

# The Esoteric Integral

Bruce Lyon

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## Abstract

This paper is Part Two of an exploration into the contribution that the esoteric worldview (as presented primarily through the works of A. A. Bailey) and the integral movement (as presented primarily through the work of Ken Wilber) can make to each other.

Part One (The Integral Esoteric)<sup>1</sup> concerned itself with the value that an integral perspective had when applied to the esoteric communities, their integration with each other and with the wider field of global consciousness. Part two addresses the contribution that the esoteric perspective could make to the integral model and movement.

## Introduction

One of the great advantages that the integral movement has is that it is... well... integral. It is essentially a contribution from the human centre and the fact it has emerged at this time indicates a maturing of Humanity at least in its highest levels as it recognizes, demonstrates and names—in its own language—its divine nature. It does this through the process of self-reflection—examining all the different ways in which the human mind has conceived of itself and its environment, synthesizing different traditions, throwing out superfluous concepts and including the evolutionary impulse itself in its worldview. Human consciousness is becoming aware of itself, the way in which it develops and the ways in which those developments affect further developments. It is also becoming aware of its limitations by realizing its relationship to that which transcends and includes the dualistic faculty of self-reflective consciousness—what we might call the dimension of spirit or monad.

Many of the established spiritual traditions have evolved via the process of revelation. An

individual is ‘inspired’ by a deeper level of awareness and creates a body of teaching, a series of practices and/or the demonstration of a new principle through their life and a new tradition is born. These originating inspirations are like fountainheads from which a lineage flows. In the language of esotericism we would call them secondary revelations<sup>2</sup>—that is, revelations emerging out of the second centre—that of Hierarchy. They possess a spiritual current—a flow of something numinous—that cannot quite be grasped by the words and practices themselves but lies ultimately beyond them. They point towards the unchanging world of being or spirit, while themselves acting as a bridge into the world of forms or becoming. Precisely because they are revealed these traditions tend to be relatively resistant to evolutionary change. They do not ‘grow’ but tend to be supplanted over time. The process of evolution in the world of form works *upon* them but not *within* them.

As Humanity becomes self-aware as a divine centre, it is beginning to make its own conscious contribution to the process of building a philosophical framework for relating the world of becoming and the world of being. And precisely because it is the third centre and expresses the evolutionary spirit of unfoldment—its contribution will have ‘built in’ the capacity to adapt and evolve. We see the third ray at work in the very act of drawing together the best and most useful perspectives of the differ-

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## About the Author

Based in New Zealand, Bruce Lyon is an author and teacher with a particular interest in the founding of modern schools of initiation. His *Agni, Way of Fire*, was reviewed in the Summer 2005 issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*, and his latest book *Working with the Will*, is reviewed in the current issue. For further information see: [www.shamballaschool.org](http://www.shamballaschool.org)

ent traditions and actively *intelligently* integrating them with each other. Humanity is beginning to develop for itself an integrative philosophy that will enable it to continuously refine its understanding and therefore its capacity to authentically and accurately express the 'whole.'

By including the insights of the great spiritual traditions (which are primarily *revealed*) along with the best insights of human intellectual and scientific reasoning and experimentation, (which are primarily *evolved*) the integral movement could be said to be a pivotal strand in the globally emerging bridge between the worlds of Humanity and Hierarchy. It spans religion and science through the realm of the abstract mind and is making its integrative presence felt in the worlds of mainstream thought as well as in the realms of metaphysical inquiry.

In general the movement comes under two types of critique. On the one hand it is said to be 'overly intellectual' and pandering to the status quo world of scientific research and academia. On the other hand it is said to be too inclusive of metaphysical dimensions that are unproven and subjective. Taken together these criticisms can be seen as the necessary tension between the two pillars of the 'bridge' and come with the territory. In hindsight we may discover that the emergence of the integral movement with both its integrating and evolutionary potential marks a critical stage in the development of consciousness on the planet and the seed for an integrated planetary personality capable of merging with the planetary soul.

The esoteric worldview is—by definition—focused on the view from the second planetary centre or Hierarchy that is precipitating into human consciousness. The integral worldview is focused upon that portion of the esoteric worldview that is useful and can be applied *now* by the human centre. In drawing from the esoteric traditions, integral humanity will exclude both those portions that are outdated and no longer serve the current evolutionary imperative as well as those portions which are not yet ready to be included and belong in the future. The esoteric community can support the

integral movement therefore both by serving as an energetic reservoir of ideas and by continuing to refine the core concepts of esotericism so that they will be useful when needed. Let us examine a couple of these.

