

## Presidential Address

# THE UNFOLDING SPIRIT IN HEALING

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### ABSTRACT

Healing is about relationship and the human connection of heart felt energy. The spiritual task for healing in this new millennium, is about sharing all of our resources and enhancing all aspects of one another's living—locally, nationally and globally. Working with post-war trauma in Kosovo, Yugoslavia, this author's heart opened to a more expansive and compassionate embrace of the world. Interactions between mind, body and spirit are powerful way in which mental, social and spiritual factors directly affect health. Ken Wilber's integral model of consciousness opens up the modern world view to include not only consciousness but spirit as well. His integral vision includes matter, body, mind, soul and spirit, as they appear in Self, Culture and Nature. Our own inner transformative work will lead the way for the world to cooperate for the good of the one whole. Compassionate connection to ourselves and one another allows for true healing to occur.

**KEYWORDS:** Healing, spirit, compassion, trauma, transformation

**A**lbanian Kosovar refugees fearfully ran to the snow-capped mountains of Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro, running for their lives. Whatever belongings they were able to take along, were thrown into wheel barrels and wagons that were pushed along dirt roads crowded with thousands of other refugees. Some people were lucky enough to drive in cars, but were ordered by guards with machine guns at border towns to stay in their cars without getting out for days. And others were ordered to get on trains, packed so tightly, that people died of suffocation before the trains stopped.

In September, of 1999, in Prestina, Kosovo, on the last day, of our five day intensive training program in Mind-Body-Spirit Medicine, a participant in my 25 hours of small group trauma work told me the following: You made our suffering soften, you gave us hope and love for life and immortality, and all your teachings we will keep in our hearts, and try to spread to others, in order to heal the wounds of our souls.

This middle-aged educator/psychologist was from a region in Kosovo called Suhareka, where hundreds of men, women and children had been slaughtered by Serbian forces. By the time we left Kosovo that September, all ten of us on our team led by Dr. Jim Gordon, felt ourselves members of a connected community of healers, committed to working and learning from one another. We mourned the tragedies that have so deeply affected all the people of Kosovo, as well as celebrated the joy of our work together. We were in Kosovo to teach a group-oriented approach to working with post-war trauma in our Healing the Wounds of War project.

I was horrified, stunned and shocked by their personal stories of pain and suffering. These stories came from 140 Albanian doctors, nurses, psychologists and teachers in the training and our small groups. We also went out into the countryside to the schools near the mass graves, and worked with the children and teachers. We returned in the Spring of last year to do the same work, with further emphasis on how to work with trauma in children. From our materials, these health care professionals are now teaching a variety of self-regulation techniques, and healing the trauma in their own people all around the province.

We were using and teaching mind, body and spirit medicine, coming from a fundamental shift in the philosophy of mental health care. And, we were

working with an alternative way of knowing, knowing that true healing comes from the patients themselves. We just facilitate our natural process of healing, which follows nature's way of integration and healing. Healing is about relationship—it is about holy listening and compassionate connection to the patient. This caring behavior is essentially built into the fabric of humanities' being, and allows for the true healing process to emerge. The adults and children that I worked with were facing their pain. They were expressing it authentically. I just wanted to create a safe enough space for that to happen, so that healing could occur by itself. In just doing that alone, perhaps I was in some small way helping to create an environment in which the conditions that caused the abuse could start to unravel.

Both times, when I left for Pristina, I wanted to participate more fully in the world's process of healing from the war. I knew that to choose one side of the story was not useful, and that I could take both sides and work toward the middle. Both extremes ultimately reflect each other, and our paths as human beings go through the place where good and evil cross. It is pretty obvious, that when we look at the world today, we have more hate than ever before. But at the same time, there is more hope, understanding and desire for peace than ever before.

**T**hese two opposite experiences indicate to me that humanity is growing close to a world of cooperation. Sometimes it is when the world seems farthest away from peace, that it is indeed the closest. I connected deeply to these people and learned the real purpose of suffering—to connect with one another. This situation in the Balkans was really not about religion or politics, it was about the human connection of heartfelt energy, about how we care for one another.

Encountering the kind of evil that was perpetrated in Kosovo has been one of my greatest learning experiences. Truly, the spiritual task for healing in this new millennium is about sharing all of our resources and enhancing all aspects of one another's living—locally, nationally and globally. This kind of work opened my heart to a more expansive, inclusive and compassionate embrace of the world. With a re-commitment on my part to daily prayer and meditation, to knowing who I really am—that radiant aspect of Divine spirit itself, that we all are. That sacred “inner space,” that we go to, that is so necessary for transfor-

mation in the world today. These Kosovars are now using these tools to teach their colleagues and they in turn are using them in schools, hospitals and clinics all over the province. And our outcome data shows that they are healing.

