

Transforming Sustainability:

An Integral Leader's Framework

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Abstract

The ethics of leadership requires an increasingly widening span of moral development. The boundaries of ethical considerations that concern organisations have extended to both involve, and respect, the diverse interests of new stakeholders, such as employees, communities and the social and biological environment. The consideration of inter-generational and intra-generational equity within common conceptualisations of sustainability require both present and future humanitarian interests to be taken into account. Leaders must now find a way, not only to lead as they see fit, but also to encompass and balance universal values within ethical relativism. Concepts such as corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship, environmental responsibility, and sustainable development are used inter-changeably. The requirements of the leadership of the sustainable organisation has become increasingly difficult to understand

In this paper an integral approach using a holistic representation of sustainability is presented to guide the transformational leader. The proposition is that conceptualisations of sustainability follow the patterns of perceptual readiness proposed as levels of existence by Dr Clare Graves (1970, 1973, 1974), the development of sustainability principles within organisations reflecting the development of human moral consciousness (Graves 1959, Kohlberg 1984).

Using Graves' eight contiguous staged levels of developmental values, each qualitatively different from the previous stage, and integrated lines of development across holonic levels in four quadrants (Wilber 2000a), an all levels/ all quadrant approach to sustainability is described. The framework presented allows leaders to view the transformational development of how sustainability is thought about in organisations in terms of the transition between levels and the development within quadrants, holistically from subsistence to existence.

Introduction

The role of the leader is to guide, inspire and to provide clarity in navigating the path ahead. Leadership vision is the ability to see what others do not see and then to show the way. In performing this role our leaders act as custodians of our future. Sustainability defines a path which enables this future to be realized. Navigating the path to sustainability is a leaders' role.

Sustainability is a concept that seems to us to be important, but also one that defies definition. If it is difficult to achieve clarity in what we mean by this concept, it will be equally difficult to demonstrate the leadership required in this important area.

This paper seeks to transform sustainability, from a confused and daunting concept relegated to the periphery of the management agenda, to a leadership priority that enables the achievement of clearly definable sustainable futures. It does this by aiming to empower the transforming leader to navigate with insight into the path ahead.

Leadership Role

The leadership challenge is always to hold a vision for a worthwhile future, translating this with sufficient clarity into the direction to be taken, and the means of getting there. In discovering this worthwhile future the transforming leader provides definition to comprehensible ends that have meaning and purpose. In seeking to achieve these purposeful ends, the morally responsible leader accomplishes them within ethical means.

Providing sufficient clarity to guide others to accomplish worthwhile ends within ethical means is one way of defining the essence of the leadership role.

The boundaries of ethical considerations that concern organisations have extended to both involve, and respect, the diverse interests of new stakeholders, such as employees, communities and the social and biological environment. Increasingly the dilemma of leadership choice is not exercised in a moral vacuum. A plurality of stakeholders, each with a slightly different ethical lens on what is 'right', influence the leadership path. The leadership challenge for all leaders of complex organisations is not only to have clarity as to their own ethical compass, but also to integrate the ethical relativism of those they lead.

The modern leader must understand and integrate concepts such as corporate citizenship, environmental responsibility, corporate social (societal) responsibility, sustainable entrepreneurship, sustainable development and sustainability. Many of these distinct terms are often used inter-changeably. The responsibilities of the 'sustainable organisation' have become increasingly difficult to understand.

Marrewijk (2003) looks at this complexity and notes that in the endeavour to create an adequate response to our changing life conditions there will be a wide array of survival strategies, each founded on a specific set of values, reflecting a vision of reality and a differing awareness, understanding and definition of the 'truth'. As values systems which do not align come together, there will be conflicting truths and worldviews and opposing strategies of how to deal with, and interpret, the situation.

Leaders must now find a way not only to lead as they see fit, but also to encompass and balance universal values within ethical relativism. In this maze of complexity leaders find themselves confronted by sustainability.

Sustainability Maze

On walking into the realm of sustainability the leader is faced with many twists and turns, false signposts and dead ends. They are told about the Triple Bottom Line, quadruple bottom lines and multiple bottom lines, about environmental management systems, sustainability management systems and systems for managing their management systems. They are asked to choose sustainability reporting metrics, sustainability indicators and adopt global reporting initiatives, and to implement clean development mechanisms, greenhouse gas management and eco-efficiency controls. But what does it all mean – and what does it mean to those we lead?

Leaders looking for sustainability will encounter all sorts of curious objects while exploring different parts of the sustainability maze. Objects such as ecological economics, ISO 14001 accreditation, the living planet index, lifecycle analysis, wellbeing assessments, natural capital calculations, deep ecology principles, sustainable development instruments, ecological footprints, vital signs monitoring, integrated impact assessments, biomimicry, ecological integrity, industrial ecology, community visioning processes and eco-economy indicators will all appear on the path.

When each is encountered the question is asked: “Perhaps this is the object we seek?”. Understanding what these objects are and how they are different, is a technical challenge.

Often this involves a technical role. Understanding why these particular objects exist and how they are important, is the leadership challenge.

The objects encountered are all worthwhile clues to unlocking sustainability, but also contain great scope for distraction. As we travel through the maze we may collect these interesting objects as we go. In recognising their aggregations as being different components of the greater puzzle, our leadership perspective of sustainability forms.

How then is a leader to navigate through the sustainability maze?

Sustainability Perspective

The aim of this paper is not to get lost in the sustainability maze, but rather to enable the integral leader to have an overview perspective of both the whole and the parts. To go searching the maze to find sustainability is to miss the point - that it is the maze. Many false turns and dead end corners can be explored along the way before we understand that sustainability is not the object in the centre of the maze, but the construct that defines and limits the path.

