenomenon towards the yet hidden structures and patterns.

The difference between zone 1 (phenomenology) and zone 5 (autopoiesis, cognitive science, neurobiology)

My observation shows me that in linking one thought with another there is nothing to guide but the *content* of my thoughts. I am not guided by any material process in my brain. (28)

What goes on in the brain is connected by so many intermediate links with the external process that any similarity to the latter is out of the question. What the brain ultimately

transmits to the soul is neither external process nor process in the sense organs, but only such as occur in the brain. (53)

Similarities between Steiners “thinking” and Wilbers “perspectives”

We must first consider thinking quite impartially, without reference to a thinking subject or a thought object. For both subject and object are concepts formed by thinking. There is no denying that *before anything else can be understood, thinking must be understood*. (35)

... that I make *thinking* my starting point, and not *concepts* and *ideas* which are first gained by means of thinking. (40)

A Wilber-quote¹⁰:

A subject perceiving an object is *always already* in a relationship of first-person, second-person, and third-person when it comes to the perceived occasions ... Moving from perceptions to perspectives is the first radical step in the move from metaphysics to post-metaphysics. Subjects don't prehend objects anywhere in the universe; rather, first persons prehend second persons or third persons: perceptions are always within actual perspectives.

The mutual interaction of perspectives with and amongst each other and their exploration by means of Thinking R

This dependence of our percept-picture on our place of observation is the easiest one to understand. The matter becomes more difficult when we realize how our world of percepts is dependent on our bodily and spiritual organization. (46)

In the language of perspectives one could say: Our „percept-picture“ (zone 1 individual, zone 3 collective) depends on individual and collective structures of awareness (zones 2, 4), on neuro-biology and behaviour-related aspects (zones 5, 6) as well as on social structures (zones 7, 8).

Absolutism

„Absolutism“ is Wilber's description of attempting to take a perspective/method beyond its scope, which leads to false conclusions. Steiner, with regard to an overestimation of the significance of one's own subjectivity, expresses this danger as follows:

My percept-pictures, then, are in the first instance subjective. The recognition of the subjective character of our percepts may easily lead us to doubt whether there is any objective basis for them at all. (47)

Confusing the *subjective* percept with the *objective* percept leads to the misconception contained in idealism – that the world is my mental picture. (77)

This would be phenomenological absolutism. Here already Steiner points out a problem, which is characteristic for the baby-boomer narcissism of the “me” generation.

¹⁰ excerpt D, p. 4

The error in a mystical outlook based upon mere feeling is that it wants *to experience directly* what it ought to gain through knowledge; that it wants to raise feeling, which is individual, into a universal principle. (115)

This is a further example for the problems of absoluting introspection/meditation/zone 1. Sometimes Steiner also speaks of „Gefuehlsmyistik“. Exactly this problem in the (authentic) mystic traditions is discussed by Wilber in *Integral Spirituality*.

If we turn towards thinking *in its* essence, we find in it both feeling and will, and these in the depths of their reality; if we turn away from thinking towards „mere“ feeling and will, we lose from these their true reality. (120)

Here yet another example for such absolutism, in this case in connection with pointing out the danger of narcissism. What new-age narcissism of the past decades, out of an anti-rationality attitude, has elevated to a credo („feeling is being“), has already been clearly defined by Steiner for what it truly is – a „mere“ subjective feeling.

It is a characteristic feature of the essential nature of man that what can be intuitively grasped swings to and fro within man, like a living pendulum, between universally valid knowledge and the individual experience of it. For those who cannot see the one half of the swing in its reality, thinking remains only a subjective human activity; for those who cannot grasp the other half, man’s activity in thinking will seem to lose all individual life. (154)

Steiner points out that dwelling upon phenomena will lead to the dead-end of sole subjectivity, while dwelling upon „universally valid knowledge“ would lead to „lose all individual life“. Both equal absolutism. In order to overcome them, Steiner recommends a “swing of the pendulum”, (Wilber would say adopting all perspectives without turning them absolute or neglecting them).

