

Diamonds of Integral Philosophy

An outline of the book ›Integral Philosophy‹

Johannes Heinrichs



Author
Johannes Heinrichs
https://johannesheinrichs.de

Publisher
Reflexivity Press
Lisbon
Johannes Heinrichs Edition

Latest version and notes on corrections: https://reflexivitypress.com/en/books/heinrichs-diamonds-integral-philosophy
Feedback: feedback+jh.en.diamonds-integral-philosophy@reflexivitypress.com
Cover: © Reflexivity Press, Kai Froeb. https://reflexivitypress.com/en/about/cover-art/

First edition
Edition Prisma, Auroville 2017

Publication
2025
Page-identical new edition: the book pages are reproduced unchanged; front matter newly typeset.

© Copyright 2026 by Reflexivity Press, Lisbon.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or made available to the public without the prior written permission of the publisher, except as permitted by copyright law. The moral right of the author has been asserted.
Text and data mining: reserved (Art. 4(3) Directive (EU) 2019/790).



About the Author

Johannes Heinrichs was born in 1942 in Rheinhausen (today part of Duisburg). As a Jesuit he studied philosophy in Pullach and Munich. In 1972 he received his doctorate in Bonn with *Die Logik der Phänomenologie des Geistes*; in 1975 he completed his habilitation in Frankfurt.

In March 1975, in Paris, he found the four stages of reflection that carry his entire work. In more than forty books he has developed from them a theory of action, a five-volume philosophy of language, a reflexive systems theory of society, the proposal of a democracy with four sub-parliaments and, most recently, a philosophy of nature.

In 1977 he left the order because of his fundamental criticism of the institutional Church, and thereby gave up his chair. From 1998 to 2002 he was visiting professor of social ecology at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Since then he has concentrated on writing.

He lives in Duisburg and Berlin. Most of his essays are freely available at johannesheinrichs.de.

1. The Proper Source of Philosophy

Lived self-reflection and methodical reflection

The author of the book “Integral Philosophy” is much nearer to Sri Aurobindo`s understanding of “integral” than to that of Ken Wilber, which he characterizes as “fast food and overall philosophy” (Appendix). The most fundamental difference to Wilber is the author`s start from the human “Ego” as a self-referent or self-reflexive being. Where Wilber states that the “I” can as little recognize itself as a knife is able to cut itself, the author rejects this objectivism and sees the “secret” of self-consciousness and consciousness in just the capability of self-reflection. This is also the position of Sri Aurobindo, which he shares with the greatest representatives of European and Indian thought. Sri Aurobindo doesn`t aim at an epistemologically systematic way of thinking, and therefore does not begin from a “critical” theory of knowledge, which is the standard of European philosophy after René Descartes and Immanuel Kant. The author accepts these critical standards as indispensable for an encounter of academic philosophy between Indian wisdom teaching and spiritual teaching.

The point of departure from the human “Ego” (“I”) needs clarifications. Firstly, we must distinguish the real *philosophical* or *transcendental* “I” which is nothing else than an activity being aware of itself before any objectification, just from the self-objectifications that form the empirical or *psychological* “Me.” If human cognition began only with objects, including an objectified “Me,” Wilber would be right on this point. In that case, a really “integral” philosophy would be impossible from the very beginning, because the seeing instance, the Seer, could not see himself. Philosophy would be damned to follow the object-sciences or religious traditions as Wilber does. **Integral philosophy means, on the contrary, an independent philosophy with her own source of cognition, which is firstly the pre-objective, implicit self-cognition, secondly the explicit or theoretical reflection on the first one.** The author also speaks of a *lived or ontological self-reflection* in contrast to the *subsequent and objectifying theoretical self-reflection* (which is still something different from, but nearer to the psychological self-image).

Secondly, the departure from “I” as a self-reflexive entity does not mean at all that there is any “I” separated from the first world of objects nor from the second world of other subjects nor from the third world of cultural sense. On the contrary, being a self-relating entity, the “I” is essentially related to the “first world” of the objects, to the “second world” of subjectivity, including other subjects (beginning with the mother) and to the “third world” of sense, all at the same time.

The latter world includes not only the cultural level, represented by language, but also the trans-cultural Sense, which is infinite. The human being is capable of the thought “All,” capable of the Infinite! This is the decisive fundament of all spirituality and all “theological” thought, as we shall see.

If we speak (with the philosophers G. Frege and R. Popper) of worlds 1, 2 and 3, this is a certain concession to what is current, because this enumeration is lacking the essential difference of the "I" and "You", putting both I and You under the common title "subjects". But the I-experience is not the You-experience, which is a social one. It is true that the three worlds are only for the "I," as objective phenomena (1), as the experienced social world (2), and as the world of common language and sense (3). Nevertheless, the activity-experience of the "I" is absolutely fundamental. It is fundamental not only for our critical departure, but undoubtedly (in difference to the objects), it is constantly, always and ever, the fundament of all the three other "worlds" and experiences. The self-experience is the only subject-world, whereas the other worlds are object-worlds (if we take the word "object" in a wider sense, for otherness). The subject-world is the most indispensable and the most forgotten and misinterpreted, a "world" of its own. Therefore an integral philosophy must take it into account, all the more.

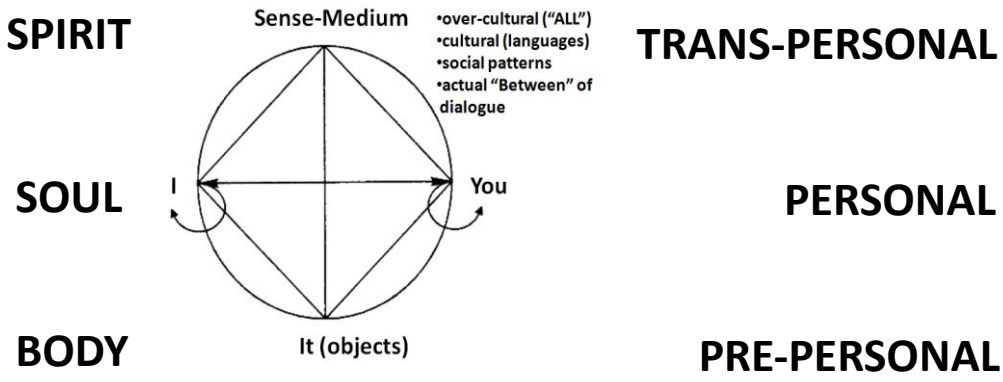
For logical reasons (namely the reflection levels which soon will become evident), the author prefers the following succession for the four "worlds" or the four *sense-elements*, as he calls them, because they are present in any human experience or action:

1. Objectivity or world of objects (world 1)
2. Subjectivity or subjective world of self-experience (world 2)
3. Inter-subjectivity or social world (world 3)
4. Medial world of Sense (world 4)

A brief summary of the structured ensemble of the sense-elements:

1. **I AM**, by reflecting myself implicitly and spontaneously. I am a being of self-reflection, first implicitly, than also explicitly. My implicit self-conscience is just the knife which cuts itself! This is the "wonder" of self-consciousness.
2. **IT is,** acknowledged by me as an object, objectified by me and more or less independent from me.
3. **You are** reflecting me, in being reflected by me. We are active mirrors of each other in a reciprocal reflection (mirroring), which is **double reflection on both sides**: my reflection of the other`s reflection on me, the other`s reflection of my reflection on him. Such is full **social relation,** exept:
4. **WE are united** in the infinite **Medium of Sense** (universal knowledge/information), which we presuppose in creating it together further.
5. **Center:** All these elements are unified in the dynamical act of Universal Being. (This will be the issue of chapter 8 only.)

The mentioned relations can be summarized in the following graphic, which contains already further aspects and which will lead us much further.



Fourness of sense-elements ("worlds") and triad of the anthropological components

There is an *ontological triad* seen from above, but this triad is a reduction of the *existential fourness* from the standpoint of subjective experience. From that point of view my I-experience is not identical with the I-experience of the Other, and the social interrelation is not reducible to both or any of them. This dialogical difference is part of dialogical thinking, which is not given with those who speak of "three worlds" only.