By shifting our view to one that is above the maze, using a meta-paradigmatic or integral perspective, we see both the map and the different paths.

Definitions of Sustainability

Many of those we lead will want to know what sustainability is before they begin working with it. The main point to understand is the importance of your framing of the area of enquiry: being ‘definitions of sustainability’, in the plural. The correct approach is not to go looking for *a* definition of sustainability, but to seek *your* definition. The leader’s role is to appreciate that there are multiple definitions, each different and all potentially appropriate, and to define the right one, consciously – to provide a link between values and vision.

In exploring the proliferation of individual definitions of sustainability Prezzy (1997) noted that there was ‘little point expanding on the collection of 50 sustainability definitions I made in 1989, to the five thousand definitions that one could readily find today’. No doubt the number has increased since then. Occasionally in the confusion of exploring the concept the first definition met is seen as the appropriate one – and then much time is wasted making sense of it.

One pitfall is that, in avoiding the sustainability maze, we may instead choose to adopt the distinctly different concept of ‘sustainable development’. Sustainability and sustainable development are not the same thing (although they can be). Sustainable development is but one type of sustainability, and as Jacobs (1995) notes, there are still 386 definitions of sustainable development.

Often when attributing the Brundtland Commission definition of sustainable development as the conceptual source of the term, it is also seen as providing a reliable definition, which is easily adopted¹. Finding this clear definition means we are given something solid to cling to in the sea of sustainability confusion. In defining sustainability as being *‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of*

future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED 1987:8) we must as leaders be able to answer the obvious clarifying questions.

Is it the 'development' that is to be sustainable or our present state we want to sustain?; what are our 'needs' and how are they different to 'wants'?; when we say 'future generations' – how many?; and how do we know what they will 'need'? Inherent within the interpretation of this definition is the problem of differing interpretations based on different values systems. One person's need is another's luxury. With so many interpretations of its underlying meaning, the initial clarity gained is quickly lost.²

However, the problems of definition in dealing with sustainability do not render the concept meaningless. The entering of the term into common language and usage has meant that for many people the phrase now has some meaning, even though its meaning may vary across time and between individuals (Rigby, Howlett, Woodhouse 2000). Our responses to the sustainability debate reflect a psychological development that itself is creating an emergent shift towards sustainability (Judge 2002). For this reason, at this stage of the development of the concept by discourse, no one can tell you what sustainability means, only what they mean by it (Varey 2003).

Ethical Perspectives on Sustainability

To begin to understand sustainability is to acknowledge one simple premise:

'Sustainability' is not a defined technical term, but a moral concept capable of individual definition within a social and physical environment (ie a biopsychosocial construct).

Sustainability is to be seen as a values-based term, making it an ethical construct, and not just an objective fact. It is distinct from the engineering processes, community actions or governance procedures which are the visible indications of the application of that construct. In accepting sustainability is a values based concept – like love, justice, goodness, beauty or truth - we are provided with a way through the maze enabling us to ‘see’ sustainability with clarity.

Sustain What?

For the leader, the way to navigate the maze is to understand different values based sustainability definitions. The simplest place to begin is to understand the term itself from a values perspective. When we seek sustainability we are in fact seeking the ‘ability to sustain’ something. Knowing what the ‘thing’ to be sustained is, provides the key. Having a framework to think about and manage the alternatives then provides us with the much needed missing perspective.

Sustainability may be about your own basic needs, a way of life, control over resources, an existing social order, a position of economic advantage, community values, the future of humanity or the future of the global biosphere as a whole. It may be about all of these things. It can also be about those things now, or in the future, or both.

A sustainability definition is where we choose what we mean by sustainability and place boundaries around this. When we create a bounded definition of sustainability we do so with the intention of moving towards achieving that end state. This highlights the distinction between a sustainability definition and a sustainability vision which remains

undefined. A sustainability definition is the way to translate that vision into action – to define the path through the maze.

A Framework for Defining Sustainability

Finding the correct words to use to define sustainability is important, but discovering the meaning behind them is more relevant. Becoming conscious about the scope and significance of that definition, and communicating this, is the leader's role. The meaning behind the definition provides the 'statement of ends' to which the organisation and its people must aspire. Once the 'ends' have been defined we are then able to decide on an alignment of 'means'.

To define the scope and significance of your sustainability 'ends' you will need to determine your perspective within in three dimensions: 1. **Depth**, 2. **Span** and 3. **Time**. (see Figure 1). These are the implicit elements that exist within all sustainability definitions that often remain undefined. The three elements represent significant concepts, explained briefly as follows:³

Depth: What do you value? In terms of depth you will need to decide what you value and why. Depth is the choice of values that are personally relevant to your organisation and their order of significance. Is the end state you seek to sustain measured solely by economic criteria, with ecological preservation being required to support this? Is biodiversity valued for its intrinsic value or its genetic economic potential? If bottom line measures are a scorecard for success, will you have a triple bottom line of economics,

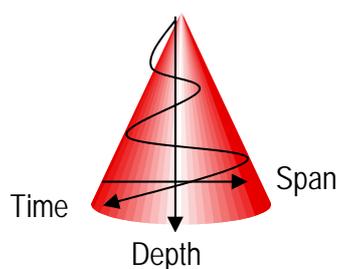
social needs and ecological preservation that reflects this – and judge success on each, or a composite of all?