I-transcendence and objectivity

My self-perception confines me within definite limits, but my thinking is not concerned with these limits. (69)

This is an important reference as to the greatness of a third person’s perspective in general – it objectifies and takes me beyond my self. When several people make an observation (phenomena), deriving the basic structures of these phenomena by means of inter-subjective dialogue and comparison, then these facts are trans-individual, transcending in a sense the individual border. This is one of the criteria of good science within a community of competent researchers/practitioners.

The one uniform concept of „triangle“ does not become a multiplicity because it is thought by many persons. (69)

This is a good example for any such facts and practically applies to all that is perceived through zones 2,4,5,6,7,8, from individual-psychological laws (Freud, zone 2), to collective cultural laws (Graves, zone 4), to the outer sciences and their discovered facts of zones 5,6,7,8.

The greatness of subjectivity (zone 1)

Each of us claims the right to start from the facts that lie nearest to hand, from his own immediate experiences, and thence to ascend to a knowledge of the whole universe.(xxviii).

After Steiner strongly emphasizes thinking, compared to percept, he points out the meaning of a „vivid mental picture“ in the following passage. This is the strength of phenomenology/zone 1/introspection, which cannot be replaced by any other perspective – a knowing resulting from “intimate” familiarity. Zones 2, 4,5,6,7,8 are, more or less, “mere” maps and menus, as they all comprise an it-perspective, but the „taste“ takes place in zone 1 (individually, in zone 3 collectively)¹¹.

I can convey the concept of a lion to someone who has never seen a lion. I cannot convey to him a vivid mental picture without the help of his own perception. (84)

Metaphysics

In PoF, Steiner, who, in general perception is known as a metaphysician, clearly distances himself from „mere hypothetic metaphysics“.

Every kind of existence that is assumed outside the realm of percept and concept must be related to the sphere of unjustified hypotheses. (90)

Just as monism has no use for supernatural creative thoughts in explaining living organisms, so it is equally impossible for it to derive the moral world order from causes which do not lie within the experienceable world. (169)

Whoever seeks another unity behind this one only proves that he does not recognize the identity of what is discovered by thinking and what is demanded by the urge for knowledge. (211)

The truth is that the human spirit never transcends the reality in which we live, nor has it any need to do so, seeing that this world contains everything the human spirit requires in order to explain it. (216)

This is also Wilber’s approach regarding the construction of post-metaphysics – abandonment of postulates, as much as possible, and derivation from perspective perceptions of sentient beings.

Steiner leaves no doubt – just as Wilber 100 years later – that inner experiencing is „fact“, pending scientific examination, and is a necessary part of a (in this case) theosophical world view. This becomes clear to us in the following passage from *Theosophie*:

¹¹ What Steiner hardly considers at all in PoF is that insight „does not just lie around“, but is gained increasingly in the course of a development process and is the result of „enactment“. The world looks – and *is* - different on every level of awareness. Wilber explains this at length in *Integral Spirituality*, particularly in appendix II (Integral Post-Metaphysics). Expressions such as „cosmic address“ and „Giga Glossary“ are Wilber’s way of enabling an appreciation and classification of *all* insight, while specifying (at the least) the level of awareness as well as the perspective of awareness of the individual making a statement and the observation that is made. The entirety of all such statements would yield a „Giga Glossary“, a hierarchy of human experiences.

In this scripture, a draft of a theosophical world-view is created originating from the hereby indicated attitude. He who has written it down does not wish to present what is not fact to him in a similar sense, as a happening in the outer world is fact for eyes and ears and the ordinary mind (Theosophie, 22).

Wilber's counterpart from *Eros, Kosmos, Logos* (p. 6, CW 6): „I suppose many readers will insist on calling what I am doing „metaphysics,“ but if „metaphysics“ means thought without evidence, there is no metaphysical sentence in this entire book.”

A relating Steiner-quote:

A concept that is supposed to be filled with a content lying beyond our given world is an abstraction to which no reality corresponds. We can think out only the *concepts* of reality; in order to find reality itself, we must also have perception. (216)

The Myth of the Given

Steiner distances himself from „the myth of the given“, which suggests that things are as we perceive them (naive realism), and looks for the connections „behind“ the phenomena.

