

Integral Ecology:
A Perspectival, Developmental, and Coordinating Approach
to Environmental Problems

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Integral Ecology (IE) attempts to develop effective solutions to environmental problems by identifying and coordinating interpretations of those problems, interpretations that are generated according to the best practices at work in the most inclusive set of perspectives. IE assumes that competent practitioners working within a given perspective are capable of producing truth-claims that are valid within the perimeters of those perspectives. Such truth-claims must be taken into account in order to arrive at the most comprehensive understanding of any complex situation, including many environmental problems. IE operates from the assumption that every significant perspective has some share of truth. Unlike contemporary multiculturalism, however, IE asserts that some perspectives are better than others, in the sense of being more inclusive or comprehensive.

IE has emerged at this historical moment for several reasons, one of the most important being the increasing acceptance of perspectivalism, which asserts that valid truth-claims about a phenomenon can be made from many different perspectives, and that no single methodology, paradigm, or hermeneutic practice provides an all-inclusive interpretation of any phenomenon. Perspectivalism, a crucial aspect of postmodernism, challenges modernity's reductionist supposition that natural science (or in some cases, social science) can provide a complete analysis of any phenomenon. Perspectivalism emphasizes that far from being a passive mirror of nature, mind influences and alters how phenomena manifest themselves. In providing maps of various domains of reality, modern scientists have often neglected to take into account the influence of the mapmakers, that is, they themselves.¹ Postmodernism highlights the role the interpreter plays in generating descriptions and analyses of various phenomena.

Not long ago, environmentalists usually interpreted an environmental problem primarily from the point of view of their own particular interests, research strengths, or organizational perspective. An environmental economist, for example, would argue that a problem (e.g., anthropogenic air pollution) results from a market failure that could be cured by instituting appropriate economic incentives and disincentives. More recently, however, people concerned about environmental problems have recognized that their own particular perspectives need to be supplemented by insights drawn from other perspectives. The growing interest in enlisting multiple perspectives and methodologies to identify, describe, and solve environmental problems

reflects an analogous trend in the academic world, where interdisciplinarity has become all the rage. IE offers an insightful theoretical framework—Integral Theory—to define, categorize, and coordinate the multitude of perspectives needed to disclose and to resolve that IE uses environmental problems.

Insofar as it subscribes to and utilizes this framework, IE may be defined as a kind of “integral operating system” (IOS), that is, a specific set of practices aimed to insuring that as many possible perspectives are brought to bear on and taken into account in connection with identifying and solving environmental problems. The IOS does not generate new data or hypotheses about phenomena, but instead marshals and coordinates the data and hypotheses generated by competent practitioners in many different disciplines, fields, and social and cultural domains. The IOS, then, involves the social practice of integral methodological pluralism. This meta-practice presupposes that the practitioner is capable of appreciating the disclosive power of many different perspectives, while also giving greater weight to perspectives that are more comprehensive and inclusive.

In his introductory essay to this volume, Sean Hargens has described the Integral Theory’s AQAL--“all quadrants, all levels [or waves]. all lines, all states”—method for analyzing holons. In what follows, I will further elucidate IE by focusing on how the quadrants correspond to four traditional academic domains with which most readers are already familiar: fine arts, humanities, natural science, and social [and systemic natural] science. Then, I will shed light on how one particular developmental line—value—unfolds in waves or levels. I will do so by discussing how different individuals and groups disclose, encounter, and use the forest as depicted in The Two Towers, the second volume of J.R.R. Tolkien’s great trilogy, The Lord of the Rings. I will then offer a contemporary example of how a forest is viewed by people whose perspective is shaped by the wave of the value line at which they experience and evaluate the forest. I conclude with some general remarks about the prospects for widespread acceptance of IE.

The Quadrants, the Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Environmental Problems

The quadrants—individual interior (UL), exterior behavioral (UR), collective interior (LL), and collective or systemic behavioral (LR)—refer to the major perspectives that one must employ in order to gain an adequate understanding of any holon, whether individual or social. The quadrant perspectives correspond generally to the four ways in which universities divide research methodologies (that is, truth-claim generating practices or paradigms): fine arts (UL), humanities (LL), natural sciences (UR), and social and systemic natural sciences (LR).² Please note that there are important methods of knowing and modes of experience, for example, shamanic rituals, tantric practices, meditation, and everyday life practices that are not included in typical university course-offerings!

That such methods and experiential modes are in fact excluded from the university curriculum should remind us of that for more than a century, representatives from the UR and LR quadrants have effectively excluded the UL and LL quadrants—arts and humanities—from the field of methodologies capable of generating legitimate truth-claims. Natural scientists, especially those in the “hard” sciences such as physics and chemistry, are even suspicious about the status of knowledge-claims developed by field biologists and social scientists. IE, seeking to overcome such unjustifiable exclusion or marginalization, insists not only that valid truth-claims can be generated in all four quadrants, but also that no one operating from one quadrant’s methodology is in a legitimate position to evaluate (negatively or positively) truth claims made by someone operating from the methodology belonging to another quadrant. By using the methods suitable for doing sub-atomic particles, then, a physicist cannot criticize assertions made by someone in the humanities—literary theorist, theologian, environmental ethicist—who is competent in utilizing the paradigms and practices of his or her own field. IE respects insights and corresponding truth-claims generated in all quadrants, all levels, all lines, but resists quadrant absolutism. By respecting and integrating truth-claims generated in all quadrants, IE attempts to overcome long-standing and problematic dualisms, for example, between mind and body, culture and society, consciousness (mind) and brain (body), spirituality and science, subjective and objective.