Span: What are you responsible for? The test of span is the limits you place on your stewardship and organisational responsibility. It is the notional boundary of the focus of your sustainability definition. If you see the Earth as a closed system, looking at ecological impacts, the span of sustainability is the ‘everywhere’. Who do your boundaries of responsibility extend to and why? Is your chosen perspective egocentric, sociocentric, ecocentric, worldcentric or perhaps simply personally eccentric? ⁴

Time: How far in the future can you see? You will also need a timeframe on your sustainability definition. It is the perspective that informs your decisions when considering their impacts, in terms of the ‘now’ and the ‘later’. When acting for the benefit of the future, where is that future point? How long will it take you to reach a sustainable state and how long do you wish that state to last?

To paraphrase this simply: “*What do you want to sustain, for whom and for how long?*”.

Figure 1: Three Dimensions of Sustainability



Armon (1984) looks at depth as ‘stages of the good’ in ascending levels being radical egoism, instrumental egoism, affective mutuality, individuality, subjective relativism, autonomy and universal holism, extending on the work of Lawrence Kohlberg (1984) on the stages of moral development and the adequacy of moral perspectives.

Wilber (2000) describes an integral approach to span as defining ‘those deemed worthy of moral consideration’. A holarchy of levels is described as ‘me’, ‘us’, ‘all of us’, ‘all earthly beings without exception’, ‘all sentient beings of any realm’ and ‘all manifest and unmanifest reality’ (with graduations in between).

George (1999) considers the effect of shifting values over time as a function of the principle of intergenerational equity in natural capital preservation. Many people can conceptualise the benefit of sustainability principles for their grandchildren – being three generations or 50-60 years - and the future generations of their own descendants, but when we say ‘without prejudice to the needs of future’ how distant is the future we envisage?

These questions are not insignificant, or simple to answer. The proposition is that they will need to be answered anyway as soon as conflicts arise. In the application of sustainability, this occurs almost immediately. If you are to have a meaningful sustainability definition it should be a description of your values and applied consistently, rather than your values being determined inconsistently by a continuous re-interpretation in ambiguity.⁵

Because few, if any, organisations consider their present operations to be indefinitely sustainable, it is acknowledged that a sustainability definition is not to be a statement of present fact, but of present and future intent. Recognising that there is a gap between what

is and what is intended creates a 'progress to goal' approach, providing forward momentum and a focus on finding meaningful measures along the way.

In undertaking that path and assessing progress to goal, the goalposts may move. By having a conscious definition that guides your actions, when the need arises for a definitional shift, this can be done consciously. Others may argue that, because a sustainable end state is unachievable, it defies definition. However, if the goal is never defined, it is most unlikely it will ever be achieved. A definition is not to be avoided. Consciously determining what is within and external to your conceptualisation of sustainability defines the boundaries of that which you are able to consciously manage, making your sustainability scope manageable.

Having defined the boundaries of your sustainability definition in the three dimensions, other frameworks can then be drawn on to manage the conceptual complexity within those definitional boundaries. While the order of the approach to these three dimensions may not be important (describing in a linear form something that is non-linear), the completeness of the approach is.

Integral Perspectives – Managing Span

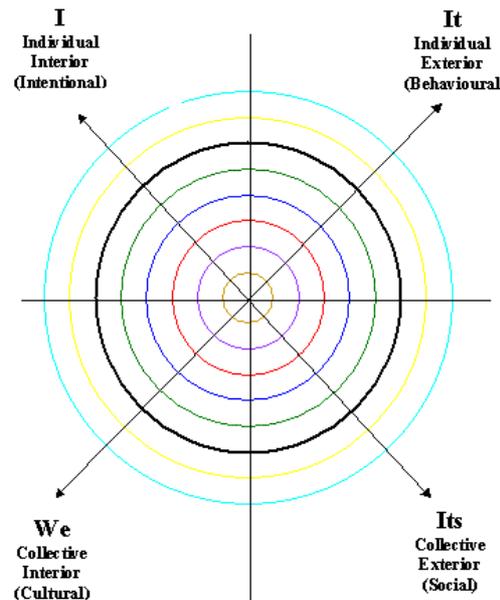
Our definition of span defines the boundary of that which we are responsible to manage. The leadership role is then to guide and instruct the proper management of all that is within these boundaries. With wider boundaries comes an increased span of complexity. Our desire is to successfully manage all of the parts of the whole within that span.

One aim in managing our span of sustainability is to avoid the ‘one-paradigm-one-tool’ approach. Sustainability is sometimes defined in a limited way as the system, process, activity or methodology used to achieve it. Adopting the prescribed sustainability system is then mistakenly seen to achieve ‘sustainability’. With each stage of complexity in function comes the risk of a greater level of complexity of dysfunction (Eddy 2001). Combining systems with a meta-paradigmatic perspective allows us to work in the meta-systemic. Sustainability is then seen, not as a system, but as a combination of the right systems or approaches in a balanced integration of perspectives, as a whole.

The integral leader seeks to avoid an imbalance of emphasis in one area over another. To do this Wilber (1996, 2000, 2001) proposes an ‘integral’ approach, meaning ‘to integrate, to bring together, to join, to link, to embrace ... into a more comprehensive view’ (Wilber 2001:2). For our purposes, this is partially achieved by recognising that there exists in all human values systems four aspects: the objective (exterior) and the subjective (interior) dimension, for both the individual and the collective consciousness.⁶

An individual perspective does not exist in a vacuum; no subject is an island unto itself (Wilber 2001). Individual values (interior individual - subjective) are formed within a biological mind and body that exists in the context of its environment (exterior individual - objective). The individual in turn exists within a societal system (exterior collective – inter-objective) which has its own cultural norms, beliefs and values (interior collective-inter-subjective). Wilber represents these dimensions as four quadrants (1997, 2000), often labelled Upper Left (I), Upper Right (It), Lower Right (Its) and Lower Left (We) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Wilber’s Four Quadrants



In applying Wilber's all quadrants (AQ) perspective to sustainability, an integral approach would look at the application of sustainability in terms of individual understanding (I), the physical structures (It), the supporting systems (Its) and the collective values (We), covering all four quadrants.