2. The Whole Human

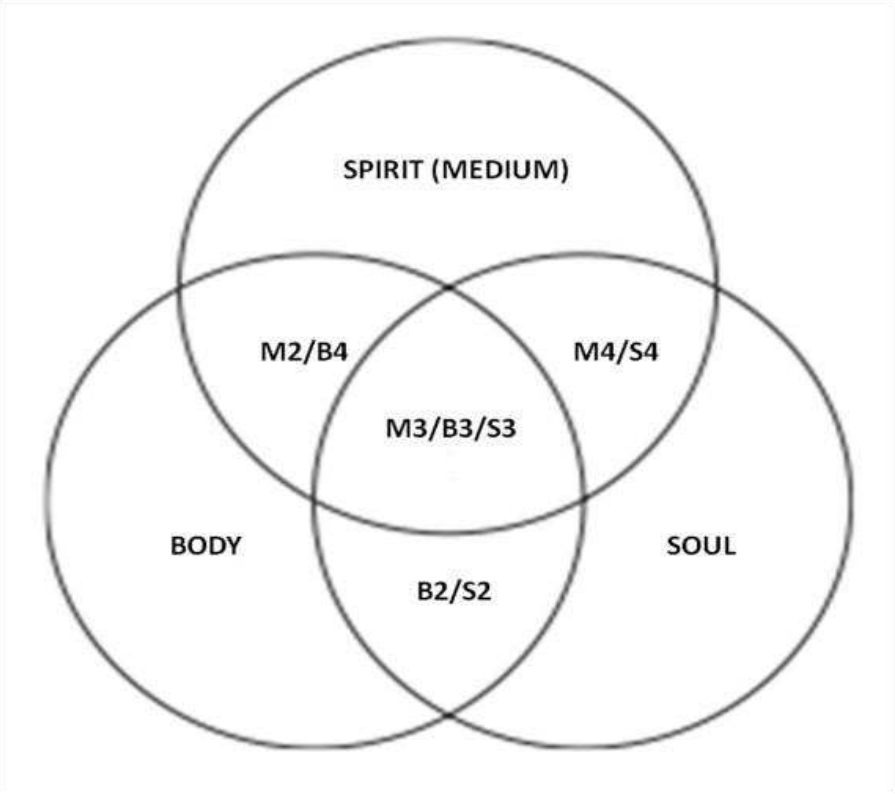
Multidimensional human being in logical reconstruction of Indian wisdom

The first aspect of philosophical integrity was beginning with the proper source of philosophy which alone provides her independence from the natural sciences as well as from religious traditions. The second aspect will take into account the wholeness of human being. In this reference integral philosophy can reconstruct the wisdom of old Vedic Seers, which is taken up as well by Aurobindo, as by the Theosophical authors in succession of Helena P. Blavatsky. The only original contribution of the author consists in a *logical deduction* of the human energy-bodies and their chakras.

As we look at the above scheme of sense-elements, we find within the structure of the four sense-elements of all human consciousness also the famous triad, if we pay attention to the vertical structure of the diamond: Body, Soul, Spirit. These concepts must not be let apart in philosophy as a matter of esoteric traditions. They can and must be properly introduced on the methodical level of modern philosophy, without her cruel amputations.

Objects are primarily what appear in the space as "*res extensa,*" whereas the subjects (I and You) are "*res cogitans,"* to take the expressions of Descartes. (It should be remarked that "*cogito/cogitans*" with Descartes stands for the whole human consciousness, not at all only for the thinking capacity in the narrower sense!) That dualism cannot be the last word, and it was not Descartes` error that philosophers after him (and before him) remained at this dualism. There is, apart from that duality, the medial sense. It is not at all reducible to the individual, because common cultural sense (languages, customs) is not individual, but a shared one. This applies all the more to Sense in its infinity, to the All-thought, which everybody has, at least implicitly, as condition of possibility of his questioning, asserting, arguing and his moral feelings. Especially, the mathematical and logical contents have nothing to do with individuality, even if they are thought by an individual. So there are Body, Soul as reflective individuality, and Sense or Logos as basically over-individual. Human being is an interpenetration of these three constituents.

