

On the development of beliefs vs. capacities: A post-metaphysical view of second tier skillfulness

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Introduction

Stage models of human development are central to the integral approach and worldview. In this article I will distinguish two types of narratives that are often woven together in integral treatments of development, one involving *worldviews, values, and beliefs*, and another involving *capacities and skills*. I will argue that, though both narratives are important, the predominance of the first is potentially troublesome. I propose that we need to, first, hold a clearer differentiation between these two interpretations of development, and second, properly frame the belief-centered one, and make more use of skills-based frames to mitigate the problems of belief-centered ones.

Because the term "skill" has such diverse interpretations, I will note here that the skills I am pointing to are *higher order skills*, what some would call capacities, capabilities, or "skillful means" that include both cognitive skills and social/ethical/emotional skills, for example systemic thinking, ego awareness, construct awareness, leadership and communication skills, and empathic ability. Also, the beliefs in our lens are not of the type considered as established scientific or empirical "knowledge;" they are more metaphysical, spiritual, cultural, philosophical, or contentious.

In this paper I will refer to the work of several prominent integral thinkers (including Wilber, Beck, Cohen, Torbert, and Cook-Greuter, and McIntosh). The ideas being put forth by these scholars include both *descriptive* theories of how mind, culture, and growth work, and *prescriptive* notions about what we ought to strive for. I will not belabor the importance of trying to keep clear the is/ought distinction, as has been adequately argued for by Stein (2008). For the purposes of this discussion I will take for granted the prescriptive elements and assume that there is moral/ethical/spiritual validity in the general goals to not only study and understand but support human development. Thus I will allow for the assumption that promoting development is somehow aligned with the general goals to help people become somehow happier, wiser, more spiritually enlightened, or more adequately skilled to address the personal and global problems they face.²

If, as we will assume during our discussion, our goal is to support some sort of change or transformation in

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² For example, Hamilton (2008) puts it this way, in describing the "enlightened humanity" that we sense in those rare individuals whom we seek to help each other emulate: "we can acknowledge that there is something...which has to do with the depth of our interiors, our moral sense, our character, our values, our wisdom, our decency, our compassion, our willingness to risk for a greater good."

individuals and societies, then we want to equip the leaders, workforce, or "army" engaged in realizing this goal with some inner resources. The question put here is: when and how is it better to instill beliefs and when and how is it better to build skills (capacities)? My conclusion will be that each is vital, but for different reasons. I will also argue that, though the inculcation of beliefs is an ancient process widely understood and often used, the process of teasing apart and identifying skills, and of working out how to support them, is, while less well understood, much rarer, and more labor intensive, a critical element for integral theory and practice that is needing more attention.

My other main question is: what *relationship* do we have *with* our beliefs in second tier or integral practices? The article includes an exploration of the concept of "post-metaphysics," which is essentially an epistemically sophisticated approach (a *skill set*) toward belief—i.e. toward what we think is true or real, and how we justify, hold, or relate to beliefs. This short paper can only serve to introduce the main themes and begin an exploratory conversation.

Developmental Narratives Based on Belief Systems vs. Skill Sets

I will start by illustrating how several of the most prominent figures and texts in the integral community fall generally into the categories of belief-system/world-view promotion vs. skill-set/capacity articulation. Later I will unpack these two categories to show how the terrain is more complicated, but, admitting to a degree of simplification and caricaturing, I claim that the examples below point to real trends.

Cohen & Hamilton's Evolutionary Enlightenment. Spiritual leaders Andrew Cohen and Craig Hamilton (one time student of Cohen) promote a grand "evolutionary context" in which "who and what God is can no longer be taken as fixed—that from a developmental perspective, God is *also* evolving, just as we are" (Cohen & Wilber, 2006, p. 69). Cohen argues for a belief system that puts humans at the forefront of the evolution of consciousness itself. To deeply experience ourselves in this way (or to experience this inherent aspect of our nature), he argues, gives access to the motivation (ecstatic impulse) to break free of our egoic and narcissistic tendencies and align with a strong moral and spiritual sense of purpose and service.

This Context is more than a surface belief system for its adherents—it is a lived experience that deeply implicates self identity. Cohen's ecstatic impulse points to a powerful universally (though rarely) experienced felt sense or deep intuition that he attaches to a particular cosmic meaning-frame. This framework speaks of human capacities in spiritual and moral terms, but in general does not get specific about teachable and measurable skill sets

in the way that developmental theories allow for.³

Kosmos Journal. Kosmos is a major publisher of authors ascribing to integral and evolutionary developmental worldviews. The magazine (edited by Nancy Roof) has published a wide range of articles and interviews, and though many of these are *compatible* with the notion that human development is about developing *skills and capacities*, in a general sense the journal conveys a particular worldview (*belief system*) that has two components: one sounds the sharp alarm of impending global crisis, and the other plays the inviting horn of hope, looking for signs at the leading edge of human development. These two elements of the worldview are illustrated by the following typical quotes:

"The ever-multiplying sighs suggesting that the modern world [is] at the end of its tether."	[A] "new era of conscious co-evolution" that could harness an "appreciative approach to global inquiry and accelerated world learning."	Cooperrider, p. 9; Kosmos Vol. 6 No. 2, 2007
"Today we can say that we have a world political crisis...the world is even more dangerous than the world of the mid-1980's."	[We] "are witnessing the formation of a global civil society" that can be steered towards world preservation through dialog, a focus on common human interests, and mechanisms of coordinated decentralized power structures.	Gorbachev, p. 6-9; Kosmos Vol. 6 No. 2, 2007

These quotes are not meant to be fair representations of the core content of the articles they are taken from, but are selected to illustrate a common theme that runs through many of the 15-20 articles in each issue. The point is that, like much of what we see in the integral community, the magazine as a whole promotes a certain worldview—it enjoins us to see our personal and global situation in a particular way, one closely aligned with progressive spiritual and integral beliefs, with a goal to instill both urgency and hopeful action.

Beck & Cohen's *Spiral Dynamics*. Beck and Cohen's text, a primary one in the integral community, has several implied purposes. One is to *describe* a model of human development and evolution, originally discovered by Clair Graves, which has, for many, become a powerful meaning-making tool for understanding the psycho-social world. The second goal is to facilitate people in becoming adept at *using* the model. The third goal is to *promote healthy development* within and up the "spiral" of development, as a means to create a better world.

The "core intelligences" of each meme level are not adequately described in terms of skills, but are more of a model or framework (a belief system) than a skill set, which limits its applicability. *Spiral Dynamics* describes a developmental sequence of core intelligences or memes, that each "reflects a worldview, a valuing system...a belief structure, an organizing principle, a way of thinking or mode of adjustment [and is a] structure for thinking, not just a set of ideas" (Beck & Cohen, 1996, p. 4). It might appear that describing core intelligences in terms of *how* we

³ It should be noted that the magazine *EnlightenNext* put out by Cohen and associates has included articles that focus on second tier skills as well as those that focus on second tier belief systems.

think as opposed to *what* we think implies a focus on skills and capacities rather than on beliefs or world-views. Yet the descriptions don't quite drive down to (or live up to) the operational level of skills. The authors talk about and around skills without getting sufficiently specific about exactly what they are, and focus more on human drives, needs, motivation, and values than on skills per se.

McIntosh's *Integral Consciousness*. Steve McIntosh describes and promotes an emerging "integral worldview" and "integral consciousness [that is] a new perspective on the world that expands our perception of reality and provides fresh motivation to make a positive differences. This new way of seeing and living arises from and enlarged set of values framed by an expanded understanding of cultural evolution" (McIntosh, 2007, p. 12). Similar to the other frameworks described above, McIntosh's worldview is described as a meaning-making framework that can "increase the scope of our awareness" (p. 15). Even more explicitly than Beck and Cohen, McIntosh is pointing to a belief system more than a set of skills. He claims that "[if] you read and consider the ideas in this book, they will literally raise your consciousness" (p. 17). Like Beck and Cohen, McIntosh alludes to skills and capacities, but does not describe them sufficiently to allow them to be evaluated or directly supported.

The frameworks and worldviews mentioned above have served as highly inspiring, relevant, useful sense-making tools for me, and many others. My present analysis of these works is to point out an important element that is missing, i.e. skill/capacity orientation and articulation. In a sense one can not fault these authors for omitting skill-based analysis; it is difficult and benefits from specialized and relatively rare knowledge gained in the study of cognition and learning. Also, the study of adult developmental skills is still in its infancy and, being as much of an art as a science, there are limits to the depth, breadth, or precision we can expect in many contexts. But knowledge and resources exist that allow for more skills-based approaches, and I suggest that they be more fully integrated into integral (and "evolutionary") narratives, given the potential problems with belief-based approaches that I outline later.

Wilber's AQAL Model. Wilber's substantial corpus of work refers to both beliefs, in the form of models, frameworks, and orienting generalizations; *and* to skills as he heavily references developmental theorists in some detail. Thus as a whole his approach does not have the same sorts of limitations of those mentioned above. However, it is important to note that to the extent that integral or second tier capacity is described in terms of facility with the AQAL *model* (Wilber, 2006) as opposed to a set of *capacities*, as is the case in many applications of integral theory, then such an approach is open to the critique that focusing on belief systems without looking at underlying skill sets is problematic.

Skills-based approaches to development. Both belief systems and skills are interior phenomena, but a skills orientation is more closely connected with action (observable exteriors).⁴ What the psychology-based skills approach adds is a deeper understanding of human thought, behavior, and learning, and thus sheds light on the mechanisms and challenges in taking up beliefs, values and virtues, which in turn can lead to more effective change methodologies. Skills-based approaches are more useful than world-view or values-based approaches where the rubber of human psychological and spiritual potential meets the bumpy road of enacted life. Skills, even highly advanced developmental capacities, demonstrate their true merit in the action contexts of communication (including dialog, deliberation, and written communication), problem solving (including planning and design), decision-making, collaboration (including group dynamics), leadership (and parenting), and learning (including adaptation and self-improvement) (as Kegan explores in *In Over Our Heads* (1994); and see Fischer's Skill Theory (1980)). Basing human growth and transformation projects on skills facilitates clear goals, measurable outcomes, and the use of theoretically sound models of human learning and change.⁵

The literature on the development of various human skills and capacities is vast and it is not our goal to summarize it here. Readers will do doubt be familiar with the lineage of developmentalists often mentioned by Wilber, beginning with Piaget and Baldwin, and including Kohlberg, Perry, Maslow, Loevinger, and Graves (Wilber 2000; 2006). Contemporary developmental theories (and theorists) referenced within or working within the integral community include Kegan's subject-object theory; Cook-Greuter's and Torbert's ego development and action logic framework; and Dawson and Stein's work, which is based on Fisher's Skill Theory and Commons' Hierarchical Complexity Theory (Dawson & Stein, 2008). These scholars have engaged in rigorous empirical research into various lines of development. Integral theory applications in the areas of leadership and organizational development, education, and psychotherapy, have made use of skills-oriented approaches.

Much of the research focuses on *defining and measuring* skills/capacities. For example Cook-Greuter and associates specialize in assessing development in the area of ego-development (also described as meaning making capacity or "leadership maturity", progressing through a series of "action logics") (Cook-Greuter, 2000). Cook-Greuter's published works are more about capacity assessment than capacity development to enable action, but her associate Terri O'Fallon, through programs at Pacific Integral, has been co-developing a coaching and leadership program that speaks of transformational change in terms of building capacities (including self-awareness, personal

⁴ Beliefs and skills affect each other. In addition beliefs have a range of certainty and import, and some beliefs are considered stable knowledge. A full explication of the topic of beliefs vs. skills requires a deeper analysis of the meanings of related constructs (knowledge, models, theories, and concepts, values, virtues) than we have space for here (see Murray, in preparation).

⁵ Skills-oriented approaches are most valid when based on research results that have show high levels of statistical validity, but orienting towards skills is possible even when not completely backed up by rigorous studies.

presence, assumption-questioning, collaboration and co-creative skills, innovative thinking and problem solving skills) (O'Fallon et al. 2008).

Other examples of skills-based frameworks include Torbert and Associates' Leadership Development work (which makes heavy use of Cook-Greuter's framework) and Joiner & Joseph's Leadership Agility work (Torbert, 2004; Joiner & Josephs, 2007). Both groups are oriented toward building skill/capacity in communication, decision making, and leadership. Kegan and Lahey's *Immunity to Change* (2009) applies developmental theory to personal and organizational transformation. They describe studies that show how developmental level of complexity correlates with problem solving, leadership, and relational skills.

