



Integral Research Center

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“Integral” Defined

Given that the term “integral” is used in a variety of fields and can take on different meanings depending upon context, here are a few foundational and illuminating quotes from the works of Ken Wilber, Jean Gebser, and Sri Aurobindo, three pioneers of all things integral. May you find their articulations of integral thought-provocative and heart-opening. And if you come across additional quotes that deserve consideration, please contact Jordan Luftig at jluftig@jfk.edu.

Quotes by Ken Wilber

Integral: the word means to integrate, to bring together, to join, to link, to embrace. Not in the sense of uniformity, and not in the sense of ironing out all of the wonderful differences, colors, zigs and zags of a rainbow-hued humanity, but in the sense of unity-in-diversity, shared commonalities along with our wonderful differences. And not just in humanity, but in the Kosmos at large: finding a more comprehensive view—a Theory of Everything (T.O.E.)—that makes legitimate room for art, morals, science, and religion, and doesn’t merely attempt to reduce them all to one’s favorite slice of the Kosmic pie.

(*A Theory of Everything*, p.2)

Integral philosophy attempts to include and coordinate the many faces of the Good (the “we”), and the True (the “it”), and the Beautiful (the “I”), as all of them evolve across the entire spectrum, from their sensory forms (seen with the eye of flesh) to their mental forms (seen with the eye of mind) to their spiritual forms (seen with the eye of contemplation)—a pluridimensional Kosmic mandala of unending embrace.

(*The Eye of Spirit*, p. 85-86)

There are many different meanings of the words “integrated” or “integral” as they apply to a stage of human development.

To begin with, there at least two different general meanings: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal integration means that the elements of any given level—purple, blue, yellow, etc.—are fairly

well integrated *at that level*. A well-integrated level is a healthy level, or the very best that that level can be given its inherent structure and limitations. Horizontal integration basically involves *an integration of the four quadrants at any given level*. Conversely, an imbalance (or lack of integration) of the four quadrants at any level (e.g., an overemphasis on the I, we, or it domains) results in a pathological imbalance at that level. Restoring health at that level means restoring a balance or integration of the elements and quadrants at that level (e.g., moving from unhealthy blue to healthy blue). Such is horizontal integration.

Vertical integration, on the other hand, means moving to a higher level of integration altogether. Now, at this point, definitions of “integral” begin to diverge sharply, depending upon the highest level of development recognized by a particular theorist. The fact is, each level of development has the capacity to be relatively *more integrative* than its predecessors, simply because each healthy level “transcends and includes,” and thus each senior level can embrace more holons in its own being and thus is relatively *more integral*.

.... Because the highest level that most researchers recognize is centauric (integral-aperspectival, second tier, etc.) I have throughout this book generally used the term “integral” to refer to those levels. But it should be understood that this is actually a very relative term, and that the ultimate integral level is the nondual Kosmos itself, which is simultaneously the highest level of your own consciousness and the Ground of each and every level without exception.

(*A Theory of Everything*, p.152)

Quotes by Jean Gebser

The concretion of time is one of the preconditions for the integral structure; only the concrete can be integrated, never the merely abstract. By integration we mean a fully completed and realized wholeness—the bringing about of an *integrum*, i.e., the re-establishment of the inviolate and pristine state of origin by incorporating the wealth of all subsequent achievement. The concretion of everything that has unfolded in time and coalesced in a spatial array is the integral attempt to reconstitute the “magnitude” of man from his constituent aspects, so that he can consciously integrate himself with the whole.

(*The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 99)

The integral consciousness structure... its mode of realization is not exhausted in quantitative or conceptual thought, in the mythical intuition of the symbolic images of the world, or in the experience of magical unity and power. The new mode of realization irrupts in verition—the perception and impartation of truth which signifies the whole and renders it transparent wherever we succeed in liberating ourselves from spatially-bound conceptuality without reverting to irrationality.... The key-words reflecting this situation reappear as the basic concern in all manifestation of the areas we have investigated: the openness that is transfigured into plentitude whenever we realize that the disruption of space by time does not lead to emptiness, to *nihil*, to nothingness or *nada*, but to transparency.... The whole, which we dimly experience in magic, which becomes visible to us in the polarity of the world of descriptive imagery, and which we

attempt to conceptualize in a mental-rational summation of parts: the whole becomes perceptible throughout all domains; origin becomes present.

(The Ever-Present Origin, p. 529)

The new attitude will be consolidated only when the individual can gradually begin to disregard his ego. As long as our thinking is exclusively self-centered the world will remain fragmented. At best the “Thou” will become visible to the “I”; but never the whole... What is necessary is neither egotism nor egolessness. Egolessness is a deficient regression into magic while a mere egotism is a deficient continuation in the mental-rational structure. Only the overcoming of the “I,” the concomitant overcoming of egolessness and egotism, places us in the sphere of ego-freedom... Ego-freedom means freedom from the self; it is not a loss or denial of the “I,” not an ego-cide but an overcoming of ego. Consciousness of self was the characteristic of the mental consciousness structure; freedom from the “I” is the characteristic of the integral consciousness structure.

(The Ever-Present Origin, p. 532)

Quotes by Sri Aurobindo

An integral spiritual consciousness carries in it a knowledge of all the terms of being; it links the highest to the lowest through all the mediating terms and achieves an indivisible whole. At the highest summit of things it opens to the reality, ineffable because superconscient to all but its own self-awareness, of the Absolute. At the lowest end of our being it perceives the Inconscience from which our evolution begins; but at the same time it is aware of the One and the All self-involved in those depths, it unveils the secret Consciousness in the Inconscience. Interpretative, revelatory, moving between these two extremes, its vision discovers the manifestation of the One in the Many, the identity of the Infinite in the disparity of things finite, the presence of the timeless Eternal in eternal Time; it is this seeing that illumines for it the meaning of the universe. This consciousness does not abolish the universe; it takes it up and transforms it by giving to it its hidden significance. It does not abolish the individual existence; it transforms the individual being and nature by revealing to them their true significance and enabling them to overcome their separateness from the Divine Reality and the Divine Nature.

(The Life Divine, p. 662)

An integral knowledge then must be a knowledge of the truth of all sides of existence both separately and in the relation of each to all and the relation of all to the truth of the Spirit.

(The Life Divine, p. 682)

To reach an integral self-knowledge, an entire consciousness and power of being, there is necessary an ascent beyond the plane of our normal mind. Such an ascent is at present possible in an absorbed superconscience; but that could lead only to an entry into the higher levels in a state of immobile or ecstatic trance. If the control of that highest spiritual being is to be brought into our waking life, there must be a conscious heightening and widening into immense ranges of

new being, new consciousness, new potentialities of action, a taking up,—as integral as possible, —of our present being, consciousness, activities and a transmutation of them into divine values which would effect a transfiguration of our human existence. For wherever a radical transition has to be made, there is always this triple movement,—ascent, widening of field and base, integration,—in Nature's method of self-transcendence.
(*The Life Divine*, p. 767-768)