Transitioning from the darker aspects of the world to the lighter, Aurobindo, in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, says that as mind learns to modulate the subtle energies by learning to think, visualize and use intentional volition, eventually the mind can generalize that control to modulate the subtle energies that control cosmic forces.<sup>1</sup> And our scientific studies are indeed revealing this to us, e.g. the prayer and healing-at-a-distance studies.<sup>2,3</sup> To bring about change, we must all go inward and learn the principles of self-regulation for our own healing. Larry Dossey showed us some key pieces of evidence in the evolution of “spiritual medicine,” and the capacity of consciousness to acquire information nonlocally from the world.<sup>4</sup>

**I**n 1959, Teilhard de Chardin said that human evolution could no longer be understood merely as a progression of morphological transformations among hominid species.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the real “spirit” of human evolution resides in the growth and maturation of consciousness into cosmic and spiritual realms. And of course, Ken Wilber’s work opens up the modern world view to include not only consciousness but Spirit as well. He gives us a holistic/integral philosophy for a holistic/integral Cosmos, by integrating for us a model of the evolution of Spirit with ancient, spiritual wisdom to produce a truly postmodern all encompassing spectrum of consciousness.

He emphasizes that science needs to acknowledge the reality and importance of the interior depth of the world of subjectivity, the domain of experience. He gives us a world view that provides for the best of empirical science and the best of religion/spirituality and mysticism. So, for a scientifically inclined mystic like myself, Wilber’s notion of further stages of evolution really excites me!!

Let’s take a brief look at what Wilber is calling “All Quadrants All Levels” of the evolution of consciousness. This work can be found in his *Collected Works Volumes*, as well as in his popular book *A Brief History of Everything*. [See Figure 1].<sup>6,7</sup> His Integral vision attempts to include matter, body, mind, soul and spirit, as they appear in Self, Culture and Nature.

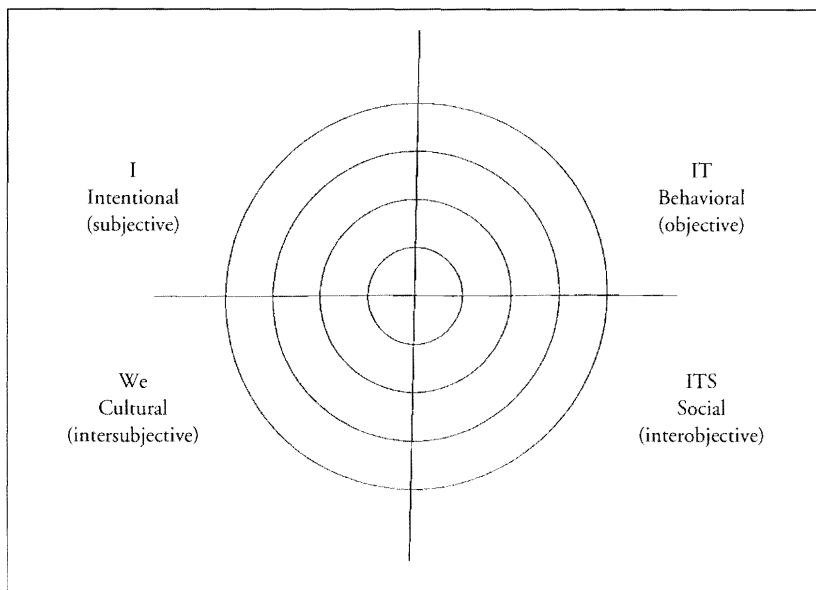
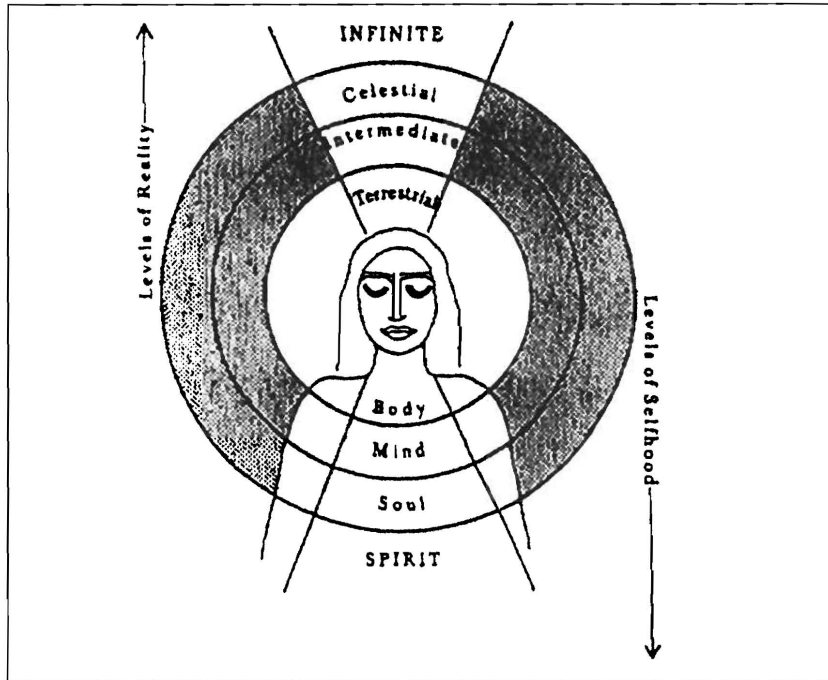