Wisdom skills. In Murray (2008) I use the term "wisdom skills" to denote a set of generic integral or second tier skills applicable across all life contexts such as collaboration, communication, leadership, knowledge building, and parenting.⁶ These are essentially the same higher level skills described by adult developmental theorists, organized into four intermeshing categories: ego-, relationship-, construct-, and systems-awareness (adapted from the frameworks of Cook-Greuter and Kegan, and paralleling the AQAL model's I, We, It, and Its quadrants, respectively). This is one of many frameworks illustrating the skills or capacities of interest to us:

- *Ego-awareness* (self/ego/will and being/spirit/essence) includes reflective awareness of one's identity and sense of self, social roles, fears and attachments, strengths and weaknesses, unconscious motives and shadow, and how one's emotional state effects one's thinking and actions.
- *Relational-awareness* (emotional/social/ethical/interpersonal intelligence) includes empathic skills, communication and collaboration skills, and the capacity for compassion.
- *Construct-awareness* (related to cognitive and meta-cognitive capacity) is about understanding the nature of mind, thought, knowledge, and the symbolic/linguistic, concept-forming and reality-forming functions of the mind. Includes metacognition (thinking about thinking), epistemic knowledge (knowing about knowledge), and awareness of the limits and fallibilities of the mind.
- *Systems-awareness* (related to "context awareness", another cognitive capacity) is about seeing the bigger picture of interconnections in any situation. It is about seeing dynamics, hierarchies, meshworks, ecologies, fractals, dialectics, and past/present/future possibilities in a system.

Some Problems with Development as a Worldview or Belief System

It might be readily evident that those working in belief-system frameworks could benefit by supplementing their approach with a deeper elaboration of skills and by referencing skills-based frameworks. But, in addition to a basic lack of precision about the human capacities they are promoting, there are other reasons to be cautious about belief-system and world-view based frameworks, as discussed next.

The Green Meme as an example. To illustrate some problems of speaking of development in terms of worldviews and belief systems, lets take a close look at what is meant by the postmodern level of development, also

⁶ In Murray (2008) I also describe second tier thinking in terms of meta- capacities such as meta-cognition, -dialog, -learning, -affect, -leadership, and -decision making.

called green meme.⁷ Much has been said in the integral theory literature about the "mean green meme" and the psycho-social pathologies associated with this level. In decrying these problems all are clear to note that the green meme represents a positive set of capacities that emerge out of the needs established at the prior developmental level, but there tends to be a focus on its problematic aspects. We associate certain world-views, values, and beliefs with the green meme, including those that go along with environmentalism, human rights, egalitarianism, radical equality and freedom, inclusive forms of decision making and dialog, and new-age orientations to spirituality and human potential. These *beliefs* established themselves culturally as a result of emerging cognitive and social/emotional *skills* that expanded thought-leaders' capacities to see complex patterns (such as ecosystems and family dynamics), reflect critically and objectively on self and society, and have an empathic understanding and connection to ever wider circles of others.

A key point is that, though having a certain critical mass of people at this developmental level is required for it to emerge as a stable self-replicating cultural phenomena, once that cultural meme emerges and establishes itself, individuals *from any developmental level*, and in particular developmentally prior levels, might be attracted to its world-view. And this is what we find. Many people who ascribe to green meme world-view assumptions and values and move within new age, political activist, or progressive circles do not seem to have the cognitive, self-reflective, or emotional intelligence capacities that are associated with the green level of development. Some are drawn in for pre-conventional, narcissistic, authority-rebellion, or pleasure-seeking reasons, and some others because new age culture accepts magical thinking about non-conventional topics. Some members of this post-conventional worldview hold onto their beliefs with a rigidity implying a conventional (blue meme) mindset. Wilber, in *Boomeritis* (2002) and elsewhere, was one of the first to clearly articulate this phenomena (which he calls the mean green meme), but he attributes it to a pathological manifestation of green level consciousness, when it may be more accurate to describe it as pre-green (pre-conventional or conventional) level of consciousness or development being attracted to the surface features of a post-conventional cultural belief system.

So there is a confusion in our developmental narrative: is the "green meme" (or any other meme) really about world-views and values or about skills and capacities? A trivial answer is that "green meme" is a term originally used by Beck and others to point to a world-view and value system. But in fact we (and Beck) use the term in a loose way that implicates certain developmental skills/capacities as well. The deeper question is, when we point to a developmental level such as green or turquoise in the context of critiquing or promoting it, what is it *most*

⁷ Also called sensitive-self, cultural creative, pluralist, or individualist (non-synonymous terms used to reference more or less the same cultural developmental level).

useful to talk about or promote—belief systems or skill sets? Or, to put it less dualistically, for what purposes is each type of narrative most useful?

Problems with prescribing belief systems. A focus on belief systems and values is appropriate when analyzing large scale cultural change in societies for descriptive purposes. But when our concern is assessment or prescriptively supporting the development of human capacities, emphasis on values and belief systems can be problematic. If one's goal is to support the development of individuals and organizations that can more adequately address the opportunities and problems of our world, wouldn't it be better to support skills (such as the ability to take many perspectives and the ability to objectively consider one's biases) than beliefs and values (such as that capitalism is dangerous, the personal is political, or that Consciousness or god evolves through humans) or even teach models (such as AQAL)?⁸

Argyris (1993) makes the important distinction between theories in use vs. espoused theories, or explicit vs. tacit beliefs. We can note that for change frameworks where the predominant narrative is explicitly in terms of world views and values, the workshops and communities working within these frameworks are engaged in substantial skill building. So my point is not that capability building is not happening around these approaches, but that they (and the integral enterprise as a whole) would benefit if such projects tried to explicitly define the target skills and how they are supported/taught. Then, those who don't fully "buy into" a specific set of beliefs and values can still find common ground and more easily benefit from the ground-breaking work being done.

Beliefs are fundamentally perspectival, culturally bound, particular, and fallible. Beliefs have a natural tendency to support in/out-group formation (we naturally identify with others who share beliefs, which can stimulate primitive human drives to "otherize"). People differ widely on what they believe and value, and the well-meaning goal of inculcating a particular belief system in others is, though not as wrong-headed as radical postmodernists might claim, still potentially problematic. Skills, on the other hand, are less problematic. The wisdom skills referred to above are generic, highly useful across a broad range of human contexts, and are "cognitive tools" not susceptible to being "wrong" per se (unlike beliefs, skills can't disagree). Both skills and beliefs can be used for good and misused for evil, but in the context of developmental theories, there is more danger that, say, green *beliefs* will be

⁸ If I had the choice between supporting a group in having a turquoise skill set vs. a turquoise belief system I would choose the skill set. I would trust as valuable whatever belief and value system that emerged from a group with solid second tier capacities, even if it differed drastically from the assumptions we in the integral community associate with second tier thought, and I would tend to trust as wise their decisions and actions, even if they differed from mine. On the contrary, I would not necessarily trust that a group that espouses to a turquoise belief system and value set would have second tier skills nor follow through with actions that we would judge as second tier. Of course, it is not an either-or choice .

appropriated to unacceptable or useless ends than that green level *skills* will be.⁹

Changing skills vs. beliefs. Unlike skill sets, beliefs-systems can become ideologies and dogmas, and the potential for unintended consequences, such as people being attracted to them for the wrong reasons, misunderstanding and abuse of a framework, and calcification and entrenchment of thought, is greater in promoting belief systems than for supporting wisdom skills.¹⁰ Beliefs can be changed with impassioned and charismatic speeches, propaganda, peer pressure, induced experiences of extreme states or emotions ("whipping the crowd up" into ecstasy or dread), or the force of a good argument.¹¹ Skills can not be transferred this way--they develop gradually through education, experience, and practice (though state-enhancement can help create optimal conditions for development). Beliefs can be tightly held, recalcitrant ego-attachments that take great effort to dislodge, so they can also take time and effort to change, but they can also have a more mercurial character (as in the "chaotic bifurcation" of a depraved rock-n-roller who is "born again" and suddenly converts to fundamentalist Christianity).

Even though both belief system promotion and skill set support may require perseverance, the *design* of skill set support is more difficult and requires more expertise and precision. This is one reason that development is more often described in terms of belief than skill change. Supporting development of skill sets requires analyzing general capacities and target behaviors in terms of specific behaviors and skills, and then determining how each skill is to be supported or taught. Promoting the development of belief systems is more about skillful argument and persuasion, which is not simple, but is certainly less complex, and has been refined over millennia.

The value of belief systems. Now let us argue from the other side, in support of the importance of world views, values and beliefs. These are primarily about motivation, including intention and vision. Skills and capacities are like tools which are impotent until called to action in the service of some goal or vision. Clearly the nature of the vision is important, and whatever the vision or goal, commitment, drive, enthusiasm, and focus provide the realizing energy from conception to fruition.

Shared world views form stable bases for new levels of emergence and cultural evolution. Commonality in beliefs and goals enable synergetic action, which can be orders of magnitude more effective than poorly coordinated individual action. The power of story, myth, and narrative in human affairs is widely acknowledged, as is the

⁹ Both skills and beliefs can be used for good or ill, but the capacity or meta-skill needed to *discern* when and how to use both skills and beliefs is itself a *skill*.

¹⁰ However, beliefs and knowledge can be promoted by those who are more advanced in development or expertise. In real-world problem solving leadership and expertise are just as important as principles of egalitarian, democracy, and autonomy.

¹¹ Also, belief systems, more than skill sets, are susceptible to being co-opted by forces that are unethical yet at a higher cognitive level. For example assume a group has both a cognitive capacity (skill level) and belief set at, say, Green. Someone with significantly higher than Green cognitive skills, who can objectively see and manipulate Green level ways of thinking, could manipulate and distort the Green belief set toward unethical ends in ways practically invisible to Green cognition.

psychological need for deep meaning and purpose, which is at risk in the existential ennui of postmodern society. Certain beliefs, if shared, might support the ethical goals of humans feeling deeply connected to each other and responsible for the fate of the planet. (Knowledge of predictable causal laws is also essential to disseminate.)

So, the importance of beliefs and world views is thereby acknowledged. Nothing (much) would come from people without beliefs and their energizing and focusing forces. The integral, transformative, and evolutionary visions laid out by those leaders mentioned earlier are, in my opinion, high quality compelling belief systems with the potential to move culture and consciousness in the directions humanity needs to go. In this article I am arguing that overall in the integral community we focus too much on beliefs, values and world views, and not enough on skills and capacities—but we don't want to throw out babies *or* bathwater, just supplement the tub with important ingredients. Above I pointed out several problems with overemphasizing beliefs vs. skills. There is an additional important and more subtle reason: that skill-based developmental frameworks might be more in line with the post-metaphysical perspective associated with second tier consciousness, as discussed next.

Second Tier and Post-metaphysical Approaches

Second tier beliefs and epistemic wisdom. The integral community is particularly focused on, and has a particular contribution to make, in exploring and supporting what has been called "second tier," integral, post-formal, and/or post-post-modern levels of development (and in supporting the transition from immediately prior stages into these stages). This level of development includes a high level of reflective understanding of self and the human condition. It involves moving further away from black and white, us versus them, and either-or thinking into ever more nuanced, complex, and dynamic perspectives ("perspectival range" in Walsh, 2009). It includes moving further from basing beliefs on authority, peer pressure, magical thinking, and emotional and unconscious drives; and toward basing beliefs on rational systematic thought, critical thinking, multiple perspectives, cognitive empathy, and intuitions grounded in deep ethical sensibilities. It includes the "epistemic wisdom" skills of understanding the nature of communication, concepts, and models, including their inherent indeterminacy and fallibility; the ability to take multiple perspectives; and tolerance of paradox and ambiguity (Murray, 2008). It even includes understanding how authority, peer pressure, magical thinking, and emotional and unconscious drives are unavoidable and important aspects of belief formation—i.e. it tries to see these aspects of thought more objectively for what they are, and use that understanding in forming and defending one's beliefs.¹²

As was mentioned for the pluralistic or green developmental level (meme), one can ascribe to second tier

¹² As is commonly understood, we transcend, include, and transform the earlier modes, rather than leaving them behind.

beliefs without having second tier capacities, and vice versa. There is a certain tension in, on the one hand, promoting or instilling a second tier world view or belief system and, on the other hand, wanting to support second tier thinking (and enacting). To the extent that an approach promotes second tier beliefs and world-views rather than allowing them to emerge developmentally and be held critically, one may be reinforcing dependency on developmentally prior forms of knowing.

How does one promote valuable second tier belief systems, instill the sense of commitment, solidarity, even urgency that is needed to ground beliefs in sustained collective action, while still allowing for—*actively supporting*—a reflective distance from those beliefs, so that they are clearly seen *as* beliefs (as objects of reflection), in the context of alternative perspectives, and with their limitations fully exposed? What it looks and feels like to strike this balance in second tier communities is an ongoing inquiry. Integralists often employ the adages to "not confuse the map with the territory" and avoid the "myth of the given," but closer inspection shows that enacting these slogans is indeed difficult and subtle forms of metaphysical thinking and "misplaced concreteness" exist throughout integral discourse.

Post-metaphysics. The concept of post-metaphysics figures large in recent integral discourse. Integralists have aligned themselves with the post-metaphysical turn in philosophy and a post-metaphysical orientation to truth and knowledge. Integralists follow Wilber in repudiating "confusing the map with the territory" and "the myth of the given."¹³ Wilber describes his latest work ("Wilber-5") as AQAL plus post-metaphysics. Indeed, it could be argued that the post-metaphysical perspective is at the heart of the evolution of human meaning-making capacity that integral theory represents. Post-metaphysics constitutes a post-post-modern approach to what and how we think is real or true; i.e. it is about our evolving relationship to *belief* and the *skills* we use to construct and reflect upon beliefs.¹⁴ Below we will look into the concept of post-metaphysics to see how it is understood and then propose some alternative perspectives on its use.

In *Integral Spirituality* Wilber says that "[arguably,] metaphysics...ended with Kant [who realized that] we do not perceive empirical objects in a completely realistic, pregiven fashion; but rather, structures of the knowing subject import various characteristics to the known object...Metaphysics is then a broad name for the type of thinking that can't figure [out that] reality is not a perception, but a conception...thinking that falls prey to the myth

¹³ "Myth of the given" was coined by Sellars (1956). The map/territory phrase is attributed to Korzybski (1948).

¹⁴ Post-metaphysics has two realms of application: philosophical discourse and cultural norms. In the cultural sense, post-metaphysical thinking is a term used to highlight the mythic, magical, non-rational, non-scientific, or non-critical ways of thinking that are found in New Age culture and traditional religious communities. Within philosophical discourse, where one expects highly rational presentations, post-metaphysical theories break with prior thought in not basing their conclusions on metaphysical assumptions.

of the given" (p. 231). In terms of philosophy, Wilber says that post-metaphysical approaches avoid "postulating fixed, eternal, [ahistorical,] independently existing archetypes" [or Platonic Forms] (p. 247).

In a transcribed dialog with Wilber, Andrew Cohen says: "Your ideas about a post-metaphysical spirituality have had a powerful impact on me...Specifically, I am endlessly compelled by the notion that higher stages or levels do not preexist, that is, they are not 'given' but are literally created by brave individuals who actually venture into new, uncharted territory" (Cohen & Wilber, 2006).

In *Integral Ecology*, Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman draw from Wilber's work and emphasize the multi-perspectival and participatory nature of post-metaphysics, which "avoids positing realities independent of the viewer" (2009, p. 65) and notes that all claims must be understood as "perspectives from somewhere by someone" (p. 484).¹⁵ They link the post-metaphysical approach to Wilber's four quadrants and eight indigenous perspectives (methodological families), and to his method of Kosmic Addresses, which labels any claim with an AQAL-based "position" classification for both the object perceived and the perceiver (p. 158).

Stein links post-metaphysics to the scientific method¹⁶ and, more fundamentally, to a reflective (or meta-) perspective on, not just the contents of our beliefs, but the methods by which we produce and justify knowledge (i.e. "the conditions that allow us to get on with inquiry") (2008b, p. 20). "Understanding philosophy in this way entails turning away from speculative metaphysics and toward the rigorous analysis and critique of inquiry itself" (p. 2). He claims that "to adopt a properly post-metaphysical approach to development [is to] turn away from the stories and describing development and toward the making of the metrics that justify these stories" (2008a, p. 1).

Stein's approach follows closely that of contemporary philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the acknowledged expert on the topic of post-metaphysics. Cooke, (1994) summarizes Habermas' notion of post-metaphysical philosophical trends as having: (1) called into question the substantive conceptions of rationality (e.g. "a rational person thinks this") and put forward procedural or formal conceptions instead (e.g. "a rational person thinks like this"); (2) replaced foundationalism with fallibilism with regard to valid knowledge and how it may be achieved; (3) cast doubt on the idea that reason should be conceived abstractly beyond history and the complexities of social life, and have contextualized or situated reason in actual historical practices [i.e. collaborative action and dialog];...and (4) given up philosophy's traditional fixation on theoretical truth and the representational functions of language, to

¹⁵ McIntosh proposes some problems with the post-metaphysical turn, and says that metaphysics is needed because "between the hard facts of science and the revealed truths of religion, there are to be found questions about the nature of reality" (p. 205). True enough, but he misunderstands Habermas' and Wilber's post-metaphysical projects as being anti-metaphysical as opposed to post-metaphysical.

¹⁶ Stein (2008) credits Pierce as a founder of the post-metaphysical approach: "by relinquishing philosophy's claim to a unique privileged mode of insight, Peirce...recast philosophy in terms of the same fallibilistic self-understanding that characterizes scientific endeavors" (p. 2).

the extent that they also recognize the moral and expressive functions of language as part of the [reasoning process] [which is thus affected by notions of rightness, sincerity, and authenticity].

The post-metaphysical turn in philosophy and culture can be understood as a product of an "epistemic turn" of increasing human understanding of the role of human thought processes in the production of knowledge and belief.¹⁷ This trend began with Kant, blossomed with the American Pragmatists, then deepened with the advent of modern cognitive and social sciences.¹⁸

What do integralists believe (and how)? We integralists define ourselves in part in relation to how we differ from the prior developmental meme level, i.e. Green, or from other cultural groups, such as New Age or Postmodern. We also live with the challenge of trying to describe and defend our beliefs to friends and colleagues who hold different world views.¹⁹ We can ask: what is an integral or post-metaphysical approach to holding and sharing these beliefs? Let us look at New Age vs integral ideas (concepts and beliefs) to consider how they compare in relation to post-metaphysics. In the table below I focus on contentious beliefs (about what is "real" or true), acknowledging that there are many others that are less ontologically problematic or "edgy."²⁰ Most readers have had frustrating experiences trying to explain integral ideas to peers or trying to critique New Age beliefs. The questions are: How confident can we be in such discourses? and Are there particularly integral ways to justify and critique?

<u>New Age</u>	<u>New Age and Integral</u>	<u>Integral</u>
UFOs and lost ancient advanced civilizations; the healing power of crystals; the earth is a living conscious being (Gaia); we can manifest our wishes through intention alone; astrology, and other prognostication systems and personality typing systems; various schools of mystical and occult beliefs; "all you need is love" (and peace); everything is perfect as it is.	Channeling and the existence of non-physical beings; ESP and psychic phenomena; intuitions can offer sturdy truths and directives; existence of a soul/spirit (and constructs such as Over-soul, Authentic Self), reincarnation and past lives; synchronicities are real; psychic energy and the chakra system; the reality of collective consciousness and parts of the self	The universe is evolving – through us; Eros, Agape, involution, morphogenetic fields, Omega Point; objects/events fit into 4 ontological quadrants (or 8 zones); cultures and people can be categorized in terms of general developmental levels like Blue, Green, and Turquoise; there is a non-dual ground of being beyond space, time, energy, matter, and mind.

¹⁷ In Murray (2006;2008) I quote Bohm and Einstein in support of the idea that contemporary global mega-issues can be traced to a general lack of understanding of how the human mind works, individually and collectively. We can see in Walsh's (2009) analysis of common factors of the great wisdom traditions that, even though "know thyself" is implied and contemplative traditions focus on awareness of thought, the wisdom traditions had little to say in the way of what we are calling epistemic wisdom. We can posit that the complexity of thought and culture has reached a level that an epistemic turn is greatly needed.

¹⁸ The post-metaphysical turn is closely related to the philosophy of pragmatism, which has strongly influenced Wilber and integral theory (through scholars including James, Whitehead, and Habermas). Louis Menand described pragmatism as *an idea about ideas*: "The idea is that ideas—theories, beliefs, convictions, principles, concepts, hypotheses—are essentially means of adaptation... Ideas are not "out there" waiting to be discovered, but are tools that people devise" (2004, pg. 1, 8).

¹⁹ The strategy of concluding that another person is developmentally not up to snuff and accepting that they simply don't have the capacity to engage with our beliefs or engage at the level of discourse we hope for is, though sometimes perfectly valid, also problematic. In doing so we (a) risk misdiagnosing the other using a simplistic categorization system; (b) miss an opportunity to connect more deeply with both the person and the ideas in front of us, and (c) miss an opportunity to more seriously reflect on our beliefs and selves in the face of an authentic encounter with another (and see Kögler, 1992). Admitting that I, and all of us, unavoidably constantly make these sorts of calls to judge the "adequatio" of the listener and gauge how deeply we will engage, we want to take seriously the question of how integral beliefs are explained and argued for in rational public discourse.

²⁰ This table is a very rough estimate based on personal experience given to anchor the discussion—it is not from any analysis.

	such as ego and shadow; all is one.	
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There are many lenses through which we could compare and analyze these beliefs to highlight differences and similarities, but here I will focus on the question of what is treated as "real" (and in what way). We will avoid the quagmire of defining what is meant by reality, and simply assume, in alignment with both New Age and integral world views, that interior (human mental) realities have an equal ontological status with external physical realities. Three issues are important here in exploring post-metaphysics: 1) On what grounds do we base our assessments of reality and truth? 2) How do we treat things that are not in concrete physical sensory-revealed reality yet are supposed to be somehow more real than "imaginary" ideas that exist only in the mind?—i.e. non physical things that are supposed to have a *meta-physical* existence. 3) Even if we consciously and explicitly reject the myth of the given (naïve realism), or the map/territory fallacy, we may still be *enacting* these belief-orientations, assigning an implicit degree of "reality" or concreteness to ideas that are unwarranted from a post-metaphysical perspective. I have the space here for only the briefest sketch of these issues (see Murray, in preparation).

Post-metaphysical truth claims. In this paper I emphasize the ontological functions of the mind that infer what is *real*, but the post-metaphysical turn also involves the related epistemological functions that infer what is *true* and determine how we argue for claims. Many theorists have demonstrated a developmental progression in the ways that humans (explicitly and tacitly) understand and justify beliefs (e.g. Perry; Fisher; Kegan). Very roughly, early forms are based on appeals to authoritative people and texts, sacred objects or beings, group norms, intuition, and direct experience. Later forms are based on logical inference, coherence with foundational tenets and existing "truths," and methodologies and sources that minimizes bias. Yet later forms acknowledge and try to compensate for the fundamental indeterminacies and fallibilities of all of the validity bases. *All* of the mentioned modes of justification are (almost) *always* combined in complex life deliberations; it is not a matter of leaving any behind but of having more options to choose from and becoming more skilled in when to use each.

As compared with Modernist or Integral modes, beliefs associated with New Age (and Green) culture rely less on logic, bias-checking, and rigorous methodologies (such as the scientific method). Assessing the Green worldview is complicated because of a combination of influences from both higher and lower developmental levels. Though sometimes the more primitive thought modes are embraced unreflectively, in other cases postmodern arguments are used to justify their intentional use.²¹ As we note later in a section on meaning-generative claims,

²¹ In rejecting Modernist ways, Green opens the door to magical thinking (indulging non-differentiation of ideas and concrete realities) and narcissistic thinking (including grandiosity and wishful thinking) (see Hanley 1992; Habermas 1991; Murray in progress). Green thinking also uses valid postmodern insights into the fallibilities of rational thought and the scientific method, and the inevitability of human bias (it also is drawn to Romanticism which values feeling good and aesthetic value over

this can be done within a post-metaphysical frame—though this is not usually accomplished.

Metaphysical claims and Integral post-metaphysics. As to the second concern, Wilber's "integral post-metaphysics" (Wilber 2006; Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman 2009) proposes an elegant solution to many perennial ontological, metaphysical, and epistemological conundrums. It follows from Schumacher's (and, earlier, Plotinus') notion of "adequatio" which says that "the understanding of the knower must be adequate to the thing to be known" (Schumacher, 1977, p. 39). That is, what we perceive as real is determined in part by our perceptual and cognitive apparatus, and thus both our developmental level (along all of the numerous lines relevant to any situation) and the perspective we are taking. It shifts the blunt question of *whether* objects (e.g. Santa Clause, past lives, Agape, morphogenetic fields) exist, to *in what way* do they exist *for whom*?

Integral post-metaphysics is a specific model for representing what Wilber calls the "Kosmic Address" of a claim, which includes the AQAL-based developmental altitude and perspectival quadrant of both the perceiver (claimant) and the object of perception. Though it has great potential as a method for adding rigor to making claims and investigating epistemology, its full potential remains to be seen, in part because it is not yet apparent whether the concept of Kosmic Address is sufficiently determinate—i.e. in contentious dialogs about the validity of specific claims, will participants be able to agree on the parameters of the Kosmic Address itself? In general this illustrates the positivistic style of Wilber and AQAL-centered approaches—they provide high level models and concepts enabling more reasoning power, and thus may increase clarity and confidence of beliefs. This contrasts with approaches that expose indeterminacy (uncertainty, fallibility, paradox, dissonance) in human beliefs. Our evolving understanding of mind and thought reveals ever higher layers of positive knowledge (increasing abstraction and nuance thought reflection, differentiation and integration), but also reveals ever deeper unsettling territories of unknowing and fallibility that call for the "*negative capability*" of being able to tolerate and work within this indeterminacy (Murray, 2006)—a territory acknowledged by Wilber but not much explored or highlighted in his work.

Integral post-metaphysics includes Wilber's "three strands of good knowledge" which frame validity claims in terms of injunctions, i.e. *if you do X then you will see or conclude Y*, and frame validity verification in terms of social deliberation, i.e. *a group of the adequate has followed the injunction and agreed upon the conclusion*. This method, in good alignment with Habermas' epistemology, again has a positivist slant in that for the critical question of "What if people don't agree and come away with different beliefs?" this framework leaves us only with the

rationality). The topic of *intuition* becomes particularly interesting, because, while basing belief on intuition can be a cover for non-rigorous thinking, Habermas' entire project is based on the 'rational reconstruction' of quasi-universal intuitions.

implied answer that they must not all have followed the injunction accurately or must not all be operating from an adequate developmental level or perspective. Very useful answers, but the question of how we account for the inherent indeterminacy of concepts, perceptions, world-views, etc., yet still "get on with it," is not fully addressed. Wilber's Three Strands model for knowledge validation allow for, but do not include, the following important questions (which reflect the approach of the Habermasian school): What are my/our biases, assumptions, capacities? How far are we removed from experiential data along the Ladder of Inference (Argyris, 1993)? What are the known alternatives, limitations, fallibilities, and indeterminacies of this idea? What other parties/perspectives should be invited into the inquiry?²² The topic is greatly illuminated by a deeper look into the psychology and epistemology of individual and group belief formation and meaning-making, as discussed in brief below.

Epistemic drives. As to the third concern raised above, underlying the "myth of the given" is a cognitive phenomena that Whitehead called "misplaced concreteness" (Whitehead, 1929), wherein one treats an abstract concept as if it had physical reality (or a reality outside of human interiors). Philosophers and cognitive psychologists arguing from the "embodied mind" perspective note that tendencies such as misplaced concreteness are unavoidable consequences of the fact that the development of the human mind (both through evolution and through childhood) has its foundation in concrete physical interactions and needs (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Clark 1996; Varela et al. 1993). There is something deep and strong within us that wants to treat abstract concepts (e.g. democracy, African-American, god, ego, compassion, spirit, evolution, formal operational thinking, left hand quadrant, green meme, or Eros) as if they somehow really existed in the way that we perceive them.²³ There is also the strong tendency to treat the boundaries defined by concepts and models as fixed or concrete, and ignore their fuzziness, malleability, ephemerality, and indeterminacy (see Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Murray, 2006).²⁴

In Murray [in progress] I identify a number of "epistemic drives" (like misplaced concreteness) that, though they can be compensated for and worked with and around, nevertheless continue to operate within us. They not only help us accurately understand the world but can create biases and errors.²⁵ Epistemic drives are like emotional drives in that we become aware of and learn to manage them at ever deeper and more nuanced levels, but meanwhile they keep showing up in ever subtler ways, so the developmental learning process continues indefinitely. Misplaced

²² Of course, to avoid the postmodern trap, we also must attend to the meta-question of: How urgent and important is the decision and how much effort should be expended before we end the inquiry process (for now) and act upon our (ever fallible) conclusions?

²³ It seems clear that properties, patterns, systemic relationships and other abstractions (and emergent properties) are not "objects" out there--but it still can seem like they are more or less accurate perceptions *about* what is really "out there."

²⁴ Objects of interest often fall between the categories of interior/exterior, singular/plural, true/good/beautiful, state/stage, etc.

²⁵ Examples include: the mind's innate drive toward perceiving patterns, wholes, essences, and universals; and how concepts and language create divisions and polarities.

concreteness and its repudiation begins at more concrete levels and persists in more abstract constructs. We being by disbelieving in Santa Claus; the Boogeyman imagined under our bed; the mermaid in the pond (as real concrete objects). We continue by questioning the realities (including stories and myths) assumed by our religion, family, or culture. At some point we enter "construct awareness" and begin to notice the tenuous relationship between interior concepts/language/models and exterior reality. Though this at first causes confusion and consternation, eventually we understand such phenomena not as unsophisticated thought modes to be outgrown, but as inevitable dimensions of thought that must be accounted for and, when appropriate, compensated for or neutralized to the extent that we can. We can allow for the meaning-generative power of myths, magical thinking, metaphysical entities, and elegant models and maintain some objective clarity of these beliefs as useful tools for some purposes but not others. We can flexibly assume perspectives that reveal the valid "reality" of a wide range of cultural and personal beliefs.

Phenomenologically (and epistemologically), the ascription of Reality or Truth to an idea is a matter of intensity or degree of certainty, rather than an all-or-nothing matter. We assign more concreteness to abstract ideas that matter more and that we are more certain of (and vice versa).²⁶ This ties enacting post-metaphysical perspective to social/emotional/ethical development.

Enacting post-metaphysics. This brings us to the issue of *enacting* the post-metaphysical stance. Though integralists may *intellectually* acknowledge that, for example, The Good, The True, and The Beautiful, or I/We/It are simply perspectives that don't exist "out there," we often *act* (speak) as if these were fundamental aspects or constituents of the universe, when they are just tripartite conceptions that have a lot of meaning-generation potential for certain individuals at a certain historical moment. As with prescriptions to avoid bias and be objective or avoid selfishness and be altruistic, avoiding metaphysical thinking to take a post-metaphysical stance is more about ongoing attention and deepening wisdom (i.e. skill building) than adopting a belief or philosophical position.

