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COLLAPSE OF WILBER COMBS MATRIX

The Collapse of the Wilber Combs Matrix:  
The Interpenetration of the State and Structure Stages

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## Abstract

This article tracks and honors the heritage of three models that depict the relationship of structure stages to state stages. This lineage parents the model being introduced here, which attempts to integrate these previous models and suggests how the state stages interpenetrate with the developmental spectrum. The model proposed then provides refinements to the developmental structure stages by describing iterating tier patterns of development and states, and then a summary through a definition of terms. The interweaving of the state stage descriptions and cross-tier patterns develops the conceptual model of gross, subtle, causal, and nondual floors (tiers) within the highly researched developmental structures. This results in a different interpretation of the relationship between the structure stages and the state stages, showing how these two aspects of human existence can interpenetrate in ordinary developmental life. The vision is further delineated and the article concludes with skeptical questions and speculative inferences, which may inform theories of the future.

*Keywords: State stages, Structure stages, Wilber Combs Matrix, Sentence Completion Test, Cook-Greuter, Aurobindo*

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The Collapse of the Wilber Combs Matrix:  
The Interpenetration of States and Stages

Structure and State Stages: The Divine Interpenetrating the World

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and

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void” (Genesis 1:1-2, King James Version).

Most, if not all, cultures and traditions have some form of a creation story, in which the heavens, the earth, the cosmos, and their inhabitants come into being, usually supported by some deep belief of a divine hand and of the world being interpenetrated in some unbroken way. This is a relevant way to introduce this paper, with an integral creation story (Aurobindo, 2000; Wilber, 1995, 2006).

#### *A Creation Story of Everything: Aurobindo and Wilber*

##### *The Kingdom of Matter*

The world once was composed of only matter, and still is primarily matter, which Aurobindo (2000) might call compressed consciousness imbued with the Divine. The kingdom of matter is composed of a world of infinitesimally small moving beings that render it alive in its own right, albeit in a form we, in the kingdom of mind, do not fully understand, for as humans generally see it, there is no awareness or instinct in granite, in dust, in a planet, or in a galaxy, even though matter teams with life both microscopically and telescopically. The kingdom of matter has the longest history of all in this creation story.

##### *The Kingdom of Plants*

The kingdom of matter transforms at some point in the eonic history of the universe, bringing in the world of plant life, with a long evolutionary path between them: ages of minute and large dynamic leaps into a form that uses the kingdom of matter as its food, developing a circulation system and rudimentary instincts that can take more direct attention from the sun’s rays. The kingdom of plants transcends and includes matter, for plants bring into their veins the very stuff of matter itself, the nutrients from the sky and earth that form their table. It develops its own form of relationship and regeneration

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through pollen and seed; thus the impulse is born to propagate. It is conceived out of its parent, matter, and this heritage is still intact in us today. When life evicts itself from the plant, the woody stems and roots turn themselves back to their original form: matter, dust, petrified stone, humus—just as our very bones do. Instinct and propagation could be viewed as early traces of the upper left and lower left quadrants in Wilber's (1995) quadratic model. The circulatory system, which provides nourishment; and matter, which provides its structural context could be viewed as the upper and lower right quadrants, respectively.

*The Kingdom of Animal*

The kingdom of plants (Aurobindo, 2000) eventually goes through a transformation as well: creeping vines and beautiful tendriling, floating seeds gradually add unrooted mobility. Thus refined, senses evolve to accommodate movement, at first rudimentary and later extensive, and the kingdom of the animal world arises. Sensory instinct arises to accommodate the need to propagate and to seek nourishment and protection from the elements, in the form of food and shelter, for the preservation of the body and its offspring. Eating entheogenic plants may have introduced the animal kingdom to states; the quadratic elements (Wilber, 1995) continue to evolve in this kingdom.

*The Kingdom of Mind*

The kingdom of animal evolves, maintaining its genetic impulse of material form, propagation, and preservation of the body and its offspring through the sensory instincts, and after eons of divinely spirited minor and major leaps, the kingdom of mind arises: mind which transcends yet includes the sensory impulses that the animal kingdom perfects, evolving to the mind which makes distinctions and takes perspectives. A child is born with a sensory system that grows to form more discrete discriminations, and

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eventually uses complex languages that communicate many analytical categories, theories, worldviews, and belief systems. The kingdom of mind has these inborn capacities from birth; it takes the form of sensory instincts and discriminations from the animal kingdom and activates this entire inborn genetic, quadratic heritage that seems to continue to call itself into development. The quadrants grow branches and leaves of lines from the trunks of instinct, circulation, shelter, and propagation, from their roots in matter. The legacy of this kingdom of mind is this very capacity to conceive differences beyond the sensory. This keeps us separate, allowing us to be individuals evolving and growing, for the mind, it seems, knows how to do little else, despite our longing for, and seeking of divine union with concrete, subtle, causal, and nondual states and stages, which animals may experience in their kingdom, rudimentarily, when they eat catnip and locoweed.

*What Next?*

Is there a next kingdom and if so what kind of being might arise? Aurobindo (2000) seems to think that the leap from the kingdom of mind to the next kingdom will be similar to the leap between the kingdoms of matter and plant, between plant and animal, or between animal and mind.

