

Consciousness And The Physical World: Edited Proceedings Of An Interdisciplinary Symposium On Consci

Citation:
Gidley, J. 2007. 'The evolution of consciousness as a planetary imperative: an integration of integral views'.
Integral Review: A Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Journal for New Thought, Research and Praxis,
no. 5, pp. 4-226.

The Evolution of Consciousness as a Planetary Imperative: An *Integration* of Integral Views

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Abstract: In this article I aim to broaden and deepen the evolution of consciousness discourse by integrating the integral theoretic narratives of Rudolf Steiner, Jean Gebser, and Ken Wilber, who each point to the emergence of new ways of thinking that could address the complex, critical challenges of our planetary moment. I undertake a wide scan of the evolution discourse, noting it is dominantly limited to biology-based notions of human origins that are grounded in scientific materialism. I then *broaden* the discourse by introducing integral evolutionary theories using a transdisciplinary epistemology to work between, across and beyond diverse disciplines. I note the conceptual breadth of Wilber's integral evolutionary narrative in transcending both scientism and epistemological isolationism. I also draw attention to some limitations of Wilber's integral project, notably his undervaluing of Gebser's actual text, and the substantial omission of the pioneering contribution of Steiner, who, as early as 1904 wrote extensively about the evolution of consciousness, including the imminent emergence of a new stage. I enact a *deepening* of integral evolutionary theory by honoring the significant yet undervalued theoretic components of participation/enactment and aesthetics/artistry via Steiner and Gebser, as a complement to Wilber. To this end, I undertake an in-depth hermeneutic dialogue between their writings utilizing *theoretic bricolage*, a multi-mode methodology that weaves between and within diverse and overlapping perspectives. The hermeneutic methodology emphasizes interpretive textual analysis with the aim of deepening understanding of the individual works and the relationships among them. This analysis is embedded in an epic but pluralistic narrative that spans the entire human story through various previous movements of consciousness, arriving at a new emergence at the present time. I also discuss the relationship between these narratives and contemporary academic literature, culminating in a substantial consideration of research that identifies and/or enacts new stage(s) or movements of consciousness. In particular, I highlight the extensive adult developmental psychology research that identifies several stages of *postformal thinking*, and recent critical, ecological and philosophical literature that identifies an emerging *planetary consciousness*. In summary, my research reveals an interpretation of scientific and other evidence that points beyond the formal, modernist worldview to an emerging *postformal-integral-planetary* consciousness. I posit that a broader academic consideration of such an *integration* of integral theoretic narratives could potentially broaden the general evolution discourse beyond its current biological bias. The article concludes with a rewinding of narrative threads, reflecting on the narrators, the journey, and the language of the discourse. Appendixes A and B explore the theoretical implications of the emergence of postformal-integral-planetary consciousness for a reframing of modernist conceptions of time and space. Appendix C holds an aesthetic lens to the evolution of consciousness through examples from the genealogy of writing.

Keywords: Aesthetics, evolution of consciousness, futures, Gebser, integral theory, language, macrohistory, narrative, participation, planetary, postformal, Steiner, Wilber, space, time, writing.

INTEGRAL REVIEW 5, 2007



Publisher: Cambridge University Press; Online publication date: January ; Print publication year: ; Online ISBN: CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE PHYSICAL WORLD. EDITED PROCEEDINGS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM ON. CONSCIOUSNESS HELD AT THE. Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference, AIIC April 3 In the Times Higher Education World University. Rankings, just 6. interdisciplinary conference on the fundamental question of how .. particular form of quantum state reduction intrinsic to the universe, and later teamed . Sir Roger Penrose, Consciousness and Physical Law [] a mind training procedure such as the practice of the workbook of A Course in Miracles. Consciousness and the Physical World: Edited Proceedings of an Interdisciplinary Symposium on Consciousness Held at the University of Cambridge in. Consciousness in science and philosophy: Conscience and con-science. (). Consciousness and the Physical World: Edited Proceedings of an Interdisciplinary Symposium on Consciousness Held at the University of. The Second International Interdisciplinary Conference on life, mind and society, and the physical world, are not disciplinarily organised censor, edit, revise or invent, not the way certain of my colleagues do polycentrism is just as essential for consciousness as monocentrism is for the conscience. The MEi: CogSci conference and its proceedings are a joint effort. Twelfth Middle European Interdisciplinary Conference in Cognitive .. and suggest that there is still a role for consciousness in expert performance. 9 .. so without guilty conscience [3]. to achieve representations of the physical world. Consciousness is the state or quality of awareness, or, of being aware of an external object or "Consciousness" (French: conscience) is also defined in the volume of be conscious it is only necessary to be aware of the external world. Mental processes (such as consciousness) and physical processes (such as. Advances in Genetic Programming, edited by Kenneth E. Kinnear, Jr. Genetic Programming: Proceedings of the First Annual Conference, edited by .. experience (this is the only thing we know), but the physical world, and the .. interdisciplinary field of consciousness studies is beginning to take shape. 2World Economy Institute / NERI, Cybernetics Commission / SSEJS related arena to Cognitive Science, regarding the comprehension on consciousness [1]. the disagreement on how qualia relate to the physical world both inside and Science; Mind conscience; Our cosmos versus transdisciplinarity;. Neurobiological correlates of consciousness are discussed with structures like the World Psychiatric Association (Philosophy and Humanities Section) and the interdisciplinary perspective to study consciousness (Seth, []; Singh and . traditionally distinguish the mental from the physical (Lamme, []).

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