Towards a Spiritual Model of Cosmic Education Based on Advaita Vedanta Philosophy

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The author outlines a spiritually oriented model of cosmic education inspired by Advaita Vedanta philosophy. The description of the general principles of this Nondual Vedantic Cosmic Education (NVCE) will be preceded by a brief review of the writings of two Indian authors, Vivekananda and Aurobindo, who led the revitalisation of nondual vedantic philosophy. In order to utilize the nondual vedantic spiritual wisdom as a curriculum substrate for teaching/learning processes in classrooms, the NVCE model uses some core ideas from Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory, which can serve as an interface theory between nondual vedantic philosophy and this new conception of cosmic education. NVCE will be organized around three main curriculum realms: a) “Purifying the mind”, b) “Controlling the Mind” and c) “Expanding the Mind”. These three curriculum realms are shown to respectively correspond with three processes in Wilber’s Integral Theory, such as a) Show Up, b) Wake Up and c) Grow Up), and also with the four classical yogas mentioned in the wisdom traditions of Hinduism: a) Bakhti Yoga and Karma Yoga, b) Raja Yoga and c) Jnana Yoga. The author holds that this world has no future unless spirituality becomes the substrate of educational processes. In NVCE, which is a proposal to raise the educational building from spiritual pillars, to educate is to guide others and ourselves on the path that leads to the nondual experience. From the nondual vedantic perspective, cosmic education is the path through which human beings progressively dissolve their limited individualities into the nature of God.

Keywords: cosmic education, nondual Vedanta, Integral Theory, Vivekananda, Aurobindo.

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Introduction

“Man will feel no rest until he finds some meaning for himself in the cosmos. And this is so, because there is a meaning which we feel hazily, and which draws us forward along the path of evolution”

(Tapasyananda, 2020: 15).

In total agreement with those words, we feel the urge to understand our place in this universe. And we feel the need to have a theory upon which we can make decisions about how to conduct our life at both individual and societal levels, a theory which could answer “such difficult philosophic questions as “the place of a human being in the material world”, “the predetermination of the mankind”, “the sense of human life” “ (Bazaluk, 2022: 155). Driven by that urge to understand our place in this universe, in a previous article (Pulido-Moyano, 2021) we presented a cyclic cosmological theory called “Consciousness Endomitosis Theory” (CET). This theory, no matter how speculative and metaphysical could appear to be, was subjectively satisfactory for us, and we hope it can be also so for others. CET nurtured itself explicitly by philosophical ideas from Advaita Vedanta (Nondual Vedanta) and included some concepts borrowed from Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory.

The main thesis of that previous article was that consciousness is the only substance of the universe, the only context of everything, the only subject (albeit temporally localized in many points of apparent individual subjectivity or specific perspectives) and the only object (albeit manifested in a multiplicity and diversity of things). Inspired by the teachings of Nondual Vedanta, in that article we said that consciousness neither “emerge” (because it is the very ground from which everything emerges), nor is a property (because it is the unique substance of which all existing physical properties are mere modulations or manifestations).

In line with the nondual vedantic inspiration of CET, here we outline a new model of cosmic education inspired by our interpretation of Advaita Vedanta philosophy and, as we did in our previous article, we will develop some of our main arguments with the help of Wilber’s ideas. To be more precise, our conception of cosmic education inspired by our interpretation of Advaita Vedanta philosophy and, as we did in our previous article, we will develop some of our main arguments with the help of Wilber’s ideas. To be more precise, our conception of cosmic education ground itself mainly on the works by Vivekananda (1863-1902) and Aurobindo (1872-1950), two leaders of the revitalisation of nondual vedantic philosophy, though we will mention many other authors belonging to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition. Vivekananda defined education as the manifestation of a perfection already existing in man (Vivekananda, 2016, vol.4: 349).