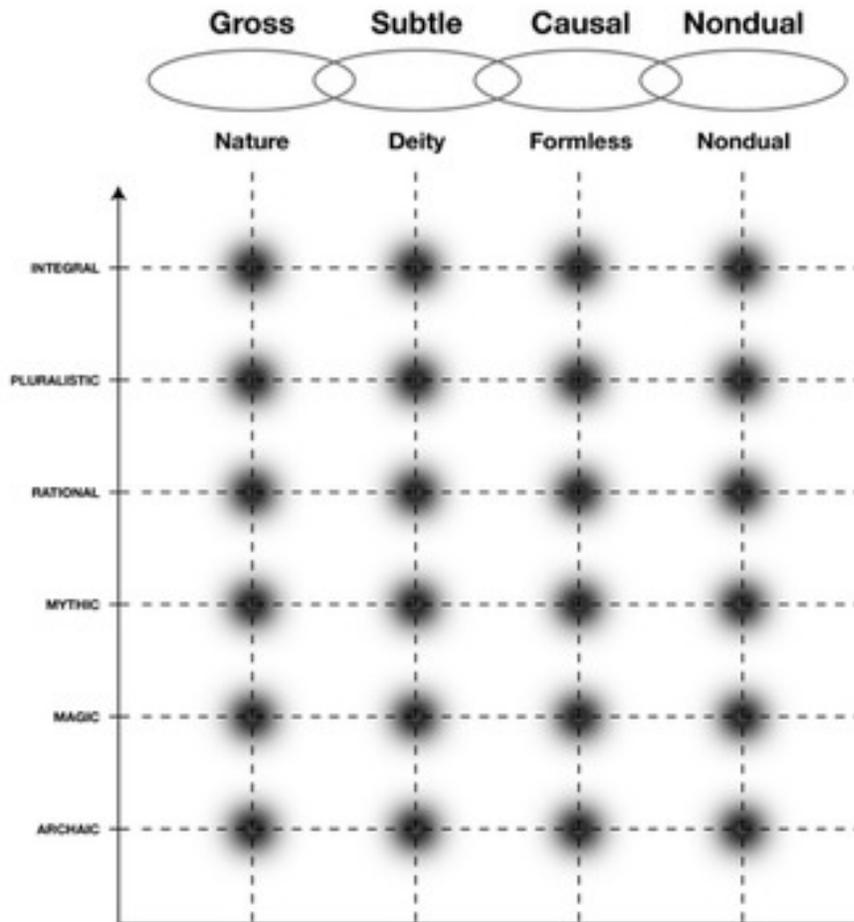
This paper is an exploration of the kingdom of mind, in particular of its developmental evolution with and toward states, which represent the Divine, and how they might interpenetrate all the way up and all the way down in waking day-to-day life.

## The Interpenetration of States and Stages: One History, Three Steps

Many have explored the relationship between the state stages of gross, subtle, causal, nondual, and the ever-present Witness and how these state stages relate to the developmental structure stages (Combs, 2002; Fowler, 1981; Wilber, 1995, 2006). Wilber (1995) suggested this relationship by stacking some of the advanced state stages on top of

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the known structure stages in chapter eight of his *Sex, Ecology, and Spirituality*. Later, Wilber (2006) and Combs (2002) developed a new theory that they called the Wilber Combs (WC) matrix, depicted in Figure 1.

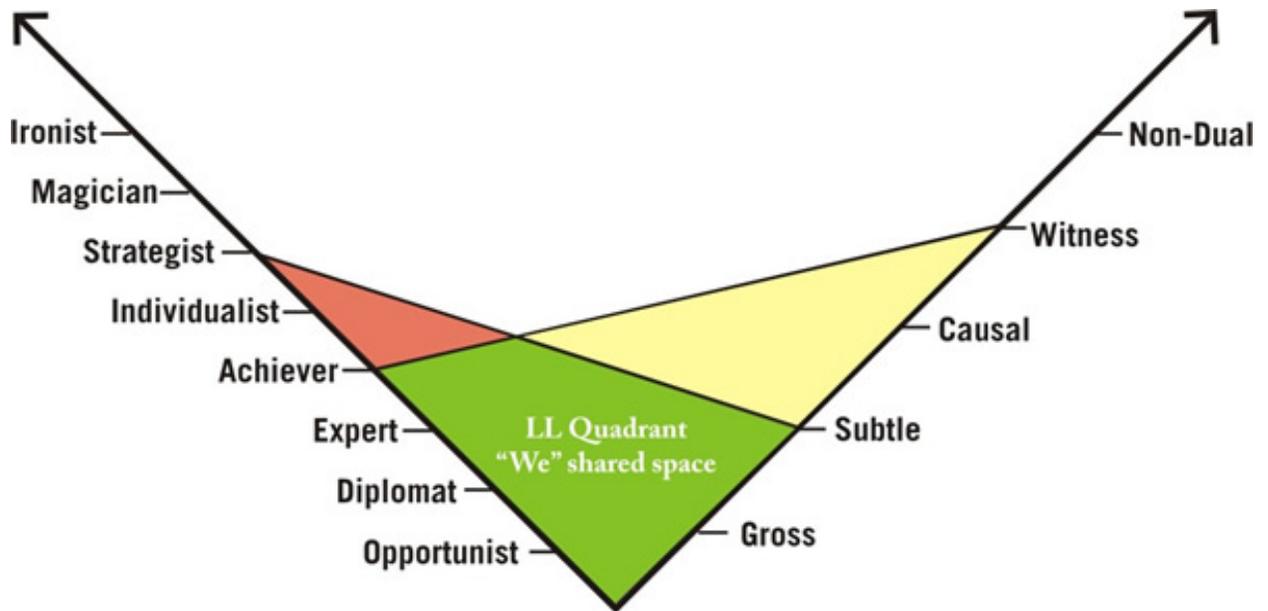


*Figure 1.* The Wilber Combs matrix.