## Astrology

Astrology is an example of both the best and worst of the esoteric offerings. Ironically as a third ray 'science' it is ultimately resonant with the third centre, Humanity, but requires a major evolutionary updating to be useful. The Tibetan laid the framework for this updating in his book *Esoteric Astrology* but the renaissance lies ahead. To date the integral movement has rejected the inclusion of astrology for a number of reasons. Among them would be the many unreasonable and unscientific claims and uses of astrology that foster the very glimmers and illusions that the integral perspective is trying to get above. Astrology however is as intimately intertwined with the evolution of the human psyche as sexuality is and while its exclusion from any unifying philosophical model might be expedient in the short term it is just too 'integral' to leave behind.

Here are some reasons for that assertion.

The twelvefold archetype: From the petals of the causal and heart chakras to the twelve disciples to the twelve months of the year, the twelvefold pattern is intrinsic to the soul as well as to geometry. Any sphere tangentially and symmetrically surrounded by spheres of the same radius will always produce an array of twelve balls around one ball.

In his recent work on integral spirituality Ken Wilber talks about something he calls the 'myth of the given'<sup>3</sup> which is a critique of metaphysical truth that is 'accepted as presented' without an understanding that the receiving consciousness and its contextual environment 'shapes' both what is received and how it is interpreted. In other words - our consciousness is an accessory to revelation. This is a valid criticism but perhaps does not go far enough into the realization that spiritual archetypes or 'idea essences' have their own inherent structure that exists independent of human

consciousness. These transcendent archetypal patterns are relatively timeless and will emerge and reemerge regardless of the cultural conditioning and the intellectual fashions. They are part of the ontology of the soul itself and therefore intrinsically a part of what man creates – including integral philosophy.

The twelfold astrological pattern emerges together with the emergence of time, space and consciousness. Wherever there is a centre then you have a sphere and the sphere has axes and a circumference. Astrology is an ancient way of relating the centre of any sphere to its environment whether that environment is physical or psychological.

The four quadrant model<sup>4</sup> of the integral movement would benefit from the astrological perspective because it integrates the four with the three or the personality with the soul. The three ‘states’ of consciousness—gross, subtle and causal—are now seen in integral theory as being available at each ‘level’ of development. The twelfold division provides a model that includes them in each *quadrant* of consciousness. The three crosses represent the three states – spirit, soul and matter operating in each of the quarters. On the cardinal cross for example Aries represents the ‘I,’ Libra the ‘We,’ Cancer the ‘inner’ and Capricorn the ‘outer.’ Readers can easily make the allocations for the other crosses.

The science of triangles is critical to the new astrology and the Master DK also tells us that the etheric body of the planet is changing from squares to triangles<sup>5</sup>—hence the ‘triangles of goodwill’ movement.

If integral philosophy was emerging as wisdom from the human centre, the square (or cross) is a perfect symbol for it. Wilber relates the four to the three by lumping together the ‘outer’ quadrant as an ‘it’ and calling the big three ‘I,’ ‘We’ and ‘It’ or the beautiful, the good and the true—art, morals, science—or the three perspectives of God.<sup>6</sup> It is possible that there is a deeper synthesis between the three and the four which does not see them as the same but combining to reveal something that lies behind both. The twelfold pattern of astrology may provide a template for that

synthesis which would allow, for example, for the ‘I’ of the personality, the ‘I’ of the soul and the ‘I’ of the monad. These are ‘one’ in the realm of being however in time and space their threefold expression is an important and useful distinction.

Another reason that astrology is so important to the soul is that it is a mechanism for sentient relationship. Astronomy represents the accumulation of facts about the physical heavens that have arisen from mental observation

and deduction. Astrology represents the reservoir of ‘story’ or meaning derived from astral-buddhic communion. As with human feelings much of astrology is a ‘projection’ of the inner reality of humanity at different stages of its development on to the stars. But, because the stars themselves are expression of the patterns in the greater whole in which we form a part they also reveal to the consciousness of Humanity truths about itself. Astrology, in much the same way as mythology, is a reservoir of both our history and our future. History – be

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cause it perpetuates myths and superstitions that belong in an earlier level of human development. Our future, because it contains seeds of future knowledge which are intuited long before there are structures of thought to make of them coherent scientific knowledge. Just two historical examples of the latter would be the knowledge of the Sirian system embedded in the mythology of the Dogon tribe and the knowledge of the galactic centre embedded in Indian and South American mythology.