Because the natural sciences are often given pride of place, let us start instead with the fields that are usually lowest on the academic totem pole: The fine and performance arts, such as painting, sculpting, photography, theater, dance, poetry, literature, film, and music, as well as art appreciation courses. All of these correspond in one way or another to the UL quadrant, which refers to the subjective, internal, or interior experience of individuals. There are many definitions of art production and appreciation, but production and appreciation of art works involve individual feelings, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, visions, ecstatic states, and so on. Also located in the UL quadrant are humanities courses that examine the truth-claims made by thinkers --ranging from Guatama Buddha to Sigmund Freud--who have analyzed the character and structure of first-person experience. First-person truth-claims are not properly evaluated in terms of criteria such as “correspondence” or “representation,” which are pertinent to UR truth-claims, but instead are evaluated in terms of truthfulness, sincerity, integrity, and trustworthiness.

To ascertain the character and consequences of environmental problems, IE must take into account the experiences generated by works of art that plausibly pertain to or give voice to such problems. Likewise, IE must encourage researchers to solicit first-person accounts from people affected by or concerned about environmental problems. Hearing the fear, anger, and suffering of people whose health, families, livelihood, or way of life is (or may be) harmed by environmentally destructive practices can have a profound effect on how one evaluates such

practices. Finally, and this is particularly challenging for those wedded to anthropocentrism, IE must also call on people to reconstruct—using imagination or empathic resonance which in its most radical expression could include altered states--the experience of non-human organisms affected by environmental problems. If the point of view of non-human life forms were seriously taken into account, extinguishing a species or slaying countless plants and animals would require a much higher level of justification than is currently required by most environmental impact statements.

The LL (cultural) quadrant is home for the humanities, which include philosophy, religious studies, theology, languages, literature, and some aspects of history and anthropology, all of which examine and critically evaluate the intersubjective experiences, ideologies, belief systems, and cultural norms and values of cultures. Academics working in this quadrants tend to examine cultural phenomena from a third-person point of view, but Integral Theory reminds us that everyone—including the professor--exists within a complex of cultural beliefs, attitudes, norms, and interpretative categories that structure the interior or hermeneutic domain of society. The humanistic measure for the validity of truth-claims made by people in such domains often concerns cultural fit, mutual understanding, rightness, or justness. Such criteria are difficult to define and to agree upon, which is one reason for the contentious quality of the history of philosophy, ethics, religion, political theory, and so on.

For IE, the fact that different cultures have different views about what is just, right, and fitting must be taken into account when attempting to describe what exactly the environmental “problem” is. What manifests itself as a problem that ought to be dealt with differs from one culture to another. If IE’s developmental interpretation of culture is valid, predictions can be made retroactively about the values and norms of cultures (and individuals) at different waves of various developmental lines. Spiral Dynamics focuses on a particular line, which it calls value-memes, or vMememes, each of which is assigned a different color. A **blue** culture, one that emphasizes hierarchy, authority, tradition, and absolute values, for instance, will usually have a far more reverential and respectful attitude toward natural phenomena (e.g., insofar as they as creatures of God) than does an agnostic or atheistic **orange** culture, which depicts humankind as the source of value and which regards nature merely as raw material for serving human needs. As used in both Spiral Dynamics and Integral Theory, vMememes have a broader valence than value defined strictly as moral or ethical code. Indeed, vMememes refer to a rather broad, though interrelated set of disclosive capacities, which are organized according to a particular wave or level of value. Hence, the vMeme developmental line is a rather rich, complex, and informative way of examining the developmental wave of individuals and their cultures.

Moving to the LR (systems) quadrant, we encounter the social sciences, including economics, sociology, political science, history, and anthropology, as well as in systemic natural

sciences such as ecosystem biology. Examining social and systemic phenomena from a third-person perspective, social scientists attempt to generate knowledge-claims that enable them to make predictions about the publicly observable behavior of social groups. Marx's idea that the economic and technological base determines the cultural and personal superstructure has proven to be a powerful presupposition for social science. Marx's point is that individual behavior is largely a function of social roles determined by socio-economic factors, which in turn are profoundly influenced by technological innovation. For example, thousands of years ago the introduction of techniques for large-scale agriculture gave rise to urban life, which made possible a host of social roles unavailable to horticultural and gatherer-hunter societies. Just as the invention of steam power paved the way for industrialization and its attendant social upheaval, so too the digital revolution will redefine human possibilities in ways that cannot even be foreseen. Individual behavior may vary, but only within the perimeters lay down by overriding social, political, and economic structures. Just so, many ecosystem biologists maintain that individual organisms are primarily functions of their species, which in turn are shaped in part by the prevailing environmental circumstances. Hence, habitat protection—not protection of individual organisms—is high on the list of many environmental activists, whose views are largely shaped by ecosystem biology. Climatologists and others who examine large-scale systemic phenomena also conclude that their methods provide valid insights.

Despite the power of social structural analysis, IE insists that such analysis in and of itself cannot provide an adequate description of or resolution to environmental problems. According to Integral Theory, all quadrants arise together or "tetra-evolve" in intertwined and highly complex ways. After all, particular individuals—not social structures—developed technological innovations. Moreover, technological innovations may not be able dramatically to alter social structure if powerful social and cultural factors succeed in resisting their dissemination.

Finally, we come to the UR (behavioral, material) quadrant, which includes most of the natural sciences, ranging from physics to neurophysiology. These disciplines focus on analyzing and developing predictive capability with regard to the behavior of individual phenomena, ranging from quasars and molecules, to cells and organisms. Because of the astonishing predictive power and technological innovations associated with natural science, many of its practitioners concluded that only truth claims generated by natural scientific method were "really" true. Other truth claims, such as those made by individuals about their subjective experience or cultures about their values, were depicted as little better than emotive and thus non-rational utterances.

