

Ken Wilber as Spiritual Development Theorist

Ken Wilber. (1949 – present) Wilber is a contemporary American philosopher and author of many books. Most directly relevant to our topic is his *Integral Spirituality*.

Ken Wilber's spiritual development stages are a measure of development in both culture and consciousness and thus also in spirituality. In *Integral Spirituality* he calls his stages Altitudes, refers to them by color names and shows how they compare with other developmental theories. Wilber correlates his stages with Fowler's and thus they also correlate well with ours. Rather than try to explain all twelve of Wilber's stages, I will only explain those which correlate with the levels we are dealing with on this website.

Ken Wilber's scale begins with a very primitive mind he calls "infrared" and has the person passing through "magenta" before arriving at his third level, red, which is the first one we shall discuss. At "red" a person is power-oriented, "might makes right," aggression rules and there is a limited capacity to take the role of an "other." Red is egocentric and self-protective, and exists at Piaget's pre-operational level. Wilber claims this is the same as Fowler's Mythic-Literal Stage, which perhaps straddles our [Lawless and Faithful levels](#).

Next, in Ken Wilber's spiritual development stages there is the Amber level, a conventional and conformist stage. The person at Amber has expanded his level of concern beyond himself and now includes his group—favors his group above all others. Wilber tells us the person at the Amber altitude is at Piaget's Concrete Operational level. He is fundamentalist (my God is right no matter what) extremely patriotic (my country is right, no matter what) and ethnocentric (my people are best, no matter what.) This mindset is essentially equivalent to Fowler's Synthetic-Conventional level and [our Faithful level](#).

At Orange the person realizes that "truth is not delivered; it is discovered." (you can't accept the teachings of your church on blind faith.) The person begins to move away from primary identification with "my tribe" and becomes an individual. However, in doing so, he expands his worldview to include more than just his tribe, his religion, his family, his political party, his country) and becomes more of a citizen of the world. He becomes "worldcentric." Orange is rational, conscientious and has reached Piaget's formal operational level. This most appropriately occurs between late high school and early adulthood. It is obvious however that some people never reach this level at all. Wilber's orange level corresponds roughly to Fowler's Individual-Reflective stage and [our Rational level](#).

The Green Altitude is conjunctive—this person ties concepts together, rather than look for divisions. He begins to take on Reich's Relational and Conceptual Reasoning level IV. He recognizes "that there are multiple ways of seeing reality." Because Green is broadening his worldview even further, he begins to have more compassion for others and may become heavily involved in social causes. He may also become more idealistic. Wilber claims his Green is roughly equivalent to Fowler's Conjunctive Faith level. While this may be the case, I personally see it as about a half-step behind [our Mystic level](#).

After Green in Wilber's Altitudes, we have Teal, followed quickly by Turquoise, Indigo, Violet, and...can you guess?...Ultraviolet and then Clear Light. There is no way we can evaluate the upper stages of spiritual development in that much detail here.

Suffice it to say that the farther up Wilber's Altitudes a person goes, the more they can include in their worldview (Teal is "Kosmocentric" and Integral.) Teal consciousness sees that each of the previous stages reveals an important truth, and pulls them all together and integrates them without trying to change them to "be more like me."

Wilber relates Teal and Turquoise to Fowler's highest level—Universalizing faith. As for the far less specific stages discussed on this site, [our Mystic level](#) is a mixture of something between Green and Turquoise.

An important point here is that we can assume we have no idea to what level people might someday progress. While Fowler's Universalizing faith is rare now, someday that may be the norm, and some other higher "Ultraviolet" and "Clear Light?" stages may be beginning to emerge.

In many of his other works, Wilber elaborates a concept it may be important to include here. He explains the existence of various developmental *lines*, of which spiritual development is only one. Other lines include the cognitive, the ethical, the logical, the mathematical, the musical, the spatial, etc. Because people can develop at a different rate along each line, we can easily note the existence of some people who are very highly sophisticated, say scientifically, while still existing at a much less sophisticated level, say spiritually.