In Section 1, we will see what Vivekananda meant by such a definition and how Aurobindo interpreted and developed it. In Section 2, we will introduce some core ideas of Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory, which can serve as an interface theory between nondual vedantic philosophy and a new conception of cosmic education. In Section 3, we will describe the overall structure of a Nondual Vedantic Cosmic Education (henceforth, NVCE). We present NVCE as formed by three main curriculum realms: “Purifying the mind,” “Controlling the Mind” and “Expanding the Mind.” We hold that these three curriculum realms articulate themselves respectively with three processes in Wilber’s Integral Theory: Show Up, Wake Up and Grow Up. At the same time, each curriculum realm -and its corresponding wilberian process – relates itself to the traditional “yogas” of the Hindu tradition: Karma Yoga and Bakhti Yoga (Purifying the Mind / Show Up), Raja Yoga (Controlling the Mind / Wake Up) and Jnana Yoga (Expanding the Mind / Grow Up).
1. The educational process as seen by Vivekananda and Aurobindo

The *Vedas* (from *vid* “to know”) are the most ancient spiritual scriptures of humankind, “considered to be a direct revelation from God to the mystics of the past” (Easwaran, 1986: 236). *Vedanta* (from *anta* “end” or “aim”) refers to the philosophical culmination of the *Vedas*, and *Advaita Vedanta* (literally “Non-dual Vedanta”) is one of the various vedantic schools, originally articulated by Sankaracharya around the eighth century C.E. (as an introductory text see, for example, Sharma, 2007). The impact of Advaita Vedanta throughout the history of Indian philosophy has been enormous though, for many centuries, its influence was shadowed by other schools. At the end of 19th century, Advaita Vedanta was revitalised thanks to the teachings of Ramakrishna and his foremost disciple, Swami Vivekananda, followed by other Indian thinkers like Aurobindo. The 20th century witnessed a series of milestones in this revitalization movement, in the figures of Ramana Maharshi, Atmananda Krishna Menon or Nisagardatta Maharaj – just to mention a few of them-, whose teachings helped western spiritual seekers to understand the depth of the advaitic philosophy. From 1970 onwards, the “New Age” spiritual flowering clearly has resonated with the “nondual wisdom”, though not always from an adequate understanding of it.

In his analysis of the contemporary relevance of Advaita Vedanta, Devaraja (1970) asked what constitutes its special significance for modern man, that is, “for the person who is aware of the strains and tensions characterizing contemporary life and sensibility and shares the concern of a disillusioned generation for objective evidence and verifiable utterance.” For this autor, it is clear that “Advaita Vedanta claims our attention today as a well-knit system of doctrines offering connected solutions to a number of problems, logico-epistemological and ethico-religious” (p.130).

It is a fact that an increasing number of people all over the world tend to define themselves as “not religious but spiritual.” Ranganathananda (2019) noticed how the idea of religion has naturally become distasteful to young people in all parts of the world, so they go away from all religion. However, this author thinks that religion has a profound message to every human being, if we approach it scientifically. This is precisely “the great contribution of India’s ancient philosophy and spirituality of Vedanta and of its powerful modern exponent, Swami Vivekananda” (p.10).

According to Bone et al. (2007), spirituality is seen very often as a source of division and is sometimes constructed as something to fear in secular societies. However, these authors explain that “spirituality is not the same as fundamentalism or religious doctrine and spirituality as an integral part of the early childhood curriculum has the potential to connect not divide, hence the emphasis on whole/holistic” (p.344). Miller and Drake (1997) noticed that educators avoid the word “spiritual” because somehow “it makes them uncomfortable.” According to these authors, “this discomfort and avoidance betray the sad state of education today”:

We focus on outcomes rather than have students explore the fundamental questions of life. These questions include such issues as: what is the purpose of human life? What is our role in the universe? What is the nature of reality? How can we deal with human suffering? To be educated should mean that one has addressed these issues in the course of one’s life (p.239).

We hope that an increasing number of educators will accept spontaneously and naturally the incorporation of spirituality in their work. In the case of higher education settings, Crowe
(2013) holds that this incorporation “provides an additional way for students to construct knowledge, make meaning of experiences, and move toward authenticity, all contributing to transformation”, and she explains:

For religious students, activities that contain spiritual components allow students to connect to their established practices. For students who are spiritual, but not affiliated with an organized religious group, these activities can serve as the inspiration for students to critically examine their existing environmental attitudes, question their assumption and beliefs, and through reflection and discourse, transform their view of their place, responsibility, and importance in the natural world (p.76).