Integral integrity. Integralists, in embodying their philosophies and visions, are called to a particularly high level of *integrity* and ethical development. I define integrity as congruence between four levels of human phenomena (in order of increasing difficulty and development): that actions follow words (e.g. we do what we say we will do); that words follow conscious beliefs and thoughts (i.e. authenticity and transparency); that conscious thoughts and beliefs align with unconscious ones.²⁷ The final step can be expected only in the high developmental

²⁶ And one's degree of certainty in an idea (how strongly we hold to its reality or truth) is tied up in emotion-laden evaluations of the importance, urgency, and consequences of an idea. Thus we can acknowledge that, regardless of one's developmental level, misplaced concreteness, and a number of other epistemic drives and cognitive biases, are affected by emotional context.

²⁷ Integrity also implies congruence among the objects within any of the four levels (actions, words, conscious beliefs, unconscious beliefs) in different life contexts. For example: acting or speaking to one group in ways that contradict what one does or says to another group constitutes lack of integrity. Also, if conscious beliefs or unconscious drives exist within us in a

levels of self-reflective capacity that turn emotional reactions, unconscious drives and motives, and even the processes of thought and language themselves, into objects of inquiry. Thus, though it is difficult, integralists are called to hold a deeper or reflective meta-perspectives on how their own cognitive and social belief-generation processes work, in able to hold their beliefs post-metaphysically.

Allowing for epistemic drives and meaning-generative claims. Yet even as we call for a more fully post-metaphysical approach to integral beliefs, post-metaphysics, based on modern revelations about how the mind works, brings with it the humbling understanding that we are wired with epistemic drives that unavoidably compel us into magical, mythical, and conventional modes of thought. The more that useful prescriptions like "don't confuse the map with the territory" become slogans that are repeated without an acknowledgement that doing so can be difficult and subtle, the greater the social pressure against admitting the natural prevalence of such phenomena, which in turn hinders authenticity and inquiry. One measure of second tier community is a group's capacity to empathically consider, allow for, and learn from such vulnerabilities.²⁸ As alluded to above, one way to approach the validity of metaphysical or purely philosophical beliefs is to appeal to their *meaning-generative* potential. Though Wilber's Three Strands method can bring a type of scientific validity to non-concrete claims, it assumes a goal of justifying claims that might be universally held by all who are adequate judges. In contrast, many beliefs are held for personal and pragmatic reasons. Beliefs that can not be "proven," or that we don't care whether they can be proven, can nevertheless be quite valuable to hold. I propose that, 200 years after Kant saw that human reasoning had differentiated validity claims according to the True, the Good/Just, and the Beautiful, culture may have progressed to where we now need a fourth type of validity claim "the Meaningful" (or the meaning-generative). This provides a path for a type of validity that is sufficiently different from truth, ethical rightness, and aesthetic appeal, that it warrants a new category.²⁹

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that the human developmental narratives and frameworks used within the integral community would benefit a greater focus on specific skills and capacities that reveal themselves in action

kind of unhealthy conflict or turmoil, this points to a subtler lack of integrity. Technically we can not know what is in the unconscious, but a large body of work deals with revealing this territory and healing it (making it whole and harmonious).

²⁸ Shifting from the mundane uses of metaphysical thinking to its philosophical uses, we can note that the post-metaphysical approach has been made possible only with relatively recent understandings of mind and epistemology. Great philosophers including Plato and Hegel were trapped in metaphysical binds. Habermas notes (2006, p. 6) that "even Nietzsche, in his rejection of Platonism, remained attached to the tradition's strong concept of theory, its grasp of the totality, and its claim to a privileged access to truth." Metaphysical thinking is in esteemed company, and not to be discounted out of hand.

²⁹ For example, I "believe in" reincarnation because, though I have no direct experience supporting it, it counteracts existential despair, is held by people I admire, and coordinates well with a number of other beliefs and intuitions I have—I do not expect to or need to convince anyone that reincarnation is real. The claim is valid for many because it is meaning-generative, not "true."

contexts such as collaboration, dialog, problem solving, knowledge building, and leadership. I have also argued that developmental narratives and frameworks based on belief systems and worldviews engender a number of concerns calling for care in their use. Finally, I explored what it might mean to entertain a deeply post-metaphysical approach to developmental or any integral beliefs or frameworks.

Above I mentioned the developmental progression in the way people hold and justify beliefs. Earlier modes, including magical, mythical, and conventional thinking, are less concerned with the universality or portability of claims, i.e. one is less aware of how those who do not hold one's perspective or worldview might interpret one's claims. For example, the New Age beliefs listed above are often held in this way. However, like all communities of affiliation, inquiry and/or practice, the integral community also demonstrates an insular belief reproduction "echo chamber" effect. Constructs such as "non-dual," "development," and "Agape" take on a particular meaning that is treated as if it is the only meaning, and certain ideas like "the cognitive line precedes other lines" get passed around the circle as truths taken for granted.

Though this phenomena is not only typical but it is an unavoidable aspect of group belief formation (including academic disciplines), there are several things to note about it relative to the integral community. First, because (we will assume that) the integral vision tends to attract individuals at relatively high developmental levels (compared to other communities of theory or practice), it has a relatively high capacity to reflect with epistemic wisdom upon its constructs and beliefs. Second, counteracting this, the integral community is unusual (though far from unique) in how much of its core constructs and truths are attributed to one (extremely talented and productive) person or founder, i.e. Wilber. This, and the fact that the integral project blurs the lines between scholarly and social spheres (e.g. with Integral Institute sponsoring Integral Life as well as a academic programs) has the effect that much of the knowledge passed around is not viewed as critically as it might be. "Wilber is brilliant, and we are all pretty smart, so these things I keep hearing others say over and over are pretty likely to be valid." Third, because integral theory is so fundamentally interdisciplinary, broad, and far-reaching, it has an unusually great potential to impact many other disciplines—and culture and society in general. Therefore, in order to realize its potential it must pay exceptional attention to the portability of its constructs and beliefs.

In conclusion, for second tier thinking generic skill sets are more fundamental than beliefs or models. *Whether* we believe in a god, or in capitalism, or an evolutionary Omega Point, is less important than *how* we hold that belief, and *how* we hold it is a matter of skills. We can aim for the *ego-awareness* to reflect on our attachment to it; the *relational-awareness* to listen deeply to someone with an opposing belief; the *construct-awareness* to hold the

paradoxes implied in the belief; and the *systems awareness* to see how that belief relates to other beliefs and to systems of action. And we can aim for the second tier wisdom to reflectively choose what and how to believe and to use that belief as a sturdy tool in ethically-relevant work, and let go of it when it is not useful. The long road ahead brings the challenges of how we will define, assess, and support such skills in our domains of application.

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