I spent several years trying to fill every cell of this grid, working diligently to make sense of this matrix, looking for an embodied expression of the unison of the structures and states. One day, in the moment of teaching about the WC matrix, aware of common preferences for vertical over horizontal, I played with depicting the equivalence of the vertical and horizontal in this matrix by tipping it on its point for another view. I also saw

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how the WC matrix seemed to involve the consciousness of only one person. When the matrix was tipped and when the interaction of two people was envisioned, the rendition of the WC matrix shown in Figure 2 suddenly appeared (O’Fallon, 2007).



*Figure 2.* The V model of consciousness roaming spaces.

This version of the WC matrix describes a consciousness roaming space for more than one person, representing how the structure stages and the state stages might interact in a person, and how people, with the different shapes of their consciousness, might share a particular consciousness space related to the intersection of the two. This view of the WC matrix brought together the “I” and the “we” (later adding the “it/s”). The later version turned into a dynamic quadratic form of the WC matrix (O’Fallon, in press b).

#### Reflections on the Three Models Related to Development

Still, it felt in my own waking experience that these state stages and the structure stages are even more interpenetrating than these diagrams represent. My experience told me that

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the state stages and structure stages are somehow hidden within each other and not as distinctly separate as they seem logically to be in these models.

In the meantime, I became a scorer for the Loevinger-Cook-Greuter Sentence Completion Test International (SCTi), a developmental scale that is said, among other things, to measure ego development levels (Cook-Greuter, 1999; Lê & Loevinger, 1989; Loevinger & Wessler, 1970). I was attracted to this scale because it also engages test takers quadratically (Wilber, 1995) with sentence stems that are designed to evoke responses from the cognitive (“I”), the affective and relational (“we”), and the behavioral (“it”) (Cook-Greuter, 2002). The three branches of the “I,” “we,” and “it” can also be seen as three *lines*: cognitive, affective/relational, and behavioral. The qualities innate in each person perspective in the scale are akin to *types*, and awareness seems to be a thread that runs through the entire developmental spectrum (*states*). Another distinction of this particular scale is that research verifies two levels that are later than those in any other scale at this point, going up through a sixth-person perspective (Cook-Greuter, 1999).

Seven years of experiencing and watching participants in the Generating Transformative Change program of Pacific Integral (O’Fallon, in press a) have been an added benefit, as each group has tested with the SCTi and retested two years later. This combination of experiences has allowed us to note the incremental changes in the developmental structures of people growing through one or more of seven of the nine levels measured on this scale, and to begin refining and further discriminating the later two levels through scoring SCTi’s that are related to embodied observations.

Through these observations I learned to recognize in experience some of the beginning structural developmental patterns clarified by Cook-Greuter, embodied in human beings as they dynamically evolved through patterns of time, space, opposing poles, perspective

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qualities, early and late variation patterns in a person perspective, feedback (Cook-Greuter, 2002), autopoiesis, and others. At some point this process revealed that many of these patterns seemed to iterate dynamically across tiers.

*Iterating Tier Patterns: Finer Distinctions in Development*

Since the congealing of these iterating patterns informs where the tiers begin and end in the model proposed below, it is relevant to share a brief description of some of the more noteworthy cross-tier patterns.

*Person Perspective Patterns*

In the research completed by Cook Greuter (1999), there are six person perspectives. The pattern begins with a narrow focus and widens with each perspective:

1. The first person perspective is a focus on the self.
2. The second person perspective is a focus on self and other.
3. The third person perspective is a focus on an observer who can focus on another self and other(s).
4. The fourth person perspective is a focus on an observer, observing another observer, observing another self and other(s).
5. The fifth person perspective is seeing the previous pattern of observing observers observing; at the fifth person perspective, the observing can cycle from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the nth positions. (Cook Greuter, 2002)
6. The sixth person perspective, seeing the nth perspectives, begins to step outside of those nth perspectives and begins to take a perspective using patterns of observation and perspective taking through tiers.

*Time and Space Patterns*

The person perspectives span first-person perspective through sixth-person

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perspective and they are very much related to time and space. The later the person perspective span, the wider the space that seems to be enveloped, from one's own skin at the first-person perspective, to one's immediate community at the second-person perspective, to world centric at the third-person perspective, to sentient centric at the fourth-person perspective, all the way to infinity at the sixth-person perspective. The same pattern holds with time, beginning with being only in the moment at the first-person perspective, to being aware of tradition-based rules in the second-person perspective, to being aware of the past and about five years into the future with the third-person perspective, to seeing about a generation at the fourth-person perspective, to seeing historically forward and back in the fifth-person perspective, to seeing eternally in the sixth-person perspective (Cook-Greuter, 2002).

*Qualities, or Types, in Person Perspectives*

With each person perspective comes the awareness of particular new quality: (a) first-person perspective involves awareness of the quality, one's concrete self; (b) second-person perspective includes one's awareness of the quality of concrete operations; (c) third-person perspective adds to one's awareness the quality of abstract and formal operational thinking; (d) fourth-person perspective involves one's awareness of the quality, contexts; (e) fifth-person perspective includes one's awareness of the quality, constructs; and (f) sixth-person perspective involves one's awareness of the unity of opposites (Cook-Greuter, 2002).

*Horizontal Hall of Mirrors Iterating Pattern*

This pattern captures the horizontal autopoietic nature of the perspectives. Autopoiesis is the self-replicating process by which we unconsciously get caught up in a horizontal iterating quality pattern (described above), which seems to hypnotize us until

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we can step out of it. For example, at late third-person, the horizontal iterating autopoietic pattern seems to be this: formal operations of formal operations sometimes referred to as analysis paralysis using either abstract or formal operations.

At late fourth-person (Strategist/Teal), the iterating horizontal pattern seems to be contexts within contexts within contexts exemplified interiorly by awareness of developmental levels (i.e., awareness of nestedness and transcend-and-include) and exteriorly often exemplified by systems within systems within systems (Bartalanffy, 1976)

At late fifth-person (Construct Aware/Turquoise) the iterating horizontal pattern of constructs within constructs within constructs seems to appear, giving rise to the hall of mirrors (Cook-Greuter, 2002) both interiorly (e.g., projections of projections) and/or exteriorly (reification of constructed maps within maps within maps; these maps are not original creations but the unique way the constructed maps are embedded in each other is original).

At late sixth-person, unification of polar patterns is exemplified by awareness of iterating cross-tier patterns of patterns, interiorly and exteriorly.

#### *Differentiating and Prioritizing Pattern: Consciousness's Rocking Chair*

The autopoietic pattern described above speaks to the late or mature stage of a person perspective. Another pattern delineates between the early and late stages of a person perspective using again, qualities of the perspectives. In the early stage of a person perspective, the new person perspective *quality* (the quality pattern is described above) is apprehended. Those moving into any new person perspective (Expert [early third-person perspective], Individualist [early fourth-person perspective], Early Construct Aware [early fifth-person perspective]) are so naïve to the unique quality arising at this new level that they cannot prioritize it easily. They tend to spend time familiarizing themselves with

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this new person perspective and its quality, rocking back to a more interior exploration of the quality. The incapacity to be able to prioritize with the new quality sometimes represents itself by shying away from categories, including developmental categories. When individuals mature and are in the later person perspective stage, they are then able to prioritize the quality, thus the rocking back and forth between the inability to prioritize, and the ability to prioritize the quality at successive person perspectives.

*Polar Opposites Iterating Tier Pattern*

Susanne Cook-Greuter first introduced me to this pattern as we were riding down an elevator to attend one of Gempo Roshi's presentations. She explained that at early third-person (Expert), choice-making is not yet possible because one can see only one side of a situation, not both sides. However, at the later third-person perspective (Achiever/Orange), both sides can be seen, so having a choice between options is now possible. Next comes the both/and preference of the early fourth-person perspective (Individualist/Green), through which one can choose both options at the same time. I watched this pattern in people for some time before I begin to see its iterative aspects (for example, I could see my grandchildren making choices, such as between ice-skating or going to the movies, but they were nowhere near seeing a third-person perspective of Achiever, so it appeared to me that there are earlier and later levels of this step pattern of seeing one side, choice making, both/and). This iterating pattern eventually became evident through my observation of people and my noticing it embedded in the scoring process. What emerged is a pattern that seems to relate to an over-arching polar pair for each tier. Within each tier was a new iteration of this pattern: (a) seeing only one side, (b) seeing more than one side and having the capacity to make a choice (either/or), (c) seeing and choosing two or more (both/and), and finally, (d) integration of the two sides of the

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overarching polar pair into one, which then becomes one side of a later overarching polar pair.

Here is an example: On the concrete levels, the overarching polar pair seems to be Self/Other (or Individual/Collective, Wilber's (1995) top and bottom quadrants). The stages this polar opposite pair holds are Impulsive, Opportunist, Delta, and Diplomat. The stages progress as follows:

1. At Impulsive, one is aware primarily of one side, or the concrete self.
2. Next, at Opportunist, there is awareness of the concrete self and concrete other and a choice is generally made for the self.
3. Awareness expands at Delta to make comparisons between the concrete self and concrete other (both/and).
4. Finally, at Diplomat there is an integration of self and other such that there is hardly a distinction between them (I am my group). A term describing this integration, is "exterior" for it integrates the concrete self and concrete other.

Exterior, becomes one side of a new set of overarching polar poles of exterior/interior, which plays out over the next four stages.

This next polar iteration adds the awareness of the subtle interior to the concrete exterior, (the exterior right and interior left sides of the quadrant map of Wilber, 1995) so the overarching polar pair is exterior/interior which plays out in the four step series until they exterior and interior integrate into what I have defined as immanence (a word which can describe mind/body, the somatic, etc). In summary, this polar pattern seems to progress as follows.

1. First tier, concrete self/other polar opposites: This progresses from (a) seeing only one side of the pole to (b) making choices between the poles to (c)

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choosing both (both/and) to (d) integrating the concrete self/other poles into the exterior self, and preparing for another pole to arise to balance out the exterior (with interior), which becomes the overriding polar focus for the next four levels.

2. Second tier, poles of subtle/concrete (interior/exterior) polar opposites arise: This progresses along the pattern until they reach the Strategist level, at which time they integrate the interior and exterior into immanence (body/mind). Immanence becomes a new end of the polar pair immanence/transcendence, which is the overriding polar pattern for the third tier.
3. Third tier, poles of immanence/transcendence arise: This progresses along the four-step pattern until they reach the Illumined level, at which time, transcendence and immanence are integrated.

*The Gross, Subtle, and Causal Floors: The Intersection of the Iterating Patterns*

By looking at these various patterns and how they intersect, another approach to defining tiers can be taken. If we identify the stages that focus on pre-conventional or concrete ways of approaching the world, which in the Loevinger model would be Impulsive, Opportunist, Delta and Diplomat, we could simply call these the concrete stages and rename these stages as the concrete tier, or the concrete floor. If we use the next set of polar opposites, interior and exterior to identify the stages that arise and engage with interiors, or the subtle, we would recognize the Expert, the Achiever, the Individualist and the Strategist. This set of stages could easily be renamed the subtle tier, or the Subtle Floor. Looking at the next stages, which work with the polar opposites transcendence and immanence, and the arising of awareness in the moment, the stages Construct Aware (2 stages) and Unitive (two stages) could be renamed the causal tier or the Causal floor.

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Some patterns are 1111 patterns (qualities pattern); some are 121212 patterns (the prioritizing/no prioritizing iterating pattern and the hall of mirrors pattern). Some patterns are 1234, 1234, 1234 patterns (the opposing poles iterations), and at the place at which they all intersect, a new tier (which I am calling a floor) seems to arise. This tier transition seems to happen between Diplomat (the last stage of the concrete levels) and Expert (the first stage of the more subtle conventional levels), between Strategist (the last stage of the interior/subtle levels) and Construct Aware (the first level of transcendence/immanence), and between Illuminative (Aurobindo, 2000; the last level of transcendence/immanence) and the first level of the fourth tier. So in the model proposed by this paper, there are four tiers or floors, the Concrete Floor, the Subtle Floor, the Causal Floor, and the Nondual Floor.

*Gross, Subtle, and Causal Egos*

In the Lovenger model the ego is another name for the self. The gross, subtle, causal, and nondual floors seem to fit well with the data we have on the arising of the ego self. In the scoring we do with the SCTi, the notion of ego seems to come up first around the early third-person perspective (Expert) when the Concrete Floor is transcended, but it is an ego self that is concerned about concrete things. For example, materialism is often seen as egoic. The next time we see a significant arising of the ego self is when people move into the early fifth-person perspective (Early Construct Aware) when the Subtle Floor is transcended, but this ego self seems to be more concerned about the hubris of subtle materialism, such as spiritual materialism and arrogance about knowing. At this stage, an awareness of a subtle ego seems to arise. It seems there is also a causal ego (Aurobindo, 2000), which, if the pattern holds, would be recognized at the post-Illuminative stages of Intuitive/Meta mind (the mind that makes object of this mind that can only make

distinctions).

### Iterating Tier Patterns: Finer Distinctions in States

In addition to finding iterating patterns in the developmental spectrum, it seems there are also iterating patterns related to state stages: Awareness; Gross, Subtle, Causal, and Nondual; Dark nights; Maya or illusion. The first states were described thousands of years ago, and with development it seems they iterate again, from the Concrete floor, to the Subtle Floor, Causal floor and Nondual Floor

#### *Gradations of the Awareness of States*

1. *First:* no awareness of an object or state, although it exists. An example of this might be deep dreamless sleep, which we all experience but are not aware of.
2. *Second:* reflective awareness after the fact of an experience of an object or state
3. *Third:* awareness in the moment accessed at will of an object or state.
4. *Fourth:* a state that has become an ordinary part of life, inseparable from it and not experienced as a state. At that point a search for another state may occur.

This pattern seems to iterate through gross or concrete objects which one is aware of in the Concrete floor, then to subtle objects which one is aware of in the Subtle Floor, then to causal objects which one is aware of in the Causal Floor.

#### *The Object of Awareness Pattern*

It is relevant to make distinctions between awareness and the level of object it takes. Is the object of awareness a concrete (gross) object? Is it a subtle object? Is it a causal object? We can observe people who are aware in the moment of a concrete object, but are able to be aware of a subtle object only reflectively after the fact and were not yet able to access this awareness at will.

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Furthermore, one could be living within the perspectives of the Concrete Floor and have gross, subtle, and causal states; but the object of those states would be generally concrete because one had not yet inhabited the perspectives of the Subtle Floor. For example, someone coming from a concrete stage of development might be aware in the moment of a concrete experience, such as an itch or delicious food. By contrast this person might have reflective awareness (a subtle state) about itches or food he or she has experienced. Or this person might have awareness in the moment that he or she is thinking about food, which would be a subtle state (awareness of thinking). However, in all of these cases, the final primary object of the person's awareness is still a concrete object. This is the basis of the Object of Awareness pattern, which iterates from the object being concrete, to subtle, to causal. Thus one could also be in a subtle state such as a day-dream or imagination, having a subtle object (such as a hypothesis, or a plan or a strategy, or a subtle experience of the divine). This would be a subtle state with a subtle object and wouldn't be accessed unless one had the capacities to take the perspectives of the Subtle Floor (tier). Or one might receive a download come through them of a map of consciousness, where self is not the center, and this might be described as a subtle state with a causal object (download from outside of the self) which becomes available when one can take the perspectives of the Causal Floor.

*The Dark Night Pattern*

This pattern has been described in Christian traditions but seems to hold resonance with many people's experiences. In this pattern there is a series of dark nights in each tier or floor.

## Concrete floor

1. Dark night of the senses: This can be seen as "the night of correction where

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the senses' appetites are curbed" (Backhouse, p 56).

2. When one stops identifying with the senses and the concrete as the self, one becomes empty of that self, and experiences a hole or a pit where that self used to reside. That experience of not identifying with the senses as "me" is the Dark night of the soul. (Blackstone, 2009)
3. When one sees that the mind that makes concrete distinctions is not the self, and stops identifying with that mind, a vacuum exists where the concrete mind used to be- this is the dark night of the concrete self that leads to union with God

This pattern repeats with the subtle floor and the causal floor, engaging, rather, with the subtle and causal mind and objects rather than the concrete senses.

*Maya Pattern*

If we are aware of the illusory play of the Divine we are free of being caught up in it. If we don't we are essentially hypnotized by it and caught in the illusory. This is sometimes called "Maya" (Wilber, 2010). Recognition of certain illusions seems to arise at each Floor, similar to the Dark Nights. This pattern appears to iterate through the floors (tiers) as people gradually recognize finer distinctions of illusion.

1. First concrete objects are seen as real.
2. Then concrete objects are seen as an illusion (That I am only a concrete entity is an illusion)
3. Subtle objects arise
4. Subtle objects are seen as an illusion (That I am merely a subtle entity is an illusion)
5. Causal objects arise,

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6. Causal objects are seen as an illusion (That I am merely a causal entity is an illusion)

## The Fourth Way: Interpenetration of States and Stages.

What follows is a summary of the developmental patterns and state patterns, first in the form of definitions, and next in a map, which summarizes what has been discussed to this point; hopefully this summary will support an understanding of another version of the interpenetration of the state and structure stages.

*Developmental Stages Summary*

These definitions are deeply informed by material developed by Cook-Greuter 2002, Wilber 2006, and Aurobindo, 2000, and modified by my own experience, incubations and observations.

1. *Structure stage*: the capacity to take a first-, second-, third-, fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-person perspective and make further distinctions within that perspective, such as early and late levels within each perspective.
2. *Structure stage patterns*: repeated iterations of structures that run through the person perspectives of the structure stages—such as, time, space, qualities, prioritization, opposing poles.
3. *Floor*: another word for “tier”; a leap in mind/body that occurs when several structure-stage patterns congeal at once, from immaturity to maturity. Each floor generally holds four stages in this version, two person perspectives (first and second; third and fourth; fifth and sixth), each of which is divided into two levels, early and late; but any developmental scale could fit within these floors. The floors are concrete, subtle, causal, and nondual
4. *World*: the evolutionary container holding all the structures and patterns

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supported by a floor (tier). Each floor continues to develop through subsequent floors in more informed ways. Thus there is a concrete world, a subtle world, a causal world, and a nondual world, each a vertical expansion through subsequent floors.

5. *Kingdom*: the movement from one form of consciousness to another one, such as from matter to plant to animal to mind to further evolutionary kingdoms.

*State Stages Summary*

The following definitions related to states were influenced by Wilber (2006), DiPerna (2007), and Aurobindo (1992); by my own experiences; and by observations of how they appeared in people in their waking everyday life and from their written utterances on the SCTi.

1. *Gross state*: awareness of the concrete, anything one can experience with external senses or their extensions (e.g., microscopes, X-rays, telescopes, etc.)
2. *Subtle state*: awareness or witnessing of the subtle or anything that one cannot generally measure with the external senses, including thought, emotion, imagination, daydreams, dreams, interior sounds, interior vibratory experiences, and so on.
3. *Causal state*: awareness of or witnessing of the very subtle, formlessness, or emptiness.
4. *The Witness*: that which is aware. There is a progression of awareness from (a) instinct to (b) simple direct awareness to (c) the Witness that is aware of objects of awareness to (d) Turiya, which is the capacity to witness 24 hours a day, even in deep sleep.
5. *Unity*: awareness merging with gross, subtle, and/or causal realities. This

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definition recognizes different levels of unity for one can unite only the form that one has the capacity to be aware of.

- 6. *Nondual*: the interpenetration of emptiness and form. This recognizes different levels of non-duality, for one can be non-dual only with the concrete, subtle or causal forms one is capable of apprehending.

Interpenetrating these developmental and state patterns brings up the following conception in which there is no separation between states and stages.

Figure 3 shows the conception that has arisen to this point

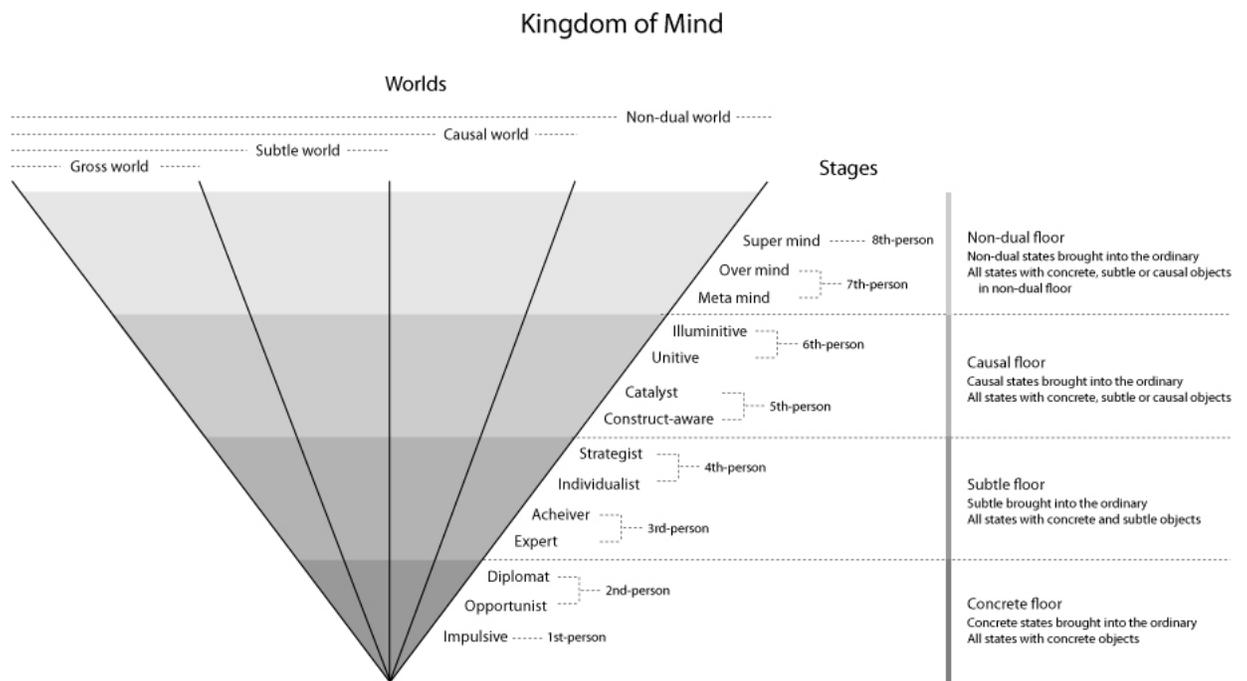


Figure 3. Kingdom of mind—the interpenetration of states and structure stages

*Description of the Model of the Interpenetration of States and Structure Stages*

First I will comment on awareness/witnessing/Turiya tendriling throughout the structure stages. Next I will give a truncated description of the Concrete Floor, the Subtle Floor, the

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Causal Floor, and Nondual Floor.

### *Awareness*

In this reinterpretation of states with stages, awareness is the sacred line that begins to develop from the moment of birth and continues through the Concrete Floor, the Subtle Floor, and the Causal Floor and worlds, into the Nondual Floor and world, moving from (a) unawareness to (b) reflective awareness to (c) witnessing awareness arising in the moment to (d) constant consciousness, in waking (e) Turiya awareness during waking and sleeping. Awareness/witnessing is the Divine interpenetration that is all encompassing and is so present that it is not seen or recognized developmentally, even though it is what holds the entire developmental trajectory together. It is evident in the state stages, but it is also the fabric that underlies all the developmental structure stages.

### *Concrete Floor*

Development of awareness begins instinctually from birth (finding the breast), growing with the instinctual teaching of the parent(s) (such as the cross-cultural “tsk tsk tsk”) guiding visual, auditory, and kinesthetic awareness in the concrete world, which includes such things as the capacity to determine what should and should not be put in the mouth, where one’s limbs are, and the fact that they are attached to a body over which there is eventually some control. This trajectory continues until these concrete states are so ordinary that no awareness is needed to make them occur. The child also learns about the concrete world with subtle states through games like peek-a-boo, through which they learn to see subtly with their inner concrete eye and know that Mommy is behind the blanket: the child is at first unaware of Mommy, next becomes aware after the fact (when Mommy drops the blanket and says, “Peek-a-boo!”), and finally sees Mommy in his or her imagination behind the blanket (concrete floor with subtle awareness of a concrete object

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[Mommy]). These kinds of subtle states continue to develop throughout the concrete floor until they take no effort of awareness and they become ordinary experience. The concrete floor may also include causal and concrete-nondual states; however I sense that awareness of a causal or nondual state in waking life would more likely happen around the transition between the concrete floor and the subtle floor (Diplomat/Blue). Here, the Dark Night of the Senses tends to occur, which is a taming of the senses' appetite (Backstone, p56).

People at earlier levels may be in the moment but, by developmental definition, they generally do not have the discipline to practice, although they may gain access through entheogens or other outside sources (hunger, thirst, dire weather, spinning, etc., and perhaps certain rituals until hallucinations occur). Notice that in Shamanistic journeys, the objects of subtle journeying are often animals, the sun, and so on.

*Subtle Floor*

Entering the Subtle Floor begins with early third-person perspective, when people make the Concrete Floor "object," become aware of an interior (subtle) self, and begin to see the limitation of the concrete as an illusory description of their true self, a lower Maya of sorts. In ordinary circumstances, the senses have been curbed (Dark Night of the Senses). They apprehend their concrete ego, which lives within the world of gross and sensory objects and materialism. They are already aware of their subtle imaginations holding concrete objects, and now begin to become aware of the subtle objects within their subtle or interior world (i.e., they become aware of emotions and ideas) including subtle physical states such as gut feelings and a soft heart (the interior corollary of the external senses). As they progress through the stages, at first they seem to be reflectively aware of their ideas, their thoughts about ideas, thinking about their own thinking (strategizing), daydreams about ideas, emotionality, and perhaps even spiritual experiences of interior divinity light

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and sound, and so on with their progressive maturity. At some point, generally during the fourth-person perspectives of the Individualist/Green and Strategist/Teal levels, though not confined to these levels, they become more aware in the moment, such that much of the subtle world is embedded in the ordinary (thinking, planning, awareness of time and space, benchmarking, awareness of exterior and interior contexts and psychological insights, etc.). During this time, especially with training or practice (including extreme sports; meditation; and body practices such as yoga, tai chi, and entheogen experiences, etc.) causal and nondual states and stages may occur. It takes four stages to navigate through this subtle floor. The Strategist/Teal, who often has a beginning recognition of projection and of circular causation and other insights, sets the stage for transitioning into the Causal Floor.