Different sustainability initiatives, interventions and conventions may sit more comfortably in one or more quadrants. For example, deep ecology interventions may shift consciousness in the upper right quadrant (I), eco-efficiency indicators may define the physical facts in the upper left quadrant (It), ISO 14001 process compliance may balance the lower right quadrant (Its) and community consultation and visioning inform the lower left quadrant (We).

Riedy (2003) notes that generally the economic, environmental and social concerns that are central to the TBL (triple bottom line) approach are all located in a single quadrant (the Lower Right). Too often we find the Lower Right (Its) system addressing the 'how', but

fail to acknowledge and honour the 'why'. To implement sustainability systems which successfully manage this span of complexity, all quadrants (the physical behaviour, the socio-political systems, the psychological and the cultural) must be considered.

For example, a recycling initiative will fail if not understood by the individual. If understood, but no behavioural change is encouraged and enabled, a shift of mind may occur but with no visible action or effect. Changes in regulations and processes can support the social-systems for change, but without a corresponding shift in cultural values there will always be non-compliance. Managing in the integral requires an all quadrants approach.

Applying this framework to balance our approach to sustainability is only part of the picture. An integral approach has as a premise that reality is not composed of wholes or parts, but whole/parts, or *holons* (Wilber 1997, 2000). Using the term *holon*, we recognise that all parts are themselves a whole, and those complete parts are themselves parts of greater wholes. *Holons* integrate together into greater *holons* and a growth hierarchy is in fact a *holarchy* (Koestler 1967, Wilber 2001)

The integral approach requires not only a perspective in all quadrants (AQ) but also of all quadrants at all levels (AL) of the holarchy, as necessary, but not sufficient elements. This horizontal and vertical approach to wholes and parts is called an AQAL perspective (or as applied by Beck 4Q/8L).⁷ Having looked at the use of a framework to manage sustainability in an integrated approach at the horizontal level, we must also find a framework to manage the vertical levels of development. This additional perspective shifts our integrated approach towards the integral.⁸

Integral Perspectives – Managing Depth

In approaching sustainability as a value based moral concept, it is appropriate to manage the ‘depth’ of sustainability values by using a framework that has a values base (Beck 2001a, Judge 2002, Riedy 2003). Using models for the staged development of moral consciousness we can identify distinctly different concepts within the staged development of sustainability values.

Graves (1959) instigated inquiry into developmental theory that led to a body of research examining contiguous emergent levels of ethical values in social systems. He developed a view of ethical behaviour from a systems point of view that leads to a hypothesis that certain values are appropriate to certain systems of ethics, but that these same values might be inappropriate to other ethical systems. If we accept the premise that we are working with a values based concept, the same could also be said for our conception of sustainability at different stages of development.

Adopting a values based approach to sustainability means we are required to accept a foundation assumption. We must let go of the alternative premise that when talking about human values, the nature of humankind is fixed and that there should be a single set of human values by which all of humankind should live, always and forever. Graves (1970, 1974) held that our nature is not a set thing, that it is an ever-emergent open system, not a closed system, which is constantly evolving, proceeding by jumps from one steady state to the next through a hierarchy of ordered systems. Graves’ model of emergent values systems provides a way of seeing ‘depth’ to add an integral perspective to our different conceptualisations of sustainability.

Graves (1959) and Wilber (1997, 2000) both present models that integrate and include the work of other researchers into human development (e.g. Kohlberg, Kramer, Torbert, Perry, Armon, Mumford, Howe, Rawls, Piaget, Selman, Gilligan, Erikson, Loevinger, Calhoun, Broughton, Heard, Fromm), providing an integral perspective which reconciles differences in the descriptive levels of staged development in values systems.

Through his research Graves (1970) identified eight major values systems that have emerged so far, originally naming them: reactive, traditionalistic, exploitative, sacrificial, materialistic, sociocratic, existential and experiential. Each values system has a primary orientation in terms of worthwhile ends and appropriate means (summarised in Table 1):

Table 1: Graves: Existential States, Associated Motivational Systems and End Values

Existential State	Motivational System	Means Values	Ends Values
System 8 - Experiential	Experience	Experiencing	Communion
System 7- Existential	Existence	Accepting	Existence
System 6- Sociocratic	Affiliation	Sociocentricity	Community
System 5- Materialistic	Independence	Scientism	Materialism
System 4- Sacrificial	Security	Sacrifice	Salvation
System 3- Exploitative	Survival	Exploitation	Power
System 2- Traditionalistic	Assurance	Traditionalism	Safety
System 1- Reactive	Physiological	Purely Reactive	(None Conscious)

Adapted from Graves, C. *Levels of Existence: An open system theory of values* 1970

Graves (1970, 1973, 1974) also noted that between the values systems there was an orientation to either individual or collective values in alternation. Systems 1, 3, 5 and 7 are seen as having an individualistic orientation and Systems 2, 4, 6, and 8 as being values orientated towards the collective. This is reflected in the constant balancing in different emergent ethical philosophies between the rights of the individual and their subjugation to the benefit of the common good. The development of alternate modalities, in increasing spans of complexity, as an open-ended system of human consciousness was described by Graves as the ‘emergent, cyclical, double-helix model of adult human biopsychosocial systems’ – sometimes referred to as Gravesian theory.

As there occurs in any bounded social system a diversity of life conditions, all of the values systems that have so far developed may also continue to exist, as appropriate. This creates a plurality of values systems of increasing spans of complexity, with elements of both commonality and distinct difference between them.

Graves suggests that as societies develop there is needed a subordination of old values systems if we are to develop new values appropriate to the new state of existence (1974). Higher order systems of complexity require higher orders systems of cognition to deal with that complexity. The process of ‘develop, transcend and include’ within developmental boundaries of increasingly greater spans is never ending, limited only by our ability to comprehend the increasing span and our requirement for this understanding to sustain the existence of that which we value.

Within his framework Graves noted two distinct tiers. The first tier is described as comprising *subsistence* level systems (systems 1-6), where meeting the basic needs to subsist in an abundant world are the prime motivators. Emerging from this is a second tier

of *existence* level systems (how many we are not able to know). The shift marks a change of perspective from sustenance of self to the continued existence of all. Graves described the shift in perspective between tiers as only occurring when ‘man truly sees the problems before him if life, any life, is to continue.’ (1970: 153).

This link between the development of consciousness and existence responses will be central to understanding the core concepts of sustainability as they fully emerge. While it could be said that an understanding of the concepts behind Gravesian theory are central to an understanding of the management of sustainability, it is more likely that an understanding of sustainability (and our own unsustainability) is central to an appreciation of the significance of Graves’ work.

Using this theoretical base we see in the development of sustainability values a holarchy of increasing complexity, with different spans of complexity being more or less appropriate depending on the values systems operating. An organisation with simple sustainability issues requires only a conceptually simple sustainability system.

Organisations with a more conceptually complex span of sustainability concerns will require systems of a higher order of complexity. As circumstances change, particularly arising from external conditions that affect continued existence or the perception of this, higher order systems will need to be developed. Whether such systems can be developed in time is of course the quintessential question of continued existence.

While all the values-systems described by Graves are legitimate expressions of the human experience, they are not ‘equal in their capacities to deal with the complex systems of society’ as these emerge over time with ever increasing complexity (Beck 2001b). One could argue that this complexity is actually perspective based, and with the broadest

perspective all organisations in a closed system have the capacity to create impacts, and be equally impacted, and therefore should have equally complex values systems. The development level considered appropriate is then seen as being based on perceptual readiness.

Respecting the Spectrums of Consciousness

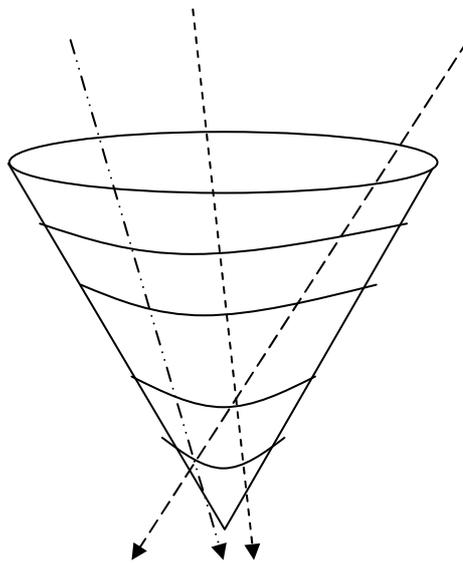
Graves' theory is descriptively applied by Beck and Cowan (1996). Their research and practice provides us with clarity as to the descriptions of each of the developmental waves representing Grave's theory. Beck and Cowan (1996) have introduced the concept of 'value memes' (v- MEME) to describe the different strata of values development and how these emerge and exist in social systems.⁹

Beck and Cowan (1996) describe Graves' levels using a colour coding, reducing our dependence on value based descriptive labels (with all their different connotations) to provide both texture and form to the theory to enrich our understanding, seeing the values system levels as a dynamic spiral of developmental inter-meshed layers.

In seeing sustainability concepts as an emergent and multi-coloured spiral of ethical development we are able to appreciate the conceptual complexity, but within a workable framework. It also allows us to take the important first step of re-framing our sustainability construct around deeper values systems, instead of racial, ethnic, economic nationalistic, culture-bound, moralistic or oppressed/oppressor filters (Beck 2001b).

The best way to illustrate this approach is to view the different strata of values systems, examining them with reference to different developmental lines ¹⁰. Like drill rig core samples, these lines pass through the strata of ethical, economic and value based belief systems, showing the developmental layers of consciousness that may exist within any social-system.

Figure 3: Lines in Gravesian Levels



Using Beck’s coding of spans of consciousness as a base, and looking at different lines of development framed around sustainability, we can envisage a more holarchical perspective (nominally described in Table 2) as a guide for the integral leader.

Table 2: Ethical Relativism in Psycho-Cultural Values Systems of Sustainability

Colour	Description	Economic System	Ethical Principle	Sustainability Focus
Beige (I)	Automatic	Impulsive	Selfish	Personal Survival
Purple (We)	Mystic	Seasonal	Tribe Norms	Sacrifice
Red (I)	Egocentric	Feudal	Monarch Rule	Control
Blue (We)	Absolutist	Consistent	Common Truth	Compliance
Orange (I)	Multiplistic	Competitive	My Right Way	Advantage
Green (We)	Relativistic	Collective	Tolerance	Community
Yellow (I)	Systemic	Multiple Streams	Integrative	Balanced
Turquoise (We)	Holistic	Values Flow	Universals	Experiential

The table represents a conceptual summation of just three (of multiple) lines of development, describing differing perceptions of economic, ethical and sustainability values represented within the different strata of consciousness.

This representation presupposes the formation of sustainability systems that would align with the corresponding systems of economic and ethical relativism existing in organisations or social systems as a natural emergence in response to different internal and external environmental conditions.

If a social system (be it an organisation, community or nation) has a predominance of one values system, it is theoretically desirable that its predominant sustainability systems should also be in alignment with its relativistic systems of economic and ethical values. A consistent mediation of ends and means leads to the health of that system within its conceptual span of complexity at the highest level.

For example, a Blue value system may see sustainability in terms of environmental compliance and standards of best practice, ensuring a continued licence to operate within the existing regulatory framework. An Orange value system may see sustainability in terms of a corporate sustainability index ranking, ensuring continued stakeholder support and access to capital in a competitive market. The Red value system could view sustainability in terms of the maintenance of power over natural resource assets, influencing power structures in support of self-regulated industry resource management. A Green value system may see sustainability in terms of community wellbeing, using community consultation to guide its triple bottom line priorities. In Beige the sustainability system is not conscious, simply knowing that if immediate needs are not met, there will be no need for future needs. Each value system is a valid representation of

worthwhile ‘ends’ which may manifest in the adoption of identical ‘means’, the only difference being in the underlying motivation of that values system.

Where a social-system has multiple representations of these lines of development, the sustainability system should, theoretically, represent that multiplicity. Doing so enables us as leaders to honour the diversity of perspectives held, as well as those that hold them (Edwards 2002). The premise is that different kinds and levels of truth can co-exist sustainably when in alignment as holons and within their immediate holarchies (Judge 2002). Recognising that each of the values systems described transcend and include the others before it, managing multiplicity is achieved by the integration of systems at each level and the integral movement of those systems to higher orders of complexity when conditions require this.¹¹

This plurality of perspectives is not to be avoided. The different interpretations of sustainability held by those with different perspectives, agendas and priorities can themselves be revealing and provide insights, each level providing the foundation for other levels (Rigby, Howlett, Woodhouse 2000). Each stage is then seen as ‘but a prelude to the next, then the next, then the next’ (Beck 2001a).

Our conclusion is that thinking about sustainability requires that we firstly understand our own values base and then understand and respect the depth of the values systems within the organisations and communities we seek to lead.

Integral Perspectives – Managing Time

Wilber (2001) recognises that each level of development of consciousness has a different type or experience of time, explained as the way in which an unfolding occurs at different levels of being. Understanding that within each level are also four quadrants, each with a correlative time dimension, we realise that in managing sustainability we have a relativity problem. In terms of sustainability, the timeframe we seek to manage will influence our decisions. To define our time perspective on sustainability is to contextualise the effects of our actions and, in terms of our present unsustainability, our inactions.

For example, an indigenous culture with a 40,000 year perspective may see us merely as custodians of the earth and temporary stewards. Bruce Sterling’s Viridian Movement suggests we write the calendar date as 02004 to give us a 10,000 year perspective. A Fortune 500 CEO may see corporate sustainability in timeframes ranging from the next 100 years or one days’ trading, following the results of the next stock exchange announcement. Others may see ‘long-term’ as being 5 years, 5 decades or 5 generations.

To provide a framework to conceptualise sustainability timeframes we can use ascending orders of ‘generational time’. A generation may be crop harvest cycle, a term in office, a dominant paradigm, a human lifetime, a generational span or the unwritten chapters of human history. Table 3 is a notional construct of different generational perspectives on the time dimension of sustainability, created to provide us with a definitional base:

Table 3: Generational Time Frames for Sustainability

Time Frame	Description	Example	System
Now	Instant	The time needed to become hungry again	Beige
1 year	Seasonal	The time until the next annual harvest cycle	Purple
1-3 years	Present Leader	The term of rule of the present leader	Red

3-10 years	Existing Order	The continuation of the present government	Blue
10-40 years	Current Paradigm	The end of the fossil fuel based economy	Orange
30- 80 years	Generational	The lifetime of our childrens' children	Green
100-300 years	Future-Generational	The emergences in intergenerational equity	Yellow
300-1000+	Gaia-Lifestage	Transition to the next planetary epoch	Turquoise



Each timeframe represents a sustainability focus based on a perspective of the envisaged future at any point in time. Each system transcends and includes, so that they act within the ‘now’ using the perspectives of the future available from each earlier system, in expanding systems of complexity. As the span and depth increases, so does the ‘distance’ in terms of the time perspective. For example, Orange will see a future paradigm shift, but also the changing of leadership and political powers within current economic cycles within its viewpoints on sustainability. As a sense of time is a perceptual variable, these indicative numbers would change over time as the complexity of change increases.

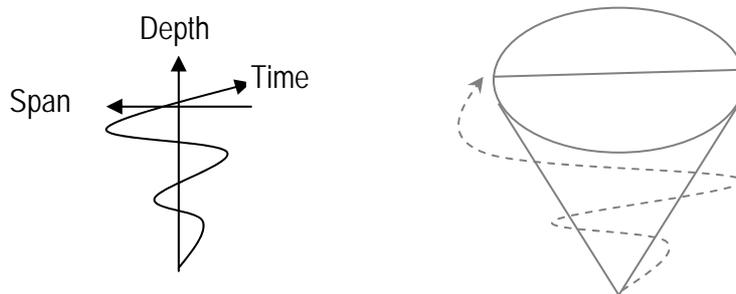
Enabled with these frameworks to conceptually manage Depth, Span and Time we can then integrate these perspectives to view our sustainability holarchy.

Integral Sustainability Approach

Working with the whole of sustainability is difficult. To sustain the leadership perspective required it is best to visualise the maze from above. This is done by understanding and creating your own sustainability meta-map.

Firstly, look at your three elements (Depth, Span and Time) that create the conceptual boundaries of your sustainability definition to form a sustainability holarchy in three dimensions (Figure 4).

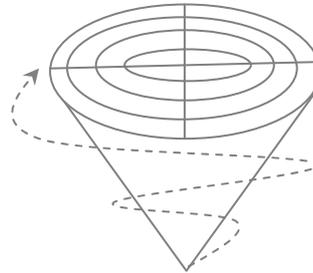
Figure 4: Dimensions of a Sustainability Holarchy



When we bisect the holarchy at any level we can see the four quadrants and the different strata of development already developed below that level (Figure 5). As each level transcends and includes each previous level, the holons lower in the holarchy are also recognisable at each higher level; being integrated, but distinct.

Viewing all levels and all quadrants at all levels within the descriptive holarchy provides us with an integral perspective.

Figure 5: Bisection of Integral Sustainability Holarchy



With this picture, an integral approach to working with sustainability is described as follows:

1. Firstly, define the **Depth, Span** and **Time** boundaries for your definition of sustainability – answering the question: *“What do you want to sustain, for whom and for how long?”* to clarify your sustainability ‘ends’.
2. Take a leadership perspective to assess the present position: *“How far have we gone towards these sustainability aims?”*
3. Bisect the holarchy at this upper level and look for the predominant wave (level) of development: *“What presently do we value most?”*
4. Align and integrate the economic systems, ethical principles and sustainability focus at this level: *“What is the values system that presently guides us?”*
5. Select the sustainability systems (your ‘means’) to create balance in all quadrants at that level: *“What systems, programs and actions do we have (and need) to support each of the psychological, structural, socio-political and cultural aspects of our sustainability focus?”*

6. Re-balance and integrate systems at all lower levels, in all quadrants, respecting those levels: *“What earlier foundation systems, programs and actions are needed to sustain the whole?”*
7. Integrate lower simpler systems into systems of higher complexity without compromising integrity: *“What can be done better differently?”*
8. Shift up levels in the holarchy, managing the transition of values at all levels, as conditions require: *“What must we do now to respond to changes occurring in the historic times, geographical places, existential problems and societal circumstances unique to our organisation?” (Beck and Cowan 1996)*
9. Reconsider Step 1 and Step 2... and so on in continuous and contiguous patterns.

Achieving your sustainability ends is not merely a function of means. It is a continuing process of existence with ever expanding perspective and insight. In the words of Graves:

“...[man] finds at every stage that the solution to existence is not the solution he has come to find. Every stage he reaches leaves him disconcerted and perplexed. It is simply that as he solves one set of human problems he finds a new set in their place. The quest he finds is never ending.” (Beck 2001b:8)

Integral Sustainability Principles

In summary, we discover through this perspective some integral sustainability principles:

- 1) ‘Everyone is right!’
- 2) More complex systems require more complex systems

- 3) Manage in all quadrants for balance
- 4) Manage so that all levels may both transcend and include
- 5) Manage developmental lines within quadrants for diversity
- 6) All wholes are also parts that should align within any level
- 7) Higher levels should integrate all parts of earlier levels
- 8) Don't classify collectively – recognise and manage individual diversity
- 9) Health of the whole means health of all the parts
- 10) No one can tell you what sustainability means, only what *they* mean by it

How you think about sustainability will ultimately determine whether what you do is sustainable (Varey 2003). If your perspective is to sustain an unsustainable state, there will come an end point. If what you do now affects what happens to you in the future - you will feel the effects. The future is the one that you will create for yourself – and the benefits and impacts of this affect us all.

Integral Perspectives- Research and Application

There are many people working with integral perspectives in the sustainability field, translating the theoretical framework into practical application. Beck's (2001a) development of the characteristics of sustainable cultures leads us from the definition of what is desired to the methodology for its creation. Marrewijk (2003) resolves definitional distinctions and similarly identifies five 'levels of corporate sustainability ambition' being Blue: Compliance- Driven, Orange: Profit Driven, Green: Caring, Yellow: Synergistic and Turquoise: Holistic. Cowan and Todorovic (2000) propose value

audits to scan the ongoing development in changes in surface, hidden and deep values and challenge us to create strategy perspectives that are values reflective.

Eddy (2001) outlines an integral view of sustainable development indicators providing an Eco-AQAL holistic framework to translate ecological and econo-metrics. He notes that a key to thinking about sustainability is to link social, economic and environmental data and the integral framework provides a way of doing this (Eddy 2001). Slaughter's (2003) work in integral futures and integral foresight practice elucidates the depth of field only envisaged by this paper. Voros (2003) using a spiral dynamics approach to blindspots in environmental scanning opens up the consciousness of the observer to different perceptions. Riedy (2003) rebalances the span of enquiry in sustainable futures using the AQAL approach to integrate the behavioural, social, cultural and psychological elements of energy sustainability. Hargens (2004) encompasses multiple perspectives of ecology within integral methodological pluralism allowing us to see, from '50,000 feet', a sound platform for participatory enquiry at ground level.

Edwards (2002) extends the socio-cultural perspective into ways of working with the diversity of existence and perspective within structures, avoiding the inherent flaw in mistaking any framework for what actually is. In this we are reminded that the role of the integralist and those working with an integrated perspective, is to form the complete framework, only to let it go to embrace ambiguity within the wider construct formed.

These are merely some of the parts of a greater whole. To understand their benefits is to see the integral view, rather than a view only from within the maze. In these works, and those like them, we find those working with an underlying premise and perspective which provides the future path. In Graves' words:

“Now for the first time [we are] able to face existence in all its dimensions, both those which seem to be known and those which are unexplained, even to the point of valuing inconsistencies, oppositions and flat contradictions.” (1970: 153).