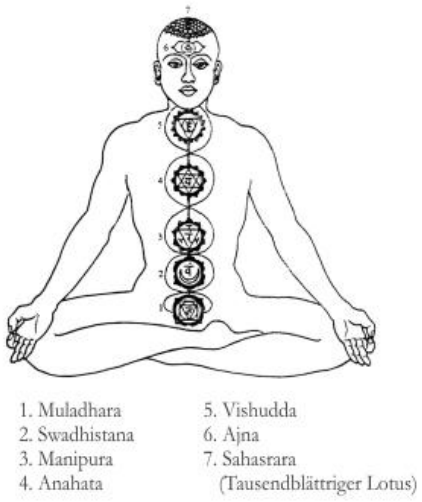
Now, there is a way from these three constituents to the sevenfold energy, the "bodies" of humans, as the following figure makes strikingly evident, in a geometrical manner:



The anthropological three-circle-model
(the inner points of intersection of two circles are at the same time the focal points of a third: picture of a complete formal equivalence of the three components)

There are three "pure" fields of Body, Soul, and Spirit in the introduced meanings. There are three fields of overlapping by two of the principles or constituents. And there is the middle field of threefold overlapping. This field can be identified as the emotional body, traditionally called astral body with the solar plexus chakra. It must not be confounded with the "heart," a current confusion. This one is the Soul itself (S1), as far as it integrates the mental body, which is represented by the field (B4/M2). This task of every individual, the integration of the mental capacities as well as the feeling capacities of the emotional body, under the Soul capacity of self-awareness, is a presupposition for their higher integration by the cosmic Bodhi-energies, and still higher by the Atman-consciousness. It is a long way to that mastership. The normal human being is on the way to integrate the mental body into his soul-life and vice versa. It may be sufficient here to indicate just the principle of a reconstructive interpretation of the geometrical figure, and to summarize it, instead of going into the theoretical and practical details:

7. logos consciousness (Atman) (M1):	crown chakra
6. cosmic consciousness (G4/S4):	front chakra, Third Eye
5. mental body (B4/M2):	throat chakra
4. pure self-consciousness (causal soul) (S1):	heart chakra
3. feeling soul/astral body (K3/S3/G3):	navel chakra, solar plexus
2. life soul/life body (K2/S2):	genital chakra
1. physical body (K1):	basic chakra



The major chakras of human being with their symbolic mandalas
(according to Vishnu Devananda, Meditation and Chakras, Munich 1984, p.113)

What is important for the idea of an Integral Philosophy are the following points:

1. The concepts Body, Soul, Spirit can be introduced in a methodically proper philosophical way. They are not the reservation of the esoteric, one of the weak points of present academic philosophy (in the West).

2. There is a logically strict connection between the Three and the Seven, which until now seems unknown.

3. To confound the constituents with the resultant components of human nature (as happens with Wilber when he speaks of the "levels" body, mind, soul, spirit etc. without satisfying definitions) is index of unclear thinking, which never is favourable for the trans-rational human capacities.

4. There are possibilities of an encounter of Western and Eastern philosophy which are by far not yet seen, not to speak of social realization.

5. The indicated anthropological model has the potential of many further clarifications, e.g. towards an integral understanding and "mapping" of the unconscious for a more satisfying theory of psychic faculties (as tried in the author`s "Critique of Integral Reason", in German language 2018).

3. The Spiritual Dimension of Democracy

Reflection levels as fundamental law of the social system

and the misunderstood truth of caste system

> *"Most important of all, the individualistic age of Europe has in its discovery of the individual fixed among the idea-forces of the future two of a master potency which cannot be entirely eliminated by any temporary reaction. The first of these, now universally accepted, is* the democratic conception *of the right of all members of the society to the full life and the full development of which they are individually capable."* *(Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle, p. 24)*

It happens rarely, if at all, that the organisation of our societies is dealt with as a general philosophical issue, or as one of fundamental and spiritual importance. "Political philosophy" seems a mere application, not a basic dimension of philosophy. This is due to the fact that most traditional philosophies are monologist in their departure. But if the inter-personal relation, the dialogue with other persons, is constitutive for a subject, as shown in chapter 1, there results a dialogical thinking which is expressed in the famous sentences of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), pupil of Hegel:

"True dialectic is not the monologue of thinker with himself, but the dialogue between I and You."- "The first object of man is man himself. The sense of nature (...) is a comparably future product. The other person is the bond between me and the world. I am and feel myself depending on the world, because I first feel myself dependent on other humans."[1]

In relation to the other persons, the reflection, which is so constitutive for self-consciousness, reaches a totally different dimension: The *interpersonal reflection becomes practical* - that means changing the interpersonal relations and changing the persons themselves. There are four levels of interpersonal reflection:

1. *Instrumental* action with reference to the other (and handling of the other), e.g. treatment by a doctor or pre-personal business, where the other is only seen in the context of things or money.
2. *Strategic* action takes into account the actions of the other for one`s own interests.
3. *Communicative* action responds to the expectations and desires of the other, not just with strategic intent, the track of self-interest (2), but for the other`s own sake; called also "altruistic" (derived from *"alter, the other"*). This communicative approach does not mean a particular altruistic attitude, but that it is nothing without successful communication. The respective subjective attitudes and acts are elements of communication, which enter into this and

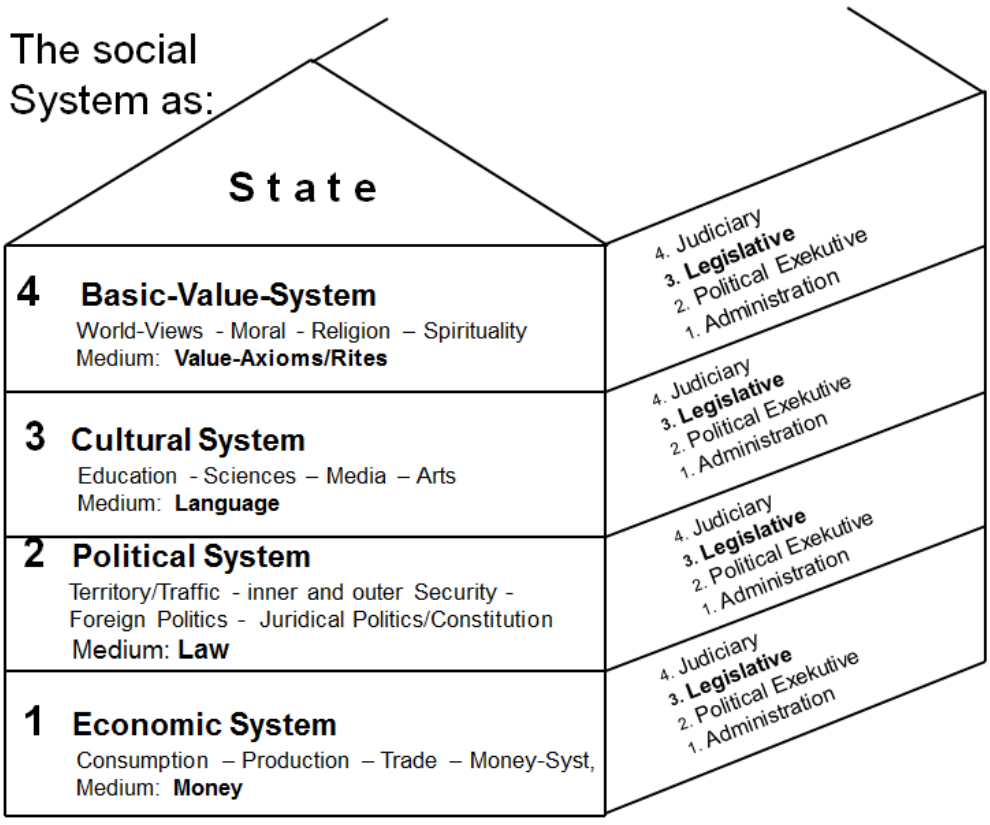
[1] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity.* This main work of Feuerbach from 1842, has been, because of his religious criticism, less appreciated in its positive, spiritual substance.

are subsequently diverted from this. It is for example possible that a partner wants to stay in communication, and the other does not, or that the current communication ceases. Then only the individual´s more or less "altruistic" or strategic attitudes remain. Successful communication goes beyond any subjective attitudes!

4. *Meta-communicative* actions or attitudes respond to the requirements and standards of social coexistence; these standards are mutually recognised, partly put into question, in any case, and are more or less regulated anew.

The → *social action* was "classically" defined by Max Weber as an “orientation on the actions of others.”[2] If we think this orientation as practical reflection with the above leveling, the decisive *structural constant* is revealed: the *four levels of social action*. The reflection levels shown above are the *predominant components* of social action.