Throughout his life, Vivekananda very explicitly addressed the type of questions posed by Miller and Drake. For him, intelligence is at the beginning and at the end of this universe:

At the beginning, that intelligence remains involved, and in the end it gets evolved. The sum total of the intelligence displayed in the universe must therefore be the involved universal intelligence unfolding itself, and this universal intelligence is what we call God, from whom we come and to whom we return, as the scriptures say. Call it by any other name, you cannot deny that in the beginning there is that infinite cosmic intelligence (Vivekananda, 2016, vol.2: 206).

For Vivekananda each of us must complete the circle and go back to this cosmic intelligence which is God. According to him, “this cosmic intelligence is what people call Lord, or God, or Christ, or Buddha, or Brahman, what the materialists perceive as force, and the agnostics as that infinite, inexpressible beyond; and we are all parts of that” (Vivekananda, 2016, vol.2: 231). Vivekananda holds that true education contributes to “complete the circle” by helping us to come back to the “source” or cosmic intelligence known as God. Rather than a going back, it is ultimately a remembrance or a recognition of our divine nature. For him “education is not filling the mind with a lot of facts”. The ideal of education is perfecting the instrument -the mind – and getting complete mastery of my own mind:

If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will. Side by side, in the child, should be developed the power of concentration and detachment (Vivekananda, vol.6: 39).

In order to be an educated man – Gnaneswarananda says – one does not have to go through books, one does not have to talk a lot, and one does not need to be an information bureau or a card – index. “Anything that helps us in bringing into manifestation the perfection that is already within us, is true education. This ideal of education is very different from the average conception” (Gnaneswarananda, 2021: 45).

Tapasaynanda (id.) admits that we cannot find in Vivekananda’s writing any details of work or methods of organization for accomplishing his educational vision on a nationwide scale, not to mention on a worldwide scale. He lived for a short time only and he had neither a political party nor governmental power to support or work out his ideas. However, some of his suggestions are very clear and specific. For example, Vivekananda said that the only duty of the teacher is to remove all obstructions from the way: “Hands off! as I always say, and everything will be right. That is, our duty is to clear the way” (Vivekananda, 2016, vol.4: 349). Ahmad (2009) holds that “Advaita-Vedanta claims that if the teacher embodies and reflects the values
he is teaching then the impression he leaves on his pupils is very deep and indelible”, and he explains:

A teacher must be conscious and careful in his behaviour, attitude and professional ethics. Both the teacher and learner are travelers on the path of self-realisation but the teacher is comparatively advanced and superior in age, experience and dignity (p.35)

As a goal, the perfection of the mind-instrument was much more important than a mere “academic perfection” as an accumulation of knowledge. According to Banerji (2017), reformers of Indian educational system at the beginning of the 20th century, like Tagore and Aurobindo, were firmly convinced that the reduction of knowledge to “intellectual understanding” need to be countered by other forms of legitimate knowledge which, in Sri Aurobindo’s case, “it was a tapping into inner sources of wisdom that Vedantic knowledge wrote about” (p.7).

This idea was further developed by the Indian thinker and mystic Sri Aurobindo, for whom Vivekananda was a source of inspiration (he said: “It is a fact that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my solitary meditation and felt his presence”). Aurobindo writes:

Any system of education founded on theories of academical perfection, which ignores the instrument of study, is more likely to hamper and impair intellectual growth than to produce a perfect and perfectly equipped mind (Aurobindo, vol.1: 383).

From Vivekananda’s or Aurobindo’s perspective, the perfection of mind is something that goes beyond an increase of complexity or enrichment of cognitive resources. According to Aurobindo, there is no proof that education and intellectual training by itself can change man; “it only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego” (Aurobindo, vol.21-22: 1094). That is why…

… it is necessary for the mind too to grow in perfection and this it can do best when it depends less on the fallible intellect of physical mind, when it is not limited even by the more orderly and accurate working of the reason and can grow in intuition and acquire a wider, deeper and closer seeing and the more luminous drive of energy of a higher intuitive will (Aurobindo, vol.13: 530).