For the naive realism, the real world is an aggregate of perceived objects (percepts); for metaphysical realism, not only percepts but also imperceptible forces are real; monism replaces forces by ideal connections which are gained through thinking. The *laws of nature* are just such connections. A law of nature is in fact nothing but the conceptual expression of the connection between certain percepts. (100)

Inter-subjectivity and culture

How the single member is constituted, and how he will behave, are determined by the character of the racial group. (203)

No man is all genus, none is all individuality. But every man gradually emancipates a greater or lesser sphere of his being, both from the generic characteristics of animal life and from domination by the decrees of human authorities. (207)

Inter-subjectivity, that is the we-perspective, plays a major role in the gaining of insight. For one by uncovering inter-subjective structures, which influence one's own perception and interpretations (zone 4), but also through the strength of dialogue and exchange, which makes it possible in the first place to turn purely subjective insights and conclusions into inter-subjective/general laws, to the point of universal „laws of nature“¹². These thoughts are present in the PoF, along with the question:

How is it that the picture of the world which I build up out of my subjectively determined percepts and my concepts turns out to be the same as the one which another individual is also building up out of the same two subjective factors? How can I, in any case, draw conclusions from my own subjective picture of the world about that of another human being? (102)

¹² „general laws“ which are not based on solid inter-subjective science, are rightfully titled „dogma“.

If we seek out the rules (concept principles) underlying the actions of individuals, peoples, and epochs, we obtain a system of ethics which is not so much a science of moral laws as a natural history of morality. (134)

This is an example for the perspective of zone 4, in connection with the concept of evolution, cultural anthropology, genealogy. The rules of collectively developing consciousness (e. g. Gebser, Graves)

Freedom

Freedom is a central expression in the PoF

Which of us can say that he is really free in all his actions? Yet in each of us there dwells a deeper being in which the free man finds expression. (140)

Wilber dedicated the book „The Atman Project“ to this deeper being and what humans make of it (based on their different structures of awareness). Using the terminology of IMP, the definition could be the following: Absolute freedom is awareness of the ground of being, the suchness of this and every single moment. Relative freedom (or fullness) is the becoming aware of more and more perspectives as far as one is able to advance. The more I know about the subjective, inter-subjective and objective dimensions of life – my life – the (more fulfilled) I am. Together they are the true freedom of complete and aware being-in-the-world, while at the same time being aware of not (only) belonging to this world.

Conclusion

My main concern in this essay was to compare Ken Wilber’s IMP, which is presently the most encompassing approach to knowledge in general, with a work of resembling intentions, Rudolf Steiner’s *the philosophy of freedom*¹³, in an attempt to stimulate a discussion on similarities and differences. In my eyes, the IMP not only represents a priceless value, but can – and should – be compared to similar endeavours of past personalities, in the sense of an ever widening perception frame and the pertaining building of models.

In order to point out yet another possible parallel to the very broadly handled expression of Steiner’s „thinking“ I conclude by quote the following passage from Wilber’s *Integral Spirituality* (p. 113) concerning cognition:

[The word] „cognition“ is actually derived from the root gni (co-gni-tion), and this gni is the same as gno, which is the same root as gno-sis, or gnosis. Thus, **cognition** is really **co-gnosis**, or that which is the co-element of gnosis and nondual awareness. This is why Traleg [Rinpoche] is saying that cognition or co-gnosis is indeed the vehicle of our spiritual path. (Incidentally, this is why, as we saw, developmentalists repeatedly have found that the **cognitive line** is necessary but not sufficient for ALL of the other developmental lines, including feelings, emotions, art, and spiritual intelligence ...

In Sanskrit, this gno appears as jna, which we find in both *prajna* and *jnana*. Prajna is supreme discriminating awareness necessary for full awakening of gnosis (*pra-jna* = pro-gnosis), and jnana is pure gnosis itself.

¹³ The complete title is *The Philosophy of Freedom, The Basis for a modern World Conception, Some results of introspective observation following the methods of Natural Science.*