On the meta-communicative level, the interpersonal relation becomes a *social system*, dynamic and self-regulating. Systemic thinking means then that the relations are no longer seen from the view-point of the individual actors, but from “above,” from the community as such. And now, we look at **the same levels of personal interaction as *system-levels*** of a big community, as that of a state, and find differentiations which we all know – but normally without systemic understanding:



The three-dimensional house (Oikos) of society, organized in a state.

The four great levels of any society are called subsystems. They are nothing else than the reflection-levels we know already from the direct interpersonal relation.

The second division (subdivision) is given for understanding the method of fractal division, and for illustrating the richness of the subsystems. Here you find the sixteen areas of human and social activity which *in a sense of social ethics* will be further explained in chapter 9.

On the political level 2 we could also insert (as is done in the book) the formal distinctions of the so-called political powers, traditionally legislative, executive, and judiciary power. Within the executive power we must distinguish, for logical as well as for practical reasons, the kind of executive, which has only to apply the existing laws, which is the *administration (e.g. police, financial offices etc.), from the* executive, which has the task and power to act and to decide for the community, which is the *government*. So we have not three but four powers or functions of the state in this logical succession: administrative (objective application), governmental (subjective power), legislative (intersubjective, communicative consulting), and judiciary (meta-communicative control).

We will see in the following that this division of powers must be applied on each system level. Therefore it is already put at the right of the house, in the graphic.

This is the first theory of social systems which is directly *derived from the nature of the individual and the interpersonal relations!* There can be no other satisfying social system theory.[3] Now let us briefly draw the conclusions for an integral theory of democracy.

1. In our existing democracies **the whole system is governed from below**, from the economic sphere and from a "capitalist" money system, which is quite dubious. Even if religion or serves as ideology of justification or diversion, the human basic values are not really leading the whole of society. And even if the money-system was in order, the governing of the system from below ("money rules the world") basically cannot be accepted. Everybody knows that, but nobody knows how to change it – except many fanatics of another money-system. Even if they are right in their economic field, they are very wrong from an integral point of view. The whole of a society cannot be changed from the economic field alone! To try that means to repeat the historical mistakes of Marxists as well as of liberals and neo-liberals.
2. In our existing democracies around the world, the **political parties** are decisive. These parties bundle all problems (basic values of culture, foreign

[3] The author has been much inspired by the theory of social systems of Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), which could not preserve its former popularity, solely because the basic principle of his system-levels (interpersonal reflection) was not found by him.

issues, inner politics, and the economy) and are chosen by their electors for all this – that means for nothing.

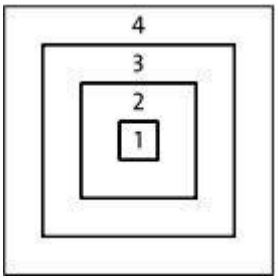
Apart from many other weaknesses of the parliamentary system these seem to be the most general and crucial ones. Now, the remedy of these weaknesses is not at all the abolishment (or a further weakening) of parliament (e.g. by direct democracy of plebiscites, which is either only an ornamental addition or totally inept for a big state), but on the very contrary, the further development and *inner* synthesis of direct and parliamentary democracy.

Let us briefly come to serious solutions which follow logically and rather simply from the above system analysis.

Ad 1: Governing from above, from the basic values instead of from below is possible by the differentiation of the parliament according to the system levels. That means **four chambers of the parliaments with a hierarchical legislation-power.**

Ad 2: **The representatives must be elected for each chamber independently.** In this way, the elections become at the same time matter-decisions. The parties (federations of candidates with the same aims) become matter-specific parties instead of power-parties which claim to cover all issues.

The decisions of the upper parliaments are binding for the lower ones. The existing second chambers, the House of Lords, the Senate, or the [redacted] could constitute the third level, safeguarding the cultural diversity of the partial states.

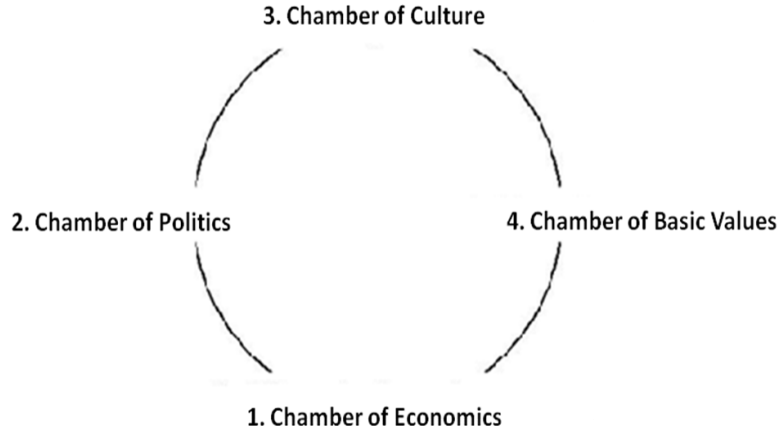


The hierarchic aspect of the partial parliaments, framework legislation

4 = basic value chamber, 3 = culture chamber, 2 = chamber of politics, 1 = chamber of economics

There must also be a circular feedback from the “lower” chambers to the upper ones. This can easily be provided by several parliamentary “lectures” in which the representatives of each chamber can publicly give their statements to any legislative project.

Taking into account the vote of the other chambers - as well as that of extra-parliamentarian social groups - contains the *circular feedback*. If a clear majority of all three other chambers presents converging concerns against a bill, it would be factually as well as tactically unwise to ignore these concerns, even if by the hierarchical point of view this would be legal. So the votes of the chambers 1 and 2 undoubtedly have influence on the deputies in chambers 3 and 4 and vice versa. As the members of parliament must all four years (for example) face re-election, although not all at the same time, there is a feedback-circuit.



The circular aspect of the differentiated parliamentary system.

There are many practical questions concerning the rhythm of independent elections for each chamber, concerning the number of parliamentarians (which must not increase, on the contrary!), and concerning a possible corresponding division of the *government* and the *administration* in the proper sense, etc.

The real main question is: How to win the minds and hearts of people, especially the members of the political and economic class? Besides an already rather numerous agreement among "normal" people, there must be forerunners among the elite, people of influence, which have not only the intellectual capacity to recognize the unique value of this model, but above all the *spiritual drive or motivation* to stand for it. Still more than for truth-finding alone, it needs spiritual qualities for the realization of truth and justice. For there are too many privileged circles which are against such a big change, even though it would be for the wealth of all.

It may be allowed to quote Alice A. Bailey responding to her Tibetan Master: "Take for instance the emergence into manifestation of the egoic ray of the German nation. Its lower expression is that of architectural construction, and can be seen at this time making its presence felt in the new and modern style in building. *Its higher expression is not yet to be noted, but Germany some day will give out to the world a sound form of hierarchical government*."[4]

It may also be allowed to remark that India has a special responsibility for the installment of a fourfold value-democracy, because the caste systems seem to be a degenerated or perverted version of what the old seers intuitively intended without formulating it enough in rational terms: a value based society. India is the biggest democracy in the world, and the most adaptable (with many changes of Constitution). It could become the most developed one, upon its philosophical and spiritual fundaments, perhaps together with Germany where the above model stems from.

By the way: It would be false to speak of a Platonic "Republic of Philosophers." The role of philosophy is only to detect the structures which enable the participation of

---

4 *Treatise on the Seven Rays I*, Geneva 1987, p. 389. – Online edition: https://www.lucistrust.org/online_books/esoteric_psychology_volume_i/section_two_chapter_iii_the_rays_andman/6_the_nations_and_the_rays.

everybody. Before everybody can participate, a philosophical and at the same time spiritual elite must go ahead. Democracy must be gripped as a spiritual task, as part of an integral spirituality in the sense of Aurobindo. There can be no Integral Philosophy which doesn`t essentially include a whole philosophy of society and democracy.

Chapter 4: Semiotic Action Theory

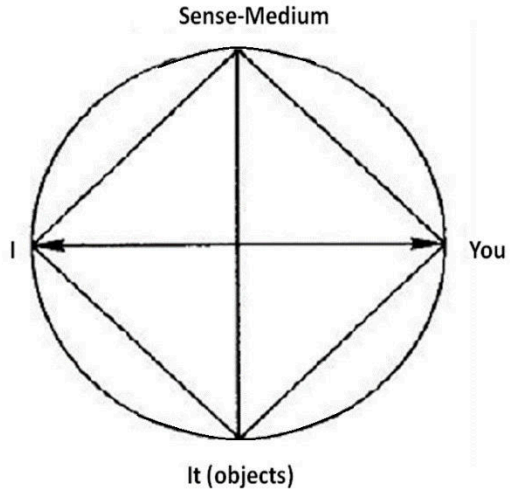
An unknown periodical System

The following four chapters are part of a so called semiotic theory. *Semiotics* is the doctrine of the signs. Human signs (in difference to natural signs) are created by and embedded in actions. So the first level of semiotic-processes or sign-processes are actions. The big hypothesis which binds the following chapters together can now be illustrated. It is about the great **levels of semiotic** processes which stand in a logical order of sucessive reflection:

1. **Actions** as the basis
2. **Language** as meta-action
3. **Arts** as meta-languages
4. **Mystic** as meta-art, where action is lifted in pure receptivity

The proof of this very comprehensive and integral view, is given step by step in the following outline of the corresponding chapters of the book “Integral Philosophy”. Here we have the privilege of overview without proving each step in detail.

We understand *actions* as such human activity-events which change something in the world. The main division of actions results from the known sense-elements which constitute all human action-situations:



According to these four general sense-elements or “worlds,” we can distinguish four main types of human action:

1. Objective-physical actions
2. Inner-subjective actions
3. Social actions
4. Expression-actions

Here is not the place to enumerate or even to explain all subtypes of action which fall under these main types. The subdivision goes to 4^4 = 256 subtypes! It may be sufficient just to understand the method of the reflection-logical division. This method is called *dialectical subsumption*: the repeated division of the subdivisions by the main types. The whole is, so to speak, subordinated and "holographically" present in every division. Contemporary mathematics speaks of "fractal" division. But it is an old method of "harmonical thinking," which can be found in Indian and Western astrology, in the Chinese I Ching and in many old scriptures, more or less elaborated in Plato, and in Hegel. In an implicit manner, you find it also in Sri Aurobindo`s main-works. What sometimes seems simple repetition, is mostly analogous "repetition" on a new level. Today such an integral systemic method is unknown or rejected as nearly all systematics in Western philosophy. After the so-called break down of German Idealism, the mainstream of Western philosophy does not dare to systematically improve Hegel´s thinking and method by a new reflection logic, but prefers miniatures or witty arbitrariness.

This method is not a purely deductive one. The distinction of "induction" (1) and "deduction" (2) is not at all complete. It must be completed by "reconstruction" (3) which means *a methodical dialogue of conceptual elements and experience*. Reconstruction is the leading method in Integral Philosophy. This one must be completed by the method of *systemic design (4),* which means to find the *logical place* of each concept and division in an integral *architecture of thought*. Only by distinguishing and disposing of all these basic methods can you speak of integral thinking according to old "academic" standards. (Until now, there is no contemporary integral thinking in the academic mainstream. Holography is seen as a mere technical phenomenon).

The result of the methods of reconstruction and systemic design is in the field of action theory, and can be called a *periodic system*, in analogy to the known periodic system of chemical elements. Mankind has succeeded in systemizing the chemical elements and (approximately) the world of fauna and flora – but not its own action-types. That makes communication about them rather difficult and confusing!

What is possible here still, instead of going into the subdivisions of the given general division, is only to show the *transition from the sphere of actions into the sphere of language*. This transition is made by sign-actions, more specifically by meta-signs. Sign-action belongs to the fourth big sphere of expression-actions (see above). An expression-action is, e.g., waving for farewell. It becomes a sign-action, if the vague meaning of this waving gets a clearly defined meaning; e.g., if the waving in traffic means a very specific intention of action. (The waving by hand can be replaced by lights, by indicators. These are technical substitutes of human actions). A sign-action is a class of expression actions with well-defined meanings. Now these sign-actions can be regulated by meta-signs, e.g., if a policeman indicates that certain rules are changed. This policeman can eventually be made of cardboard. It is a meta-sign saying that signs have changed.

Now, *language* is a system of signs which regulates itself, in the very process of speaking, by its own meta-signs, the grammatical rules. This is **a semiotic definition of language as self-regulating meta-action!** This definition enables one, by the

way, to distinguish clearly the astonishing animal “languages” from human language. Only a self-conscious being can develop self-regulating action-rules. (The animals have consciousness, but not self-consciousness, cf. chapter 8).