This “drive of energy of a higher intuitive will” opens the door to the purely spiritual or divine element, which is already present in us but mostly unnoticed. We will be truly educated (meaning “spiritually mature”) only after recognising our divine nature, which is veiled by layers of mental conditioning. However, for such a recognition to take place, it is absolutely necessary to understand God without anthropomorphic limitations. In one of his writings, Vivekananda told the story of a man of eighty years who said that he “could not conceive God except as an old man with a long beard sitting on a cloud”. For Vivekananda, those words showed that “[this man of eighty’s] education is not complete. There has not been any spiritual education, and [he] is unable to conceive anything except in human terms” (Vivekananda, 2016, vol.6: 60-61).

The concept of god is at the very core of any philosophy of cosmic education from a vedantic perspective. However, it is necessary to emphasize that Vivekananda’s ideas on education are far away from abstract speculation or any beatific or spiritually romantic attitude. His famous
dictum “education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man”, was immediately followed with another crucial statement: “religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man”. Ashokananda (2019) drew out attention to “the nice distinction Vivekananda made”, and explains:

Perfection includes divinity, of course, but it means a little more. You might almost say that he gave a higher place to education than to religion. Religion as it is ordinarily understood is limited to the conception of attaining to God, whereas man, a human being, has many other things in him because of which he is man (p.166).

In other words, Vivekananda was fully aware of mundane implications of “real education”:

You consider a man as educated if only he can pass some examinations and deliver good lectures. The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion – is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one’s own legs. The education that you are receiving now in schools and colleges is only making you a race of dyspeptics. You are working like machines merely, and living a jelly-fish existence (Vivekananda, 2016, vol.7: 141).

Both Vivekananda and Aurobindo got their inspiration from the Bhagavad Gita when they defend the need to articulate the most pragmatic, politically and socially commited view on education with its deepest spiritual foundation and orientation. Thus, Aurobindo talked about “a new creation, a spiritual education and culture, an enlarged social spirit founded not on division but on unity, on the perfect growth and freedom of the individual, but also on his unity with others and his dedication to a larger self in the people and in humanity” (Aurobindo, vol.13: 511). In his famous poetic style, he explains:

As the mental development foreshadowed above proceeds to its goal, man will begin to evolve and realise himself as a mighty and infinite Intelligence, not limited by sense-perception or the laborious and clumsy processes of the reason, but capable of intuitive and infinite perception. And when the evolution of Mind is complete and the evolution of Supra-Intelligence proceeds, the liberation of the Will involved in its operations will lead man to the highest evolution of all when he realizes himself as a potent and scient Will, master of creation and not its slave (…) (Aurobindo, vol.17: 243)

In other words, both Aurobindo and Vivekananda hold that a truly cosmic education would be like an upward path through which a human being progressively dissolve its limited individuality into the nature of God. A truly cosmic education is a Godward path. From the Advaita Vedanta perspective, an authentic cosmic education would help us to become God. Once a human being had completed this educational process, his/her only mission on this planet would be to assist others to complete the same educational process. Vivekananda succintly stated this idea: “First, let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. Be and make. Let this be our motto” (Vivekananda, 2016, vol.4: 342).

Vivekananda’s powerful words can be easily misunderstood, because he used the plural “gods”, in a mere rhetoric way, but it is obvious that he holds, like any follower of nondual or advaitic Vedanta, that there is just “one” God, and nothing apart from God, because only God is. For the nondual vedantic follower, God is consciousness, the only substance out of which
the universe is made. In that sense, the nondual vedantic approach to cosmic education would define it as the process through which God “remembers” itself or rediscovers its divine nature. The pillars of cosmic education lie in the self-knowledge capacities of the human mind. As Aurobindo wrote:

First, he has to turn his eyes upon his own psychology and distinguish its natural elements - ego, mind and its instruments, life, body – until he discovers that his whole existence stands in need of an explanation other than the working of the natural elements and of a goal for its activities other than an egoistic self-affirmation and satisfaction. He may seek it in Nature and mankind and thus start on his way to the discovery of his unity with the rest of his world: he may seek it in supernatural, in God, and thus start on his way to the Discovery of his unity with the Divine (Aurobindo, vol. 21-22: 722).