Figure 1. The Great Nest with the Four Quadrants courtesy of Ken Wilber.

These higher stages, move through higher psychic, and even more subtle levels, the subjective streams of consciousness (upper-left quadrant) which are correlated with developments in brain tissue (upper right quadrant), the individual objective which is viewed in a much more empirical, scientific fashion. In the lower left quadrant, we have the collective, cultural settings, communal values and world views, and in the lower right, the inter-objective collective, nature, social systems and environment, all culminating in the realization of Spirit. And each quadrant has waves, streams and types. [See Figure 1 The Great Nest With the Four Quadrants].

In the circles you can see each quadrant has waves, streams and types in a spiraling or fluid effect. This is what I really love about this model. Figure 2 is the great nest of being, and this is well-known to the world's major wisdom traditions. He calls this nested hierarchies or growth hierarchies. Each senior wave enfolds its predecessors, so in this way, each wave becomes more inclusive, more integral and more developmental. This developmental spiral is just all a natural growth process.

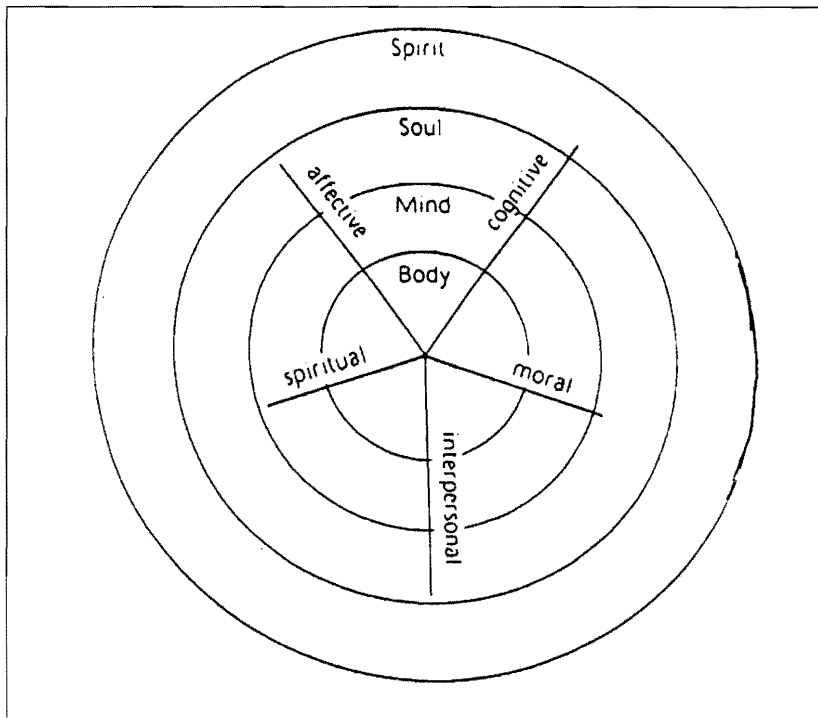


*Figure 2. The Great Nest of Being courtesy of Ken Wilber.*

Here, you see Spirit, and the waves on up from spirit, to soul, mind, and body. Spirit transcends but includes soul which transcends but includes mind, which transcends but includes body, which transcends but includes matter in all of this manifesting of spirit.

In Figure 3 again we can see the four waves of body, mind, soul, and spirit and they transcend and include their predecessors like those nesting Russian dolls. The nests within a nest, this development again is fluid, it is flowing and it's spiral. For example one could be highly developed morally, but could be poorly developed interpersonally.

The quadrants mean essentially that anything can be looked at from four perspectives. We can look at consciousness from the inside or the outside and



*Figure 3. Ken Wilber's Hierarchy of Development courtesy of Ken Wilber.*

in the singular or individual or the plural collective. We try to understand any group of people from sympathetic understanding ( the lower left) or from a more detached, objective view (lower right). When I was in Kosovo this understanding was really helpful to me in looking at the entire picture.

If you look back to Figure 1 on the lower left, it shows the patterns of consciousness shared by those who are in a particular culture. In order to understand each other, communities need at the very least to share linguistics, perceptions and world-views that overlap to some degree. The key idea here is that different societies and cultures, as well as entire nations, are at different levels of psychosocial emergence and the previously awakened states do not disappear. Like Elmer Green, Wilber is fascinated by the fact that the perennial philosophy of the great wisdom traditions across all cultures, for thousands of years, has

reported these higher stages of consciousness, and that they are available to us right now.<sup>8</sup>

**H**owever, he says that the average level of consciousness for societies today, and the human species as a whole, evolves through identifiable stages, even though a particular individual at any time could develop a higher stage of consciousness. So, this is an attempt to provide a framework in which all science behind energy medicine and healing can be accommodated. The framework contains both interior realities (spiritual experiences—subjective realities), and exterior realities. This framework finds room for “matter” from body to soul to spirit, but it plugs those realities into empirical facts in a definite and specific way, which is just what we are all attempting to do with energy medicine.

Ken Wilber’s vision embraces science, art and morals; that equally includes disciplines from physics to spirituality, biology to aesthetics, sociology to contemplative prayer; that shows up in integral politics, integral business, integral spirituality and integral medicine, as well as other branches that he has designated at his recently formed Integral Institute.

I have had the good fortune to have become a member of Ken’s recently formed Integral Institute, the medicine branch. During our first meeting this past year in Boulder, we looked at how this integral vision invites us to be a little more whole, a little less fragmented, in our work, our lives and our destiny. What captured my attention the most, was its relevance in the “real world” of every day life in all cultures of the world. As a group we discussed the ways in which an integral approach to psychological and spiritual transformations can be used in our own lives. So, when Ken asked us about the experiences we had in the past that transformed our former way of being, to one of leading our lives from a more holistic vision, I shared the following story.

Some years ago, my husband, David, and I joined a group of friends on a river rafting trip on the Colorado River, at the beautiful Westwater Canyon. We were all doing our own paddling, and I had a position in the small raft up front. The day was absolutely beautiful, hot and sunny with a clear blue sky. We were enjoying the ease of the beginning part of the river, by talking and connecting with one another and nature. But not paying attention to the river has its consequences! Suddenly, I was hit by a huge wave of whitewater, and



was thrown out of the boat. Well, at first, I thought it was a delightful surprise, because I was hot, so I didn't try to get back on the boat immediately. This was mistake number two! Another minute later, we hit the start of the dangerous, and continually thundering whitewater. Everyone started to be afraid for me. Including my husband who jumped into the water, to attempt to rescue me, because the others could not keep the boat from moving forward at lightening speed. Immediately, the boat person in charge yelled to David to get back on, or they might lose two people! So, David got back on the raft, and seconds later, the raft and my loved ones were out-of-sight, having gone around a bend in the narrow canyon, trying to navigate the swift rapids. And for the next mile or so, I was alone, fighting to keep from drowning in the continuous whirlpools of raging water, being sucked under, over and over again.

**I** was terrified, and tried to think about surviving. I remembered a story, from someone whom I thought was wise at the time, that goes like this: If ever you are caught trying to survive in the rapids of a raging river, just put your feet forward and relax into the situation and you will go around the rocks instead of hitting them. Well, guess what. That didn't work! Trying to "control" surrender obviously isn't surrender! Then I just started praying very hard, but after awhile I knew I just didn't have the strength to come up one more time. At that moment, I knew I was going to die. And you know what? A still small voice said it would be ok to die. And that's when I experienced true surrender, because the last thing I remember was feeling a great peace by not having to struggle anymore. Then, the next thing I felt was the hot sun upon my freezing skin, and solid rock underneath me. I was on a huge boulder, looking over a falls area, a big drop off where the river falls through a chute between two huge boulders. Looking up, all I saw were high, inner canyon, sandstone walls.

At first, I thought how lucky I was. I had managed to get myself up onto this enormous rock, when I had been totally exhausted. And, of course, in the shock of it all, I had just forgotten how I had accomplished this incredible task! But there was no way that I could have gotten up on that huge boulder by myself! Well, it wasn't until much later, that I realized what had happened. Truly, I had been assisted by Divine Grace. I had received a gift of life from a higher intelligence, a deeper mystery in which we are all surrounded and embraced. That experience moved me toward a loss of the

fear of death and a deeper interconnectedness, love and compassion for all beings. A wise man once said, “Die while you are alive, and be absolutely dead. Then do whatever you want because its all good.” When I stopped thinking “I” had some control on the river, and eliminated that “I-ness” from my mind, and joined a higher intelligence, I found the experience of peace. What naturally followed was truth—that life is eternal and all is Spirit.

This amazing experience propelled me into taking a more transpersonal, integral approach to psychotherapy and also into working with death and dying at our clinic. Now, this doesn't mean that my behavior was or is consistently at a certain level. I find myself operating at different levels of maturity and awareness at different times. But I know that I can choose a sustained level of behavior as an on-going learning experience.

**A**nd just six months ago, I was once again, “thrown” into a place of intense suffering—not on a raging river, but within my own heart, attempting to navigate one of those dark nights of the soul. The most important lesson I have learned is what Ken Wilber is pointing to and what is a part of a vision that will very likely transform society. That is the importance of engaging in what Ken calls an integral transformative practice. I started to meditate and pray more intensely, and on a daily basis. The notion is that this will help us to move into those higher stages of transpersonal, spiritual waves—not merely as an altered state, but as a permanent trait.

So, what the world needs to engage in is some form of prayer, contemplative thought or daily meditation for consciousness to evolve. I don't tell my clients or people in my classes to do this anymore so that they will look younger and feel younger. (Actually, I just turned 82!) No, just kidding. But I tell them to do it because it is important for all of us to find out just who it is that believes in all these integral, spiritual notions. And the more I am finding out who I am through deeper meditation, prayer and contemplative thought, the more I allow myself to know who/what God/Spirit is. The very respected Tulku Thondup Rinpoche says “If you want to heal yourself, others or the whole universe, you need to begin with yourself.”<sup>9</sup>

Of course, Elmer Green told us all last year with his impressive vision-dreams, that it isn't magic that's required in the world for transformation, but that it

is consciousness. Recognition by us of the parts of our own nature is what seems to be essential.

So, the future direction of all mystically inclined scientists, and all of you scientifically inclined mystics, is to develop our own inner transformative work, and then apply this in relationship with other researchers and educational communities for this continual bridging of science and spirituality. We need to be truly experiencing connectedness or “oneness” more often, where the universe is one thing, and all parts are cooperating for the good of the one whole, where we can be free of our own personal agendas, and therefore, found by others to be trustworthy. In order to be in alignment with nature, at the highest level of maturity, we need to give priority in our thinking to the connectedness of one another. I have mentioned Mahatma Gandhi many times in my talks, and I want to mention him again. Gandhi believed we were all part of one undivided universe. He believed that we are each the “trustees” of the health, wellness, power and skills that we possess. We are not the “owners” of them. This “trusteeship” that Gandhi proposed, was to be the result of free choice, not mandated by some authority. He believed it could only come into existence as the result of the growth of the individual consciousness into understanding that this was a more conscious way to be in the world. And therefore, it would include our own personal satisfaction as well.

Indeed, evolution has a direction. And with the assistance of divine grace, we will manifest what the spiritual mystics have always taught—that the love of our neighbors world wide must always take precedence over personal agenda and even, the most intimate communion with God. Because that state of consciousness then leads to natural and effortless compassionate behavior.

I would like to conclude with a reading from the Hopi Elders 2001.

To my fellow swimmer—there is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold onto the shore and they may be torn apart and suffer greatly. Know that the river has its destination. The elders say, “We must let go of the shore. Push off into the middle of the river and keep our heads above the water, just keep our heads above the water.” They say, “See who is there with you and celebrate that this time in history we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey

come to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over—gather yourselves. Banish the world struggle from your attitude and even from your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration for we are the ones we have been waiting for.”

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