Conclusion

Transforming leaders move their organizations or the ecology of systems for which they are responsible to healthier and possibly more complex levels of existence to accord in harmony with the internal and external environment. Sustainability is about both sustaining health within and enabling the emergence of an expansion beyond. To transcend and include with respect for diversity at all levels while managing transitions to new levels is the transforming leader’s challenge.

To quote from the conclusion of the 1972 Report to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment:

“That men can experience such transformations is not in doubt. From family to clan, from clan to nation, from nation to federation – such enlargements of allegiance have occurred without wiping out the earlier loves. Today, in human society, we can perhaps hope to survive in all our prized diversity provided we can achieve an ultimate loyalty to our single, beautiful and vulnerable planet Earth.”
(1972:220)

The leadership role in the transition to a sustainable world is to provide the direction and guidance to assist others in making their transition. Each time we return to this simple truth, of honoring the internal and external, the individual and the collective, embracing all that has gone before and all that will come, we find in this the true leadership challenge: that to undertake the leadership journey we must embrace with expanded perspective the immense profundity of that which we are not yet able to know.

Bio

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Footnotes:

^{1.} The concept of ‘sustainable development’ promoted in the IUCN commissioned World Conservation Strategy (IUCN 1980) may have as its origination the desire to link environmental protection and human development as integrated concepts. The original concept can be seen to have a slightly different paradigmatic premise to that of the Brundtland World Commission, with its focus on human progress and human survival, notwithstanding the similarity of the brief.

^{2.} Interestingly, one part of ‘Our Common Future’ actually reads "*sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future*’ (WCED 1987:40) making no mention of inter-generational equity and also introducing the concept of present aspirations to confuse the definitional premise further.

^{3.} The synthesis of the concept of depth, span and time encompasses very large questions, beyond the scope of this paper, but not its intent of inquiry. Within *depth* is the expanse of consciousness that informs all values of morality and our conceptions of the good, the beautiful and the true (Wilber 2001). Within *span* are the determinants of how we view connectivity and inter-connectedness, defining the boundary of I - other relationships within the I-Thou (Buber 1970). Within *time* is our ability to conceive not only of those we do not know in terms of inter-generational equity, but also the relationship of the ‘now’ within the implicate order (Bohm 1980). Within the trilogy is the composite inter-relationship of these parts as a whole. The framework is simplified, but is not intended to be simplistic, only approached with the perspective desired.

⁴ The concept of inter-generational equity as a function of sustainable development is inherently anthropocentric. The Brundtland Commission noted that “species and their genetic material promise to play an expanding role in development, and a powerful economic rationale is emerging to bolster the ethical, aesthetic and scientific cases for preserving them.” (WCED 1987:147). Sustainability concepts may however extend to inter-species equity, or to all life, or all existence. Limitation of the concept is not intended by the reference to ‘who’. At the heart of the integral sustainability approach is always the foundation principle to nourish and replenish our natural habitats so that all life forms may flourish (Beck 2001b).

⁵ It can be argued that a dialogue of what constitutes a valid definition of ‘sustainability’ can only be held within an acknowledgement of the psycho-socio-cultural paradigm (and individual conditions) which guide and inform the perspectives of the participants in such a debate. Uniformity in the meaning behind language, while facilitating discussion, limits the discovery of new insights – the discussion being just more of the same.

Acknowledging both the desirability and difficulty in having a consistency of language by adopting a particular framework, and the myth of the framework generally (Popper 1994), the proposed alternative is that when working in values based meta-paradigmatic fields it is desirable to find a higher (but more satisfying) ‘myth’ in the adoption of ‘integral methodological pluralism’.

⁶ A summary of Wilber’s work is not attempted. Integral theory is best read in its source to understand the complexity and depth of the concept, and re-read as different levels of understanding become available. For the purposes of this paper an understanding of the distinctions within the four quadrants, correlations between them, of holons, holarchies,

waves (levels), dimensions, lines (streams), states and types, is encouraged (see Wilber 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2000b, 2001), but not required.

⁷ In referring to an ‘integral’ approach, Wilber’s conceptualisation of unending emergent higher levels or waves and Graves’ open-ended cyclic double helix recognises the difficulty of conceptualising a truly all levels ‘integral’ approach. Beck’s use of 4Q/8L (four quadrant/eight levels) is a more accurate (and honest) description of the limited approach described in this paper, than an open ended AQAL perspective, and is preferred where there is confusion in the definition of the scope of enquiry.

⁸ As Wilber (2001) notes, ‘*integrated*’ refers to a dimensionally balanced integration of the four quadrants at a horizontal level, ‘*integrative*’ refers to vertical levels that integrate ‘lower-level’ horizontally integrated structures, and what we call “the” ‘*integral*’ level really is only ever the highest vertical level that we as individuals are able to validly recognise.

⁹ Wilber’s criticism of the subtle reductionist perspective of the meme as being a two dimensional simplification of enfolded holons finds an exception in Beck’s four quadrant use of the v- MEME, Wilber’s equivalent concept being the mental-cultural quadratic holon (Wilber 2001).

¹⁰ It is recognised that Graves’ values levels are themselves lines of development. However as the levels in that line are levels of consciousness, they can be used to recognise general levels of values systems in the integral (Wilber 1997, 2001).

¹¹. Failure to integrate into higher order holons creates a pathology of the entire system, freedom being valid only to the extent it does not impact on others' freedom. Increasing pressure of impacts sees the need for each system to integrate at higher levels of complexity (Marrewijk 2003). We recognise that in respecting the right of each to choose, we must acknowledge the eventual limitations to each in doing so, and the dynamics of change required within that choice.

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