Aurobindo claimed that the soul or spirit within us, if it is divine, immortal or celestial, “cannot be sent here solely to be put to school for this kind of crude and primitive moral education” (Aurobindo, vol. 21-22: 836-837). For him, the mundane perfection is sometimes conceived of as something outward, social, a thing of action, a more rational dealing with our fellow-men and our environment, a better and more efficient citizenship and discharge of duties, a better, richer, kindlier and happier way of living, with a more just and more harmonious associated enjoyment of the opportunities of existence. But by others again a more inner and subjective ideal is cherished…

… a clarifying and raising of the intelligence, will and reason, a heightening and ordering of power and capacity in the nature, a nobler ethical, a richer aesthetic, a finer emotional, a much healthier and better-governed vital and physical being. Sometimes one element is stressed, almost to the exclusion of the rest; sometimes, in wider and more well-balanced minds, the whole harmony is envisaged as a total perfection. A change of education and social institutions is the outward means adopted or an inner self-training and development is preferred as the true instrumentation. Or the two aims may be clearly united, the perfection of the inner individual, the perfection of the outer living. (Aurobindo, vol. 23-24: 616)

Aurobindo admits that the discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child’s own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system. However, this step still fell short because “it still regarded him as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated”. Advanced educational ideas must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine. Thus, “the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being” (Aurobindo, vol. 25: 32-33). According to him, “the first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught”:

The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, he is a helper and guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil’s mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the
knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the Surface (Aurobindo, vol.1: 384).

For Aurobindo, the prevailing idea of education in his time was “still primarily that of intelligence and mental capacity and knowledge of the world and things, but secondarily also of moral training and, though as yet very imperfectly, of the development of the aesthetic faculties” (Aurobindo, vol.25: 75). In quite a premonitory declaration, considering our current chaos of “infoxication” due to mass media multiplicity and social networks, Aurobindo wrote the following:

Modern education has not in the mass redeemed the sensational man; it has only made necessary to him things to which he was not formerly accustomed, mental activity and occupations, intellectual and even aesthetic sensations, emotions of idealism. He still lives in the vital substratum, but he wants it stimulated from above. He requires an army of writers to keep him mentally occupied and provide some sort of intellectual pabulum for him; he has a thirst for general information of all kinds which he does not care or has not time to coordinate or assimilate, for popularised scientific knowledge, for such new ideas as he can catch, provided they are put before him with force or brilliance, for mental sensations and excitation of many kinds, for ideals which he likes to think of as actuating his conduct and which do give it sometimes a certain color (Aurobindo, vol.25: 90).

Aurobindo received a letter from a worried man, father of a son, who wanted to know Aurobindo’s view about the adequacy of his son’s education. The father has doubts concerning the rightness of having a “mundane” education as opposed to spiritual advance of his son. In his reply, Aurobindo said that he sees “no objection to [the boy’s] going on with his studies,” and he made clear:

Whether his studies will be of any use to him for a life of sadhana [spiritual practice] will depend on the spirit in which he does them. The really important thing is to develop a state of consciousness in which one can live in the Divine and act from it on the physical world. (…) There is no reason why X should not complete his studies or learn something which will make him useful in life. To be useless is not a qualification for Yoga (Aurobindo, vol.31: 71).

These words give us a clear indication of the overall attitude showed by both Vivekananda and Aurobindo in these matters. For them, true education must obviously serve for solving “real-world” problems related to our human existence, hence we need to acquire as much knowledge and competence as possible. As we will see below, we need to “Grow Up” as high as possible, in Wilber’s sense. However, this knowledge for action has to be grounded on our communion with the divine (the “Wake Up” process in Wilber’s view), and act (“Show Up” in Wilber’s view) from it on the physical world. It is time to explain the meaning of these wilberian processes, as they are a useful tool to translate nondual vedantic ideas into the language of educational philosophy.
2. From Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory to nondual vedantic cosmic education.

In our previous work (Pulido-Moyano, 2021) we used several concepts introduced by Ken Wilber in order to illustrate the dynamics of evolutionary processes. For example, physical structures were “holons”, and the four fundamental forces operating in the universe were “Eros”, “Phobos”, “Agape” and “Thanatos.” Now we will instrumentalise Wilber’s Integral Theory in order to articulate the principles of nondual wisdom with policies and practices of cosmic education.

In order to utilize the nondual vedantic spiritual wisdom as a curriