



## **Understanding the Struggle between Self Consciousness and Cultural Worldview in the Sense of An Ending: Ken Wilber's Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Integral theory is Ken Wilber's attempt to place a wide diversity of theories and thinkers into one single framework. It is portrayed as a "theory of everything", trying to draw together an already existing number of separate paradigms into an interrelated network of approaches that are mutually enriching. Wilber's All Quadrants All Levels (AQAL) model, pronounced "ah-qwul", is the basic framework of Integral Theory. It suggests that all human knowledge and experience emerges within four primordial perspectives, which can be mapped along the dimensions of "interior vs. exterior" and "individual vs. collective". This article examines the conflict between two quadrants and how it affects human life. Julian Barnes' Booker Award-winning novel, *The Sense of an Ending* very explicitly develops the theme of self-consciousness and world view intertwined with the two drives: life-instinct 'Eros' and death-instinct 'Thanatos'. The analysis of the two instincts with quadrants and their association to Integral Theory is presented and expanded upon in this article.

*Keywords: Postmodernism, Integral Theory, Quadrants, British writing, Self-Consciousness and Worldview.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Integral theory is a school of philosophy that seeks to integrate all of human wisdom into a new, emergent worldview that is able to accommodate the gifts of all previous worldviews, including those which have been historically at odds: science and religion, Eastern and Western schools of thought, and pre-modern, modern and post-modern worldviews. Integral theory posits that evolution is not limited to the exterior forms of reality, but is also evident in the interior spaces of reality, namely in the development of culture and consciousness.

Ken Wilber is at times deemed to be one of the most prominent and intellectual integral thinkers of our time. The website of his corporation 'Integral Life' even presents him as being 'widely regarded as one of the greatest philosophers alive today' (Integral Life 2009). His 'Integral Theory' shows up with no minor claims: it alleges to have succeeded in integrating most of the insights elaborated by contemporary natural sciences such as biology and physics, together with those of the social sciences and humanities, especially with the deep truths found in religion as well as in philosophy from the ancient Greeks until today.

Wilber began fostering his hypothesis in the last part of the 1970s. From that point on he modified and explained it, distributing it in excess of 20 books. He, at the end of the day, recognizes five unique stages, between which significant movements and improvements concerning his hypothesis occurred. Today, he presents his hypothesis as a structure that professes to give something like a spot for all that exists, including the different logical trains and approaches. The hypothesis appears to give a legitimate spot to everything. That spot is characterized above all else by its degree of advancement and its particular viewpoint, from which it sees and depicts the world. This makes Wilber acclaim his hypothesis as an out and out 'hypothesis of everything' (Wilber 2000a), having the option to give the long required joining of the complex and divided assortments of information in our post-modern world. From his comprehensive hypothesis Wilber infers pragmatic ideas for a more fundamental life, a necessary practice which comprises of reflection, actual activities and social responsibility.

Julian Barnes is an English essayist of recognized ability. His three books: *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), *England, England* (1998), and *Arthur and George* (2005) were shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. At long last, the novel, *The Sense of an Ending*, sacked the lofty artistic honour in 2011. Alongside these remarkable books, Barnes has an amazingly assortment of expositions and brief tales. His wrongdoing fiction is composed under the alias 'Dan Kavanagh'. He has been regarded with the Somerset Maugham Award and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. His works likewise remember an interpretation of Alphonse Daudet's *For the Land of Life and Keeping an Eye Open: Essays on Art*. On 25th January 2011, the French President selected Barnes to the position of Officer in the *Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur* recognizing his affection for France and depiction of French culture in his compositions.

*The Sense of an Ending*, Julian Barnes' 11th novel is an exceptionally acclaimed novel. Aside from having won the Man Booker Prize, the novel had likewise won the David Cohen Prize for writing in 2011 and *Europese Literatuurprijs*. Barnes' compositions manage different topical parts of affection, truth, history, and reality. The title, "The Sense of an Ending" is acquired from Sir John Frank Kermode's work *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the hypothesis of Fiction*, distributed in 1967. The title legitimizes the pith of the book. It alludes to 'apocalypticism' connoting the finish of the trivial presence in this universe. As announced by Tim Masters, Entertainment and Arts Correspondent, BBC News about Chairwoman, ex-MI5 chief, Dame Stella Rimington's perception on Barnes' books as, "the makings of an exemplary of English Literature". Further, she assigned the novel, *The Sense of an Ending* as, "dazzlingly composed, quietly plotted and uncovers new profundities with each perusing". The novel is separated into two sections, covering the biography of the storyteller hero, Tony Webster. The account centres on the perplexing subtleties of the mind boggling circumstances and conditions of the existences of the characters. The novel is a journal and features the storyteller's journey to track down importance in the pointless previous occasions and distinguish their noteworthy outcomes in the present. Barnes' books have generally been the epitomes of existentialism and distance. Existentialism is by a wide margin attempting to track down significance in the good for nothing presence.

In endeavouring to comprehend the chain of occasions prompting Sarah Ford's consideration of Tony in her will, Tony returns over and over to his school days, specifically to his set of experiences, theory, and writing classes. In the homeroom, Tony and his companions attempted to outmanoeuvre and mentally one-up one another, anxious to be just about as cunning as conceivable while likewise keeping a demeanour of cool separation. Be that as it may, scholarly and philosophical thoughts truly do include substantial impacts inside the book: they lead, one could contend, to Adrian's self-destruction, and in less emotional ways they help characters like Tony, Colin, and Alex conclude what sort of individuals they need to be by concluding which thinkers they feel affiliations with. *The Sense of an Ending* investigates the reverberation and force of reasoning in daily existence even in choices about whether to gauge or pass on yet additionally demonstrates the limits of applying general, unique hypotheses to the chaos and intricacy of individual, real life connections.

In school, Tony and his friends rebel against "all political and social systems," preferring instead "hedonistic chaos" part of their embrace of the culture of the 1960s. Adrian, however, remains preoccupied with finding a philosophical system that will not just explain the world, but also tell him how to live in it. He is drawn to abstractions as a way of giving meaning to his life. For instance, he

refers to “Eros and Thanatos” sex and death, or the erotic drive and therefore the death drive, as psychoanalyst Freud would have it to explain the meaning of a poem assigned in class, but also, at another moment, to explain why the boys’ classmate Robson has killed himself. The group of friends all tends to make such equivalences between literary analysis and analysis of real-life situations, but the novel cautions that Adrian’s reduction of life experiences to a single abstract, learned expression is a troubling, immature way of understanding other people.

If Tony is drawn to writers of dystopian fiction like George Orwell, Adrian embraces existentialists like Albert Camus, who considered suicide the “only true philosophical question.” Existentialism seems to equip him and his friends with theories and language to describe the excitement and despair that they feel. But when they use such language to interpret Robson’s suicide, analysing it coldly and matter-of-factly as indulgent and irresponsible rather than based on true philosophical logic, their lack of grief or concern for Robson, his family, or his girlfriend shows a startling lack of sympathetic imagination. Their conversations underscore the limitations of applying theory to life especially when philosophy is divorced from context or the human beings that such theories seek to explain and describe.

If Tony and some of his friends come up short in their attempts to explain Robson’s suicide through philosophy, Adrian flips the logic, using philosophy to justify his suicide. Adrian is shown to have grappled extensively with the idea that suicide might give meaning to a life that has no inherent meaning. He ultimately philosophizes his thanks to suicide, in an extreme example of the ways in which philosophy can have very real power, albeit abstract theories and concepts might sound far removed from everyday life. Despite this, the novel portrays Adrian’s suicide note as a sophisticated philosophical act, but as the desperate, tragic act of someone who’s yearning for meaning something he can only find outside reality, within the abstractions of philosophy has led him to destroy his life.

Later in life, Tony’s various “theories” about Adrian’s character, his family, and his decision to kill himself are shown to be equally limited in their ability to do justice to the messy and complex realities of people’s lives and relationships. As Tony gets back in touch with Veronica and begins to learn more about the circumstances leading to Adrian’s suicide, he replaces one “theory” with another, deciding at one point, for instance, that Adrian must have gotten Veronica pregnant and killed himself as a result. Suddenly Adrian seems weak rather than brave, immature rather than sophisticated; but when Tony learns more and has to re-evaluate his theories once again, the limitation of the very attempt to reduce Adrian to abstractions becomes more evident.

## 2. Conclusion

By lingering over the abstract philosophical discussions of Tony’s adolescence, the novel suggests that what one learns in the classroom can have unexpected and far-reaching consequences. While discussing vast questions like the meaning of life can seem strangely detached from the realities of everyday life, it’s impossible to predict what people will do with such ideas or how they’ll interpret the theories into action. The novel shows that abstractions can become concrete in powerful and chilling ways, and difficult philosophical questions can become a matter of life and death.

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