For astrology to be included in the emerging integral philosophy it must shed some of its astrality and develop as a mental science but primarily as a vehicle for the intuition. Then it will bring with it a rich vein of relationship and revelation. The result will be a steady expansion of human buddhic consciousness into the Kosmos as well as an integration—by inclusion—of levels of consciousness within the human centre that are more astral and easily relate to the astrological thoughtform.

Our physical cosmos is an outer expression or representation of Kosmic consciousness and humanity will benefit from engaging it with both mind and soul. There is a significant gap between ethnic centered consciousness and world centric and there is an even greater gap between world centric consciousness and universal consciousness. By relating human consciousness with the archetype of consciousness itself, Astrology will help to bridge that gap.

### **The Seven Rays and the Seven Planes**

**A**s integral philosophy draws from the many different models that divide consciousness into different numbers of ‘levels’ or stages I think it will find itself coalescing around a sevenfold model. This is not because of historical precedence—the seven days in the week, colours of the rainbow, and so forth—but rather because the historical precedence is itself the result of an inner archetype. Much like the twelvefold pattern of astrology, the sevenfold pattern is not merely an arbitrary division thought up by earlier thinkers but part of the structure of space as it interacts with consciousness. Some models penetrate more

deeply and are more robust than others and this tells us something about that ‘structure.’

Geometry is a bridge between consciousness and matter and allows us to see how this structure expresses itself in the three worlds.

We start with a point—the one. We extend this point in three dimensions—the three. We are then able to move from that point in seven directions—six take us outward from that point into ‘space’ and the seventh takes us inward into the origin of the point. Thus we have one point, three axes and seven ‘directions’ (Figure 1).

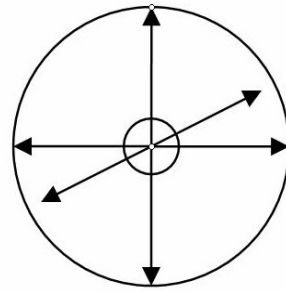


Figure 1

These seven directions define a sphere and the spherical model itself overcomes many of the difficulties that are inherent in two dimensional linear models that occur both in integral theory and theosophical theory alike.

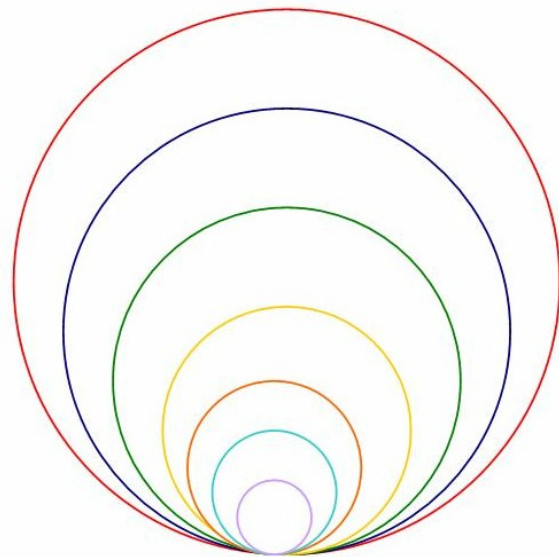


Figure 2

The four quadrant model is really a plane or cross section of a sphere and the seven planes are really seven spheres contained within the first. From a consciousness perspective the so called 'higher' levels contain the 'lower' and thus form a holarchy (Figure 2).

If we divide the seven into three overlapping spheres we have the nine fold division of monad, soul and personality. We can further express the seven as three spheres around a central fourth as shown below. This can aid in visualising how one level of consciousness (yellow sphere) can, through its radiation or emanation, provide a field that allows for the sequential development of another level of consciousness (red sphere). See Figure 3.

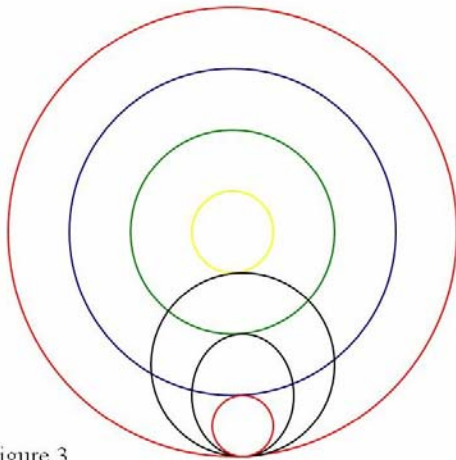


Figure 3

When we integrate these models (figure 4) we get a comprehensive map for understanding both the directions in which consciousness evolves as well as the stages which it passes through in that evolution. The four horizontal directions correlate to the four quadrants in integral theory. Wilber also uses the terms eros and agape to refer to the movement of consciousness in the vertical dimension. Eros tends towards transcendence (up direction) and agape tends towards inclusion (down direction). The seventh direction is the 'fourth dimensional' linking between the centres of each sphere that occurs via the process of identification.

Translation refers to development of a centre of consciousness within a sphere or level. This corresponds to individualization.

Transformation refers to the progressive shifting of levels by a centre of consciousness. This corresponds to initiation.

Transfiguration would refer to the realization that all the centres of consciousness are inherently expressions of one life. This corresponds to identification.

Another byproduct of this spherical model is that it solves a paradox that seems inherent in (even the most recent expression of) integral theory. The states—gross subtle and causal—are often referred to as a vertical dimension—gross corresponding to physical, subtle to soul and causal to spiritual dimensions. But it is also asserted that all states can be experienced at the different 'levels' or stages of development and this idea is expressed in the unsatisfactory Coombs-Wilbur lattice.<sup>7</sup>

In a spherical model that includes the idea of 'planes' we can illustrate the idea more elegantly (Figure 4).

The point "P" (figure 4) occurs within the lowest level or 'plane.' Its location in the substance of the plane however does not tell us about the state of consciousness that is operating within the point only where it is operating. The point P may be defined by three different sets of Cartesian coordinates depending on which of the three yellow centres it is primarily related to. This relationship can be expressed as 'orbiting.' If P is orbiting the lowest centre it will be confined in its orbit to the lowest plane. If it is orbiting the highest centre however it may 'pass through' five planes. Indeed it is possible for a single point in space to have different levels of consciousness operating through it. The so called 'raising' of consciousness and its 'externalisation' are therefore seen as dual expressions of a single process occurring in time and space.

We might define transfiguration of a sphere as the process where the highest stage of consciousness is able to fully express on the lowest level. This process is facilitated by the seventh direction or 'ray.' A problem for the 'integral movement' is that integral consciousness only emerges at relatively advanced levels of human development. It has not yet penetrated or 'externalised' on the lower levels.

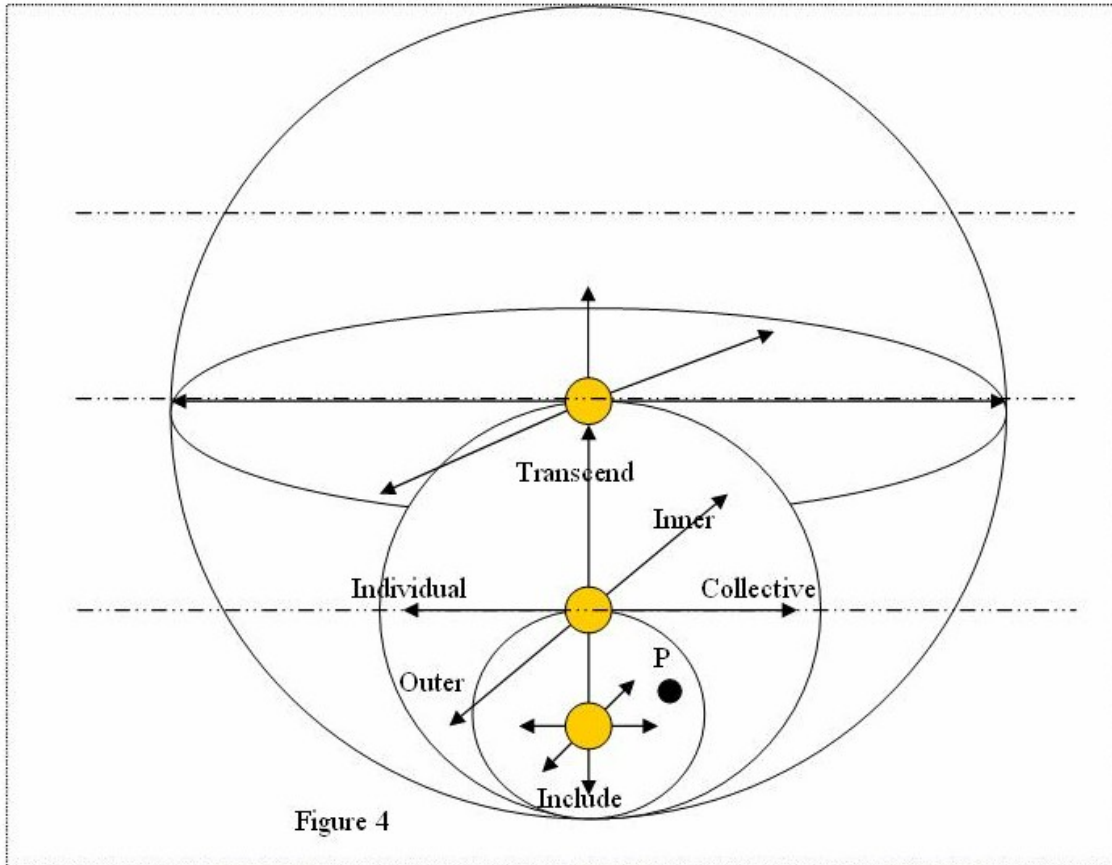


Figure 4

The seventh ray will make it possible for this integral consciousness to operate on and therefore contextualize the lower levels of consciousness even while consciousness centered upon those levels is not itself ‘integrally aware.’ So called ‘red consciousness’ with its primal war-producing drives will then exist within a ‘sea of turquoise’. In a chakra model we would say the base centre has been ‘solarised.’

The complexity of the model that is inherent in the esoteric world view provides greater depth and hence will be found to be more integrative as the need for refinement of the basic integral models increases. Once again it must be remembered however that the integral model is emerging from the human centre. It is therefore meant to contain and embody the depth and content that is most applicable to the exact point in time and space in which it is emerging. Its job is to be maximally useful as an integrating force within human consciousness and to build bridges between the different tra-

ditions and disciplines so that a centre for understanding, dialogue and direction emerges. One of its main potencies is that it is evolutionary and will adapt and continually refine itself—expressing the divine nature of the third aspect.

### How Can We Know what is Hidden From Us?

Another significant contribution that the esoteric worldview can make to the emerging integral movement is the recognition that human consciousness is not the pinnacle of consciousness in the universe—or even on earth. Integral theory, by its very definition locates itself on the leading edge of the evolutionary wave of human consciousness and can suffer the same hubris that all who locate themselves at the ‘centre’ of any sphere are prone to.

The so-called ‘spectrum of consciousness’ applies to ‘human’ consciousness but just as

there are infrared and ultraviolet bands in the spectrum so, esoteric theory would say, there are super and subhuman expressions of consciousness. The states, stages, levels and lines of integral theory are all inherently and necessarily human-centric.

For example we might look at ‘so-called’ universal consciousness in which the experience is being one with the pure witness of the ‘universe’ where everything arises ‘within one’ or the experience where subject and object completely dissolve and ‘Brahman and samsara’ are one with no identity left over to experience it. The point is that these are *human* experiences even if, in their higher reaches, all awareness of a human ‘identity’ vanishes. They are reported by humans who have either returned from the experience or, in some cases remained ‘fused’ with this higher level of consciousness and become expressions of it *within the human kingdom*.

By definition we can know nothing of what identity or organization of consciousness might actually occur or be inherent to these higher levels themselves. An inadequate analogy would be if the ‘identity’ of a cell in one’s body was suddenly lifted into ‘oneness’ with the human personality operating through the body. Initially the experience would be disorienting. All experience of ‘cellness’ and ‘organeness’ would dissolve in this all pervasive perception of the body as a whole contained within ‘witness consciousness.’ With time the cell identity might be able to maintain some degree of dual identity as both the cell and this transcendent awareness.