*Causal Floor*

This begins with the Early Construct Aware stage of the early fifth-person perspective. At this stage, individuals begin to make both the Subtle Floor and the Concrete Floor object, and they see the subtle ego (e.g., spiritual materialism, egoic projections, etc.), as well as the mind's illusionary construction of the subtle self, and all that ego sees, knows, does, constructs, and defines using the concrete and subtle worlds they have inhabited before. This could be defined as a living awareness of a later Maya illusion. No concrete or subtle forms with subtle objects they have ever known remain a ground to stand on (Cook-Greuter, 2002). *Nothing*, or the formless, becomes the living ground of this new world, even as their gross and subtle floors continue to evolve and erupt through this causal floor. The shock of this realization can often send them into the angst of a Dark Night of the subtle Soul. This floor appears to be quite difficult to enter; if one has a substantial state practice it seems to support the concrete and subtle floors, but the state practice of the

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causal and nondual may not necessarily translate into the waking lived experience of the causal Construct Aware developmental stage without an embodied developmental experience of structure stages. Likewise, it appears that people who have embodied developmental experiences in their lives may also have difficulty if they have not cultivated states. Although both states and stages penetrate all levels in this model, entering into this floor appears to call on an effortless, well-balanced, lived experience of both. Also, because this stage is farther away from the conventional stages, there are not yet communal containers to incubate anyone; parents do not instinctually teach a causal version of peek-a-boo. Entering into this floor, there seems to be witnessing of awareness of the subtle in the moment, of awareness of the causal after the fact (the illusory aspect of the subtle), eventually moving into full embodiment of the causal in wakeful life where most subtle and concrete objects seem to erupt effortlessly out of this causal ground, almost as if they are planted in mind by some other force. It takes about four stages (Early Construct Aware, Late Construct Aware, Unitive, and Illumined) to begin to experience the lived causal life as ordinary.

*Nondual Floor*

Entering into the nondual floor is another huge leap, yet most humans seem far from realizing this world of the nondual as an everyday ordinary experience. Nonetheless, the transition into this floor begins to take place when one develops the capacity to construct distinctions and patterns that can span gross, subtle, and causal floors, in addition to common effortless eruptions coming out of the formless ether in the illumined mind. After holding this space for time, one suddenly feels a shock—a stab, an internal tsunami, a tumble, a dive, a rolling downhill, an agonizing tearing and ripping of the fabric of mind. It is another Maya once again, a crashing clarity caused by seeing the causal ego and by

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the discovery of the illusion of the distinction-making, perspective-taking causal mind itself—the mind that all along has constructed this gross, subtle, and causal self. This causal Maya that hypnotizes us once again tumbles us in its playful hurricane, the washing machine scrubbing the mind, which is drenched in gross, subtle, and causal distinctions into a Dark Night of the Causal Self. There are glimpses of the operation of this mind that has led for so long, completely unaware that it is not leading at all. Rather, it has been incessantly discriminating amongst its own constructs, regardless of how ethereal they are, and is not able to see itself constructing gross, subtle, and causal floors. The Nondual Floor is a very sloshy and so unformed as of yet that no predictions can be made (Aurobindo, 2000). But what is this “that” that is watching this mind-self? This is a wondering that seizes one’s gaze as one fitfully surrenders mind to the nondual Divine that begins to transcend the kingdom of the mind that makes distinctions. Few, if any, know the full trajectory of the Intuitive Meta mind, the Over mind, the Super mind space, and at this point, the mind we operate with can only bow in service to the Divine calling (Aurobindo, 1992, 2000).

*Questions and Speculations About This Model*

This mind-made construct is riddled with cracks and flaws, unfinished and tenuous. All well noted, for although there is some support for this model in research that has already been done and in new research still in its early stages, there is as of yet no verification of the whole. A relevant question might be, “How is it that some of the greatest sages, saints, and siddhis who lived ages ago seemed to have had all of these experiences that I am borrowing the words for (such as Dark Night of the Senses, Soul, and Self; and Maya)?” Responding to that question, we might pretend that all the floors were always there, though the center of gravity was far earlier, as the human race began to develop from the

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animal kingdom to the kingdom of mind. We might imagine that there were no stage distinctions at the subtle, causal, and nondual floors, and perhaps only a few discriminations within the concrete floor. Since awareness of state stages seems to lead awareness of developmental levels (awareness of states have been acknowledged for thousands of years, while awareness of developmental levels arose within the past 100 years), we might speculate that the Subtle Floor, the Causal Floor, and the Nondual Floor were each but one state stage, undissected because of the unevolved mind kingdom. It could be that, for some advanced souls, there was a leap to the unformed Subtle Floor, and then to the Causal Floor, and finally a tumbling into the Nondual Floor for those very few who had an energetic push to ascend and a perfect pull from the Divine hand.

But wait! Isn't this simply stacking the advanced states on top of the developmental model, such as Wilber's SES model (1995)?

Perhaps I should try again. The model described on these pages depicts gross, subtle, causal and non-dual states and realizations in gross subtle, causal and non-dual stages, in gross, subtle causal and non-dual worlds. Oh, but isn't this but another, perhaps more detailed form of the Wilber Combs Matrix?

It might be that this is the incredible space of each person's gross, subtle, causal and non-dual states, stages, floors, and worlds, as they intersect with others who are at different gross, subtle causal and non-dual states, stages floors and worlds, with these intersecting spaces evoking evolution in each other? Yes, this is simply another more complex version of the third model depicted at the beginning of this paper.

Perhaps this fourth model is simply describing something else; a pliable model that sees the truth of all of these previous models, and can't easily be put on paper because it is itself evolving moment by moment through time; a model that continues to change as

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humanity evolves; a flowing model which might be accessed if I take a meta-perspective on perspectives-sweeping-through-time, rather than from any one frozen place; perspectives viewed like rushing water in a stream, sometimes a trickle and sometimes a flood, which through time changes the truth of the concrete, subtle and causal landscape forever even as it doesn't change the truth of the stream that is flowing.

Awareness kissing distinctions

The Witness parenting stages

Ave Maria becoming

Ishwara

The kingdom of mind

Bows in service to the Mouth of the River

Setting Buddha's and Christ's table

Host or Hostess?

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