The counterculture of the 1960s refused to countenance this exclusion of truth claims from experiential and knowledge-producing claims apart from the natural and social sciences. Postmodern deconstruction was largely inspired by the counter-cultural revolt of the 1960s, and

was philosophically informed by thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida, and Foucault. Among many other things, postmodernism sought to level the truth-claim playing field by asserting that there is no one true way of seeing things; that different perspectives disclose things in different ways; and that some white European males had used natural science and the ideology of progress to justify exploitation of non-white, female, and Third World peoples. Seeking to halt the hegemonic drive of the natural sciences and its attendant globe-dominating technology, deconstructive postmodernists began aligning themselves with environmentalists who likewise criticized the modern megamachine. Environmentalists soon discovered, however, that postmodernism undermined not only the foundations of Western capitalism and science, including systems science, but also the foundations of environmentalism itself, which often called upon natural science to buttress politically influential and publicly appealing claims about the integrity, harmony, and balance of nature. For postmodernists, all too many environmentalists depicted "nature" as an ultimate source, origin, or—gasp—foundation, whereas in fact nature is a social and cultural construct, not a "thing in itself" to which individuals and groups have privileged access.

Although affirming postmodernism's deconstruction of natural science's belief that only science can generate valid truth claims, IE resists postmodernism's problematic denial of all hierarchy in connection with truth claims. When some postmodernists maintain that one perspective is as good as any other, that natural science methodology is simply a different (not a superior) version of many different poetic language games, and that all hierarchy involves domination and repression, the consequence is a dramatic levelling that generates what Wilber has called "flatland." In fact, however, although postmodernists are loath to admit the following, the perspective offered by postmodern perspectivalism and multiculturalism is more inclusive than—and hence superior to--the perspective offered by modernity. In denying the superiority of their own perspective, postmodernists end up in a performative contradiction. IE resolves this contradiction by reinstating the reality and importance of holarchy: some truth claims are better—more inclusive, more comprehensive, more insightful, more generative—than others. In the case of the natural sciences, IE affirms that truth claims arising in this domain must be taken very seriously when it comes to describing environmental problems. Natural science is not a kind of poetry, because science and poetry involve very different methodologies. Nevertheless, natural scientific truth claims must not be allowed to trump or to exclude truth claims generated by competent practitioners in other domains.

The Two Towers, the Forest, and the Waves of vMemos

In addition to analyzing holons according to the perspectives afforded by the quadrants, IE also examines holons in terms of various developmental lines, which unfold temporally in waves or levels. Following the work of Clare Graves and Don Beck, who developed Spiral

Dynamics, Wilber indicates that the developmental value line unfolds as a spiral vortex.³ The spiral symbolizes both the complexifying trends of cultural and personal development, as well as the oscillation that occurs between the poles of individualism and community as the developmental waves unfold. As **beige** emphasizes individual survival, **purple** emphasizes cultural conformity as tribalism; as **red** represents egotistical self-assertion, **blue** represents the rule of transcendent law and a corresponding code of social conduct binding on everyone; as **orange** represents the autonomy of the individual rational agent, **green** represents the consensus building practices of multicultural postmoderns. Those who ride the second tier waves, such as **yellow** and **turquoise**, no longer identify exclusively with any of the earlier perspectives, but instead appreciate the value of the truth claims made by people in each of the earlier waves.

Wilber and constructive critics such as Mark Edwards point out that the color-coded vMemes focus on only one or two of the many developmental lines at work in cultures and individuals.⁴ A culture whose center of gravity is the **orange** vMeme is governed by a worldcentric moral and political scheme that is more inclusive and to that extent more evolved than cultures dominated by the ethnocentric **purple**, **red**, and **blue** vMemes. We should, however, avoid supposing that a predominantly **orange** culture is in all respects more evolved than cultures where the ethnocentric **purple**, **red**, and **blue** predominate. A **purple** or a **blue** culture, for example, may in fact exhibit greater development in certain other lines, just as a person highly advanced in spiritual development may be less advanced or integrated in the psycho-sexual domain than some people without comparable spiritual development. Moreover, as Wilber, Edwards, and others have indicated, we ought not to assume that contemporary indigenous cultures—whether or not they have the trappings of “tribal” societies—are developmental identical with human tribes from thousands of years ago. All humans, including indigenous peoples, have continued evolutionary development, no matter what the vMeme center of gravity of any particular contemporary society may be. Indeed, some indigenous people may not have evolved to the **orange** wave, but they may have developed capacities for community and for relating to non-human nature that exceed development of such capacities in **orange** cultures. Modern **orange** and **green** cultures may well have important things to learn from indigenous peoples. The challenge is to entertain and to adopt such lessons without regressing to less inclusive, pre-modern socio-cultural formations. Everything is more complex than we would like it to be! This is one reason that Whitehead said: Seek simplicity, and learn to mistrust it.

In what follows, I elucidate the developmental model by analyzing an influential work of fiction, J. R. R. Tolkien’s The Two Towers.⁵ In this second volume of his trilogy, The Lord of the Rings, Tolkien indicates that the forests of Middle Earth manifest themselves and are thus valued

quite differently by different individuals and groups. Because Tolkien's book does not employ the conceptual distinctions used by Beck or Wilber, my attempt to interpret in terms of such distinctions will enjoy limited success. Nevertheless, I believe that it is plausible to read the characters and cultures in The Two Towers as exhibiting at least four intertwined developmental waves-- **beige**, **purple**, **red**, and **blue**. For those readers who ride the **orange** and **green** waves, The Lord of the Rings is so compelling in part because it enables such readers (and viewers, for the film version) to recall their own experience of and to feel nostalgia for and connection with earlier waves of consciousness and culture.

According to Integral Theory, someone at a particular wave of personal and cultural development will disclose things according to fairly predictable categories (although there are many superficial differences between cultures at the same wave level) and will evaluate those things according to predictable norms (although again, there are differences in such norms across cultures whose center of gravity is at a particular wave or level). It should be emphasized here that vMemos do not evolve in a vacuum, but instead are in part elicited and sustained by particular social and material contexts. A particular wave of the unfolding value-line opens up a world space that allows things to reveal only certain aspects of themselves. Other aspects can be manifest only within a more inclusive and hence more complex world space. For instance, someone at the **purple** wave of value development will belong to a highly ethnocentric tribe that not only discloses forests as alive and ensouled, but also as filled with gnomes, demons, ghouls, fairies, and other powers. A person riding **red** will seek either to neutralize such magical beings, or else to enlist them in his power-seeking schemes. Someone at the **blue** wave, however, will interpret those "magical" beings as subservient and inferior to a transcendental Divinity or Principle, or will dismiss them altogether as the products of fantasy and imagination. The **orange** wave attempts to carry such demythologizing to its logical conclusion, by denying all supernatural phenomena, including God, and by introducing an interlocking order of science, technology, and economy that discloses the forest primarily as a resource. Nevertheless, mythic concepts frequently continue to influence **orange** individuals and cultures.

All cultures and individuals include the survival instincts represented by **beige**, but **purple**, **red**, and **blue** introduce new ways of promoting and evaluating such survival. Someone at the **blue** wave might, for example, might regard mere survival as worthless, if purchased at the price of betraying allegiance to his or her society and its Higher Power. In The Two Towers, **beige** is represented by the Ents, ancient forest shepherds, who are "made of the bones of the earth" and who can "split stone like the roots of trees, only quicker, far quicker, if [their] minds are aroused." (113) Having taken their role as forest guardians so seriously that they have adopted the shapes of trees, Ents represent the wisdom of the survival instinct, which can marshal enormous power against external threats. As Treebeard remarks:

We Ents do not like being roused; and we never are roused unless it is clear to us that our trees and our lives are in great danger. That has not happened in this Forest since the wars of Sauron and the Men of the Sea. It is the orc-work, the wanton hewing—rárurum—without even the bad excuse of feeding the fires, that has so angered us....⁶

The last march of the Ents culminates when they take revenge upon and destroy Saruman's stronghold at Isengard, beneath which lies an enormous underground—hence, diabolical-- factory for producing war machinery. Much of the great forest had been annihilated to fuel the engines of war. Although the land around Isengard's walls was still being tilled by Saruman's slaves,

most of the valley had become a wilderness of weeds and thorns. [...] No trees were there; but among the rank grasses could still be seen the burned and axe-hewn stumps of ancient groves. It was a sad country, silent now but for the stony noise of quick waters. [...]

Once [the vast and shallow plain] had been green and filled with avenues, and groves of fruitful trees, watered by streams that flowed from the mountains to a lake. But no green thing grew there in the latter days of Saruman. The roads were paved with stone-flags, dark and hard; and beside their borders instead of trees there marched long lines of pillars, some of marble, some of copper and of iron, joined by heavy chains.⁷

The Ents are fading away in partly because the **purple** wave, which discloses them as one of many different animistic forces, is being eclipsed by **red** and **blue**, for which such phenomena have a more tenuous ontological status. The elegiac dimension of Tolkien's depiction of the Ents is discernible in the following episode. Upon noticing the Ents marching through the forest, the human king Théoden asks Gandalf, the good wizard, who they are.

'They are the shepherds of the trees,' answered Gandalf. 'Is it so long since you listened to tales by the fireside? There are children in your land who, out of the twisted threads of story, could pick the answer to your question. [...]

The king was silent. 'Ents!' he said at length. 'Out of the shadows of legend I begin a little to understand the marvel of the trees, I think. I have lived to see strange days. Long we have tended our beasts and our fields, built our houses, wrought our tools, or ridden away to help in the wars of Minas Tirith. And that we called the life of Men, the way of the world. We cared little for what lay beyond the borders of our land. Songs we have that tell of these things, but we are forgetting them, teaching them only to

children, as a careless custom. And now the songs have come down among us out of strange places, and walk visible under the Sun.’⁸ (197)

Since its publication, Tolkien’s trilogy has attained near-cult status, because it coincides both with widespread nostalgia among riders of the **orange** and **green** waves for simpler times and earlier waves, and more recently with revulsion against practices such as clear-cutting ancient forests and exterminating wild species. Strongly reactivating their **beige** and **purple** and even **red** waves, some **greens** see their own survival as bound up with the survival not only of the ancient forests, but of the tribal peoples for whom the forests are an ensouled home.⁹ In contemporary environmental discourse, the Ents represent a double return of the repressed. On the one hand, they may be interpreted as nature taking revenge upon its human tormentors. Today, an angry environmentalist might imagine that the work of the Ents could be accomplished by an upsurge of deadly viruses, which might annihilate humankind, thereby purging the planet of the life form currently plaguing it. On the other hand, the Ents may be read as modes of human awareness that **blue** and **orange** have repressed and even dissociated to such an extent that humankind is insensitive to the pain that it is inflicting upon non-human living nature. Some argue that only by reactivating these waves can humankind disclose living nature in a way that would automatically temper our treatment of it. Those who seek to reactivate **being** and **purple**, while canceling out **blue** and **orange**, however, risk inviting a regression to **purple** tribalism and perhaps **red** power-thirsty narcissism, which--if armed with modern weapons and technologies-- could kindle a violent ecofascism that sacrifices individuals to the needs of the natural whole.

In The Two Towers, the cultures of Hobbits, Elves, and Humans are primarily characterized by **blue**, with residues of **purple** and **red**. In some respects, the Orcs—deformed Elves, perhaps even sub-elfish--seem to ride the **purple** wave. Orcs regressed to a tribal mode of awareness dominated by terms Wilber uses to describe **purple**: “voodoo-like curses, blood oaths, ancient grudges, good-luck charms... and superstitions.”¹⁰ For Orcs, the forests are filled with magical forces that both terrify and enchant. Incited by their dark leaders who promise protection from the magical protectors of the forest, Orcs are willing to cut down the trees. The Orcs are readily seduced by those who wield magical (and thus immortalizing) power: the wizard Saruman of Isengard and his ally the Dark Lord, Sauron of Mordor, both of whom have reactivated the **red** wave. Typically, the **purple** wave evolves toward **red** when strong, power-craving individuals take into themselves some of the magical power and importance once accorded to the human community and to the forest (or fields or sea or animals). But not all magic is left behind. As Wilber puts it, **red** represents the emergence of power gods:

First emergence of a self distinct from the tribe; powerful, impulsive, egocentric, heroic. Magical-mythic spirits, dragons, beasts, and powerful

people. Archetypal gods and goddesses, powerful beings, forces to be reckoned with, both good and bad. Feudal lords protect underlings in exchange for obedience and labor. The basis of feudal empires—power and glory. The world is a jungle of threats and predators. Conquers, out-foxes, and dominates; enjoys self to the fullest without regret or remorse. Be here now.¹¹

Elements of strongly individualistic **red** are found in some leading human characters, which must struggle against the temptation to seize the Ring of power carried by Frodo. Humans and Elves, however, primarily ride the **blue** wave, which emphasizes social conformity and solidarity, while curbing excessive displays of individuality. Although Elfish institutions are not evidently **orange**, in some respects the Elves exhibit a highly developed individuality and technological knowledge that is in some respects **orange**, and have plainly explored psychic states of consciousness. In contrast, Sauron and Saruman represent the **red** wave, characterized by egocentric and individualistic impulsiveness and by a power-thirst that claims its own rapacious desire in defiance of all collective norms. They will let nothing stand in the way of seizing the Ring, thereby solidifying forever their domination of Middle Earth. When asked who Saruman is, Treebeard replies that he is a wizard:

'More than that I cannot say. I do not know the history of wizards [...]

Saruman was reckoned great among them, I believe. [...]

'I think that I now understand what he is up to. He is plotting to become a Power. He has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except insofar as they serve him for the moment. And now it is clear that he is a black traitor.¹² (95-96)

At one time, Saruman was perceived as caring for living beings, but turned against them when he began operating riding the **red** wave. Presumably raised within the context of the **blue** wave, Saruman would have at least been respectful of the forests insofar as they served the well being of elves, Humans, and other such inhabitants of Middle Earth. **Blue** reasserts the power of the community over the rebellious and egotistical individual, and affirms that life has meaning and purpose determined by the transcendent Higher Order. The Higher Order requires submission to a rigorous and strict code of conduct, adherence to which promises eternal bliss and defiance of which promises eternal punishment. **Blue** conformity is the basis for ancient nation-states dependent on agriculture. For those riding **blue**, the forest has status as a living creature of the Higher Order. Although trees may be felled to further the needs of the community, the people must acknowledge the destruction caused by such practices. Failure to respect the inherent limits imposed on humankind invites nemesis, Divine punishment for hubris. "Had God wanted us to fly," intones **blue**, "He would have given us wings."

During his predominantly **blue** phase, Saruman explored waves of consciousness beyond what was available to many Middle Earth inhabitants, including Hobbits and Men. In experiencing **turquoise** states, Saruman acquired paranormal powers. Teachers in all traditional spiritual traditions take for granted that such powers emerge in connection with spiritual practice, but those teachers also warn against being seduced by those powers. In using psychic powers, one may become a sorcerer. This transformation not only blocks the path to spiritual development, however, but often reignites regressive egoistic and narcissistic power cravings. Having re-identified himself with these **red** cravings, and armed with paranormal power as well as with technological knowledge, Saruman was regarded as a dangerous traitor by all who had once depended on him to serve the larger **blue** community, and by the **beige** Ents who at one time had not regarded him as an enemy of the forests.

To the **red** individual and the collective he leads, the forest may continue to reveal itself as animated by magical forces, but **red** individuals seek allegiances with some of those forces in order to hold the others in check. Moreover, a wizard like Saruman can defeat such magical forces with his own superior paranormal powers. In his lust for power, he treats the forest trees as nothing but fuel for heating the cauldrons needed to forge the engines of war. For those operating at the **purple** wave, **red** individuals seem extraordinarily advanced: self-assertive, independent, and capable of envisioning a future and commanding others to help realize it. Those riding the **red** wave concentrate efforts are concentrated on increasing their own power and status as leaders, with whom the tribal collective identifies.

Saruman's destruction of the forest for the sake of enhancing his own power has often been read as an allegory about how rational-industrial civilization reveals the forest as nothing but raw material for consumption, and for constructing fiendish machines of war. A hint of the rational-technological **orange** is discernible in Sauron's practices, but missing altogether is **orange's** celebration of universal liberty, equality, and material improvement. Saruman, then, clearly represents not the **orange** wave of modernity, but rather the premodern **red** wave, in which tyrannical individuals disclose everyone and everything as grist for their mills of personal domination.

Tolkien resisted attempts to read The Lord of the Rings as an allegory about World War II. An author's interpretation of his or her own work ought to be respected, but other interpretations are certainly possible. Consider, for example, the name of Saruman's realm, Isengard. "Isen" is very close to the German word for iron (Eisen), while "Gard" is German for guard. Isengard, then, is the iron-guard or the stronghold of iron. It does not take much imagination to connect the fire-belching furnaces of Isengard with German heavy industry in the Ruhr valley, where Krupp and other manufacturers constructed Hitler's war machinery. At least in the European theater, World War Two was a battle between a **blue** culture reverting to **red**,

Nazi Germany, and **orange** societies tinged with **blue**, the Allies. Pre-war Germany had some elements of **orange**, which was at work in the highly active communists and in the liberal democrats who backed the ill-fated Weimar Republic. Under tremendous economic and social pressure, however, Germany regressed toward **red** and even **purple** under Hitler's leadership. Historian Jeffrey Herf has described National Socialism as "reactionary modernism," insofar as it involved a premodern social formation run by a charismatic leader depicting himself as a world-savior, and endowed with high-tech military and industrial capacities. While summoning ancient tribal gods such as Wotan, Nazi leaders used Messerschmitts and tanks to overrun Poland on their way to the Soviet Union. In some ways, Saruman may represent another charismatic leader engaged in a movement renouncing the developmental wave that he had previously attained. Saruman was renouncing **blue** and had only limited experience with **orange**, no institutions of which existed in Middle Earth. Hitler knew first-hand about **orange** values, history, and institutions, however, in the form of such French Revolution, English and American democracy, and the Weimar Republic, which he personally attempted to put to the sword.

Despite the fact that there are important analogies between the titanic struggles between good and evil in World War Two and in The Lord of the Rings, the fact that the vMeme center of gravity for characters and cultures in Tolkien's trilogy is **blue** makes it difficult to interpret the trilogy as an allegory of our own era, which is predominantly **orange** with significant dimensions of **green** and **blue**, and some **red**. Against **blue** social conformity and herd-mentality based on belief in an unseen, otherworldly Higher Order, individuals riding the **orange** wave re-assert the centrality of the individual, only this time not as impulsive **red**, but rather as rational, autonomous, and self-authoring. self-grounding rational agents, who interpret the forest as a material phenomenon generated by time according to natural laws that reason can first understand and later be subsumed to human purposes. For **orange**, the forest manifests itself merely instrumentally, as board-feet of timber, the value of which emerges only after human labor has cut and fashioned the trees into a commodity fit for sale in the market. **Orange** disenchants the world, thereby revealing it solely as a goal-less complex of matter-energy that humans have every right to utilize in whatever ways increase individual and/or social power, security, and pleasure. Magic, myth, and religion vanish into technology, science, and rationality.

Seeking to reassert the importance of the community in the face of **orange** individuality, and attempting to be inclusive in the face of perceived **orange** exclusivity, **green** rejects the notion of individual and social "development" as an **orange**-led effort to justify the oppression of allegedly lower human cultures and non-human life forms. In attempting to avoid hierarchical rankings, **green** must conclude that all cultures are equally valid, and that there are no significant differences among various life forms. By ignoring evidence indicating that cultural and

biological evolution have generated more complex and arguably more valuable phenomena, such as misguided egalitarianism eliminates any basis for making difficult decisions. In effect, the flatland **green** worldview reflects the one-dimensional ontology of modern natural science, which attempts to reduce all phenomena to variations of matter-energy. Moreover, **green** egalitarianism engages in a performative contradiction, insofar as it pretends to be non-hierarchical, but plainly regards the **green** perspective as superior to **blue**, **orange**, and **yellow**, all of which it despises. Despite its noble intentions and important achievements, e.g., in promoting the idea that all perspectives deserve to be heard, and that there is no one true way of interpreting things, **green** is incapable of appreciating every perspective. **Green** remains too identified with its own perspective. According to Integral Theory, the opportunity for **green** is to move to **yellow**, thereby entering the second tier of vMeme development.

Which wave tells the “truth” about the value of the forest? According to IE, each of them has a valid claim upon truth, although the more comprehensive and inclusive waves have a greater claim on truth. Such greater claims, however, are undermined by the extent to which an allegedly more comprehensive wave, e.g., **orange**, sometimes dissociates itself from or strongly represses earlier waves, e.g., **purple**. **Orange** wave individuals who are competently interpreting phenomena in any quadrant are typically capable of disclosing more than can someone riding the **purple** wave. Insofar as **orange** omits or distorts the valid truth-claims that can be generated by **purple**, however, **orange** discloses phenomena in a partial and even dissociative way. Healthy second wave **yellow** and **turquoise** (and waves beyond) do not engage in dissociation; hence, they are capable of taking seriously the truth claims of every preceding wave.

Evaluating the Forest: A Contemporary Example

We began by examining how the quadrants correspond to the traditional domains in the liberal arts and sciences, and then saw the extent to which the characters and cultures in The Two Towers can be read in terms of Integral Theory’s developmental model. In this final section, let us consider how that developmental model can shed light on an imaginary contemporary ecological problem.¹³ A tropical forest in South America will be clear-cut, if the government grants permission to a logging company that has applied for a permit. We begin with the perspectives of the forest’s flora and fauna, so far as we can imagine them. The forest shows up in innumerable ways for the countless creatures dependent upon its interconnected constituents, some of which may become extinct if clear cutting takes place. Local tribal people may ride the **purple** wave, so that they may perceive the forest as the revered home of ancestral spirits and magical beings that will vanish if the trees are removed. Riding **blue**, however, other indigenous people may interpret the forest as a living whole, elements of which may be used for collective purposes, so long as the tribe pays proper respect to the sacred source of which the forest is a

manifestation or dimension. As Mark Edwards points out, we should avoid viewing interpreting indigenous societies as evolutionary dead ends, because such societies may have evolved further along certain developmental lines than have supposedly “advanced” **orange/green** societies. It is also important to recall that members of indigenous societies may ride **purple, red, blue**, and even **orange** waves in complex combinations. For present purposes, however, I focus on the vMeme center of gravity of various stakeholders in the logging issue.

According to the early modern **blue** perspective of some representatives of the national government, the forest reveals itself as the natural patrimony of a great country, as well as the living creature of the Creator. **Blue-orange** leaders assert that people are of even greater importance, although from the perspective of such leaders, native humans may not be included in the class of “people.” Such leaders may then feel justified in sacrificing the natural patrimony for the benefit of the some people, at the expense of others. From the perspective of the private logging company’s **orange** managers, who are modern and even libertarian in outlook, the forest reveals itself in several ways: as raw material for human purposes, as a source of jobs for loggers, and as potential income for individual shareholders. The world-centric aspect of **orange** requires that those managers take into account all indigenous peoples whose rights may be affected by logging. Profit considerations, however, may well force managers to compromise their own ethical stances—not an unusual event in modern organizations. In the world-space opened up by **green** members of an international environmental NGO, the forest—including flora, fauna, and human inhabitants—manifests itself as a web of inherently valuable phenomena that must be protected from clear-cutting loggers and benighted governments. For the owner of the logging company, who rides an **orange**-tinged **red** wave, the tribal people, government officials, and NGO representatives are irritating obstacles standing in the way of his desire to make a profit by cutting down a bunch of trees that are good for nothing if they’re left standing around in some backwater.

The integral ecologist appreciates that the forest shows up in ALL of these ways, and more. Each way of disclosing the forest makes sense from the perspective of the particular clearing or world-space in question. How might IE adjudicate the difference between the very disparate disclosures of the forest by **purple** and by **orange**? As king Théoden remarked above, we would indeed live in strange days if tribal people, and if we ourselves upon reactivating the **purple** wave, were to disclose Ents or similar “magical” creatures walking around in the forest. What, then, is valid about **purple**’s magic mode of disclosure? That the world is in effect ensouled, that all phenomena are characterized by interiority, which **orange** misguidedly restricts to humans and perhaps to some animals. **Purple** projects onto and perceives in its living environment archetypal psychological contents that seem to have a life of their own. When such projections cease, as when someone evolves toward **blue** and beyond, the archetypal

phenomena fade away: the Ents stop marching and vanish into legend, lore, and myth. Many members of indigenous people in the forest recognize that magical beings celebrated in lore and myth are not “real” in a literal sense. Such myth and lore, however, voice something valid and important about nature and human experience of it. Humans are in fact deeply affiliated with other life forms on Earth, not only in terms of DNA and morphology, but also in terms of an interiority that belongs to all beings, especially life forms. Even though human interiority is highly evolved, we forget or repress at our own peril. the fact of our continuing affiliation with and dependence upon beings that preceded us long ago.

IE makes recommendations that take into account and address the concerns and interests that inform the various perspectives. In this particular case, an integral ecologist might conclude that the best course of action would be limited and ecologically-informed logging that acknowledges: the life forms dependent on a relatively intact forest, the tribal peoples who dwell in the forest, the loggers who make a living from their work, the national leaders whose pride is at stake, the logging company owner who seek to maximize his profits, and greens who have a deep eco-sensibility. Not everyone will be happy with such a solution. Indeed, one can imagine a scenario that calls for an alternative course of action, for example, a total logging ban. To be effective, however, such an alternative would have to address adequately the concerns and interests of those who had counted on logging. Some of the stakeholders in the logging disputes in the Pacific Northwest, greens and timber-cutters alike, have understood that the best solutions are those in which all interests are at least fully heard, even if they cannot always be wholly incorporated into final decisions.

In this essay, I attempt to write from the **turquoise** wave that all Integral Ecologists seek to ride, although I make no pretense to ride this wave at all times. Hence, my perspective is far from all encompassing! In principle, someone at **turquoise** discloses Earth as an incredibly complex, multi-layered, living whole that brings itself to awareness through all its life forms, and self-consciously so through at least human life. Indeed, the Earth in its interrelated complexity may now be generating an interrelated “world soul,” whose traits most people can scarcely imagine. From **turquoise**, the inherently glorious planet Earth points to unmanifest glory, to the divine Nature that gives rise to and sustains all phenomena. Distinguishing between manifest nature and unmanifest Nature, between what some traditions call creatures and God, **turquoise** holds that worshipping manifest or material nature is consistent only with early modes of awareness not yet in touch with unmanifest Spirit, which is both ingredient in and transcendent of the material domain. Whereas pantheism depicts the material world itself as sacred, panentheism—to a version of which I adhere—affirms that the sacred both includes and transcends the material domain. In the most developed modes of human consciousness, material nature reveals itself as a relatively gross level—although still glorious--manifestation of

divine Source. Discerning that all natural beings are in some measure sentient, people riding second-tier seek to manifest compassion for all beings. How best to intercede in human affairs so that well-being is increased while suffering is minimized, not just for humans, but for all beings? This is the question that an integral ecologist must keep before herself or himself, as she or he aspires to an ever more encompassing perspective.

Discerning that all natural beings are in some measure sentient, people riding second-tier seek to manifest compassion for all beings. How best to intercede in human affairs so that well-being is increased while suffering is minimized, not just for humans, but for all beings? To answer this question, we must first understand that very few people ride or even aspire to ride the **turquoise** wave. In the United States, for example, perhaps one fourth of the adult population has begun riding the **green** wave, with the majority still riding **blue** and **orange** waves. Many years from now, when a critical mass of the population has learned to ride **turquoise**, that population will found institutions, develop practices, and establish rules that will govern the behavior of other members of the culture. At that point, currently accepted activities—such as habitat destruction for short-term economic gain—will no longer be acceptable.

An analogy here is what had to happen in colonial America prior to writing and later adopting the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. As a result of lengthy and complex social, cultural, and personal practices, a critical mass of the population had become **orange**. At that point representatives of that population could establish institutions and laws that limited the behavior of all adult citizens; no matter what wave they were riding at the time. A newly minted American citizen might have remained a deeply **blue** Protestant, convinced that Catholics, Jews, or atheists should have limited rights, if not be expelled. The U.S. Constitution, however, now the law of the land, forbids such behavior. American citizens may continue to think what they like, but they cannot act on thoughts that violate the Constitution, without risking imprisonment or fines. Likewise, centuries from now, an individual in a **turquoise** governed society may wish to destroy ecologically important habitat for economic gain, but he or she will not be allowed to do so.

In connection with the point I have just made, I wish to address briefly a related issue, namely, that a shift in consciousness, a move up the vMeme scale, say, from **orange** to **green**, does not in and of itself guarantee that one's behavior will always correspond to that level of consciousness. This is so, because consciousness is but one (UL) of at least four dimensions of human social reality. An individual may start to ride **green**, but if s/he lives in cultural and socio-political contexts that are **blue-orange**, he or she will receive no support for behavior that reflects dawning **green** mores and attitudes. Subsequent feelings of isolation, vulnerability, and alienation constitute formidable behaviors to behavior corresponding to the **green** wave.

Environmental activists who **do** manage to align their behavior with the **green** vMeme often experience burnout when, after years of devoted service, they fail to achieve their laudatory goals. The challenge here for such activists is not to become attached to the fruits of their labors, but instead to take the actions that they take solely because they believe that is right to do so, regardless of the outcome. We have very limited control of the consequences of our actions; we have much greater (potential) control over the attitudes that we have about our ideals and the behavior that manifests them. Simply by being true to the **green** wave in one's behavior, a person may create the conditions necessary for someone else to consider riding **green**, but much of the time we are only rarely aware that we happen to have such a constructive influence on others.

Humanity's capacity for understanding what, how, and why things are, makes it possible for there to be an environmental movement at all. The Earth does not give reports about itself; waters do not announce that they are being poisoned; fish do not point out that their numbers are being depleted by voracious fleets; spotted owls don't indicate the loss of their habitat; and inner city playgrounds do not on their own sprout signs indicating that their soil is heavily contaminated with lead. People make such reports and observations, and they do so from particular perspectives. Humankind is one life form among others, a product of evolutionary processes, but humankind also has linguistic, cognitive, and introspective capacities that differentiate its kind from other kinds of beings. Humans--and there may be other kinds with capacities similar to our own elsewhere--may be regarded as the Earth making itself conscious of itself as Earth, a planet that is interdependently involved with the whole cosmos. The wisest from all times and places have regarded language and self-consciousness as mixed blessings. Awareness of our mortality and the burden of morality are difficult to bear. Many environmentalists admire and envy nature forests and seas, rivers and deserts, animals and mountains, precisely for their unself-conscious beauty, complexity, power, and apparent amorality. Many people would like to unburden themselves of the responsibility involved in being conscious moral and historical agents. For them, wild nature often represents the home from which our species sprang and to which many of us at times would like to return. IE emphasizes that we should admire, appreciate, and protect those life forms still ensconced in such a home. But we can't go home again, in the sense of renouncing modern civilization, without surrendering important and valid socio-cultural gains.

IE takes into account the **green** wave, although IE in fact is post-green, because it maintains that some perspectives are superior to others in the sense of being more inclusive. IE, in other words, acknowledges the important insights of multicultural perspectivalism, but avoids the pitfall of assuming that no perspective is better than any other. IE recognizes, however, that criteria for evaluating the relative inclusiveness of perspectives must be arrived at

via dialogue. A **green** perspective is better than those preceding it, precisely because green attempts to give voice to those other perspectives, rather than merely excluding them, but often excludes the dominant perspective. Second-tier waves, however, both include and attempt to develop a holarchical ranking of other perspectives.

Integral ecologists acknowledge, but are not run by their fear, anxiety, and sorrow about what natural splendors may be lost not only by the predatory and ravenous practices of corporations and governments, but also by the everyday practices of tribes people, by small farmers trying to eke out a living, and by large and small scale natural disasters. Integral ecologists have no overall "solution" for environmental problems, but instead seek to tease out multifaceted solutions by approaching problems from many different perspectives. In general, integral ecologists take into account the instrumental, material, social, cultural, epistemological, existential, psychological, and axiological dimensions of humanity's relation to nature and to Nature. Access to all such perspectives is needed to generate appropriate strategies for enhancing the well being of humankind and the living planet on which all life depends.

Unfortunately, the definitions of both "humankind" and "nature" are very diverse and hotly contested. Are humans and the rest of terrestrial life the products of a transcendent Creator? Or is life, including human life, merely the accidental consequence of millions of years of aimless cosmic and terrestrial evolution? Is nature the vast systemic reality that exists quite independently of humankind and its trivial affairs? Or is nature merely a social construction, a complex phenomenal domain disclosed by and involved in myriad human practices? Are humans merely clever animals limited by structural features generated by evolutionary processes, or does complex language and intelligence enable humans to transcend their supposedly "natural" origins by establishing historical domains that must be understood on their own terms? Is nature a totality of material phenomena that humans ought to utilize for increasing their power and security, or is nature the life-generating matrix that humans ought to regard as sacred? Clearly, defining humanity's relation to nature is not an easy affair. IE attempts to contribute to this process, with the aim of preserving and enhancing all life in ways informed by the most inclusive modes of interpretation.

¹ See Ken Wilber, A Brief History of Everything (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), 52-62.

² See Ken Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution, second edition (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), for a comprehensive account of the quadrants.

³ See Don Edward Beck and Christopher E. Cowan, Spiral Dynamics (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Business, 1996).

⁴ See Mark Edwards' excellent essays posted in the Reading Room of The World of Ken Wilber, website, edited by Frank Visser: <http://worldofkenwilber.com>. In particular, see "Integral Sociocultural Studies and Cultural Evolution."

⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien, The Two Towers, Part Two of The Lord of the Rings (New York: Ballantine, 1965).

⁶Ibid., 113.

⁷ Ibid., 202-203.

⁸ Ibid., 197.

⁹ I vividly recall a meeting of environmentalists more than a decade ago when a leading deep ecologist stated tearfully that if the great northwest forests go down, then humanity would go down as well. Even if humanity physically survived the destruction of the ancient forests, he feared that we would lose a crucial aspect of our very being. Put in terms of Spiral Dynamics, the loss would indeed be great if humankind were no longer capable of experiencing profoundly its deep kinship and affiliation with the forest and other natural phenomena.

¹⁰ Wilber, A Theory of Everything, 9.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Tolkien, The Two Towers, 95-96.

¹³ In Wilderness and the American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), Roderick Nash showed how wilderness—including the great North American forests—was perceived differently by settlers riding the **blue**, **orange**, and **green** waves. In The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), Max Oelschlaeger adds the perspectives afforded by the **purple** and **red** waves.