Whole realms would still lie far beyond the capacity of the cell to experience them (in consciousness) however even though it felt that it had found an absolute. Our concepts of ‘infinity’ are just that—concepts—and therefore contained within mental matter, even if we continually refine and expand them. Our ‘experience’ of ‘infinity’ is limited by our capacity to experience.

Another way of glimpsing this human bias (which is also prevalent in esoteric circles) is to consider our view of what we might call a

‘spiritual master’. Inevitably this view—at least initially—is human-centric. We tend to visualize an actual individual human who is or was incarnate and has some form—either physical or subjective. We may consider them an ‘embodiment of a principle’ such as love or brotherhood for example but we tend to imagine this principle centralized in them rather than them centralized (or dissolved into) the principle. One is a bucket full of ocean water. The other forms part of the ocean itself.

## Fusion of the Esoteric and Integral Worldviews

We might liken this process to the fusion of soul and personality or the second and third aspects. In astrological terminology we could talk about the reconciliation of the fixed and mutable crosses from the perspective of the cardinal cross.

Often those who work in the esoteric traditions are wary of the third aspect because it can be used to dilute or distort central ‘revealed’ truths which they see themselves as the custodians of for humanity. They tend to use terms like ‘absolute’ and ‘eternal’ when referring to the source of revelation (as well as sometimes—unfortunately—to the form of the revelation). They resist what is termed the ‘popularisation’ movements particularly when this also involves (as it often does) a commercialization of the teachings.

On the other hand those who are more identified with the ‘integral wave’ are wary of the esoteric traditions precisely because of their fixed and sometimes ‘fundamentalist’ adherence to what they see as a ‘myth of the given’. As representatives of the mutable cross there is a fondness for words like ‘organic’ and ‘evolving’ to express the dynamic nature of human consciousness.

The criticism of the second aspect by the third is that they are taking a quality of the timeless world and applying it to something temporal—that is, the particular doctrine and dogma of their tradition. The criticism of the third aspect by the second is that they are taking something inherently temporal and illusory—that is, the

wave of evolutionary awakening of human consciousness and elevating it to something primary and central.

The gift of the emerging integral movement to 'esotericism' is that it wields a discriminating sword which enables the esoteric world to discern the difference between what we might call pre-integral esotericism and post-integral esotericism. In the former there is a tendency to overemphasise the particular 'form' in which the esoteric tradition is presented and a lack of its integration into human consciousness as a whole.

The gift of esotericism to the integral movement is the realization that there are archetypal patterns within the structure of cosmic consciousness that are 'trans-human' and that while the integral movement may be a most significant development in human consciousness, it is a doorway into a deeper revelation.

An esoteric perspective of the integral movement is that it is indicative of an emerging integrated personality within humanity as a whole. This integration is happening through the power of the mind, illuminated by the planetary soul, to penetrate illusion and bring the various sub personalities (represented by the political, philosophical, religious, gender, racial and economic perspectives and levels) into one cohesive theoretical whole. The culmination of this will no doubt eventually express itself as some form of global governance based on the integral principles and perspectives. In the individual process of psychospiritual development, the integration of the personality immediately precedes the full emergence of the soul and the fusion of these 'dualities' into the unity that they essentially are. The emphasis will then shift to the heart as the seat of the life principle and the planetary monad will increasingly be revealed.

We might then expect, as Humanity increasingly finds itself to be a cohesive integrated centre, a dawning realisation within that centre of that which was previously 'esoteric' or occulted—its real purpose.

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- <sup>1</sup> Bruce Lyon. "The Integral Esoteric." *The Esoteric Quarterly*, vol. 3, no 1. Winter 2007, pp. 27-32. <http://www.uriel.com/quarterly/>
  - <sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey. *Glamour: A World Problem*. Lucis, 1950, p. 183.
  - <sup>3</sup> Ken Wilbur. *Integral Spirituality*. Integral Books Shambhala Publications, 2006, p. 175
  - <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.
  - <sup>5</sup> Alice A. Bailey. *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*. Lucis, 1950, p. 163.
  - <sup>6</sup> Wilbur, *Integral Spirituality*, p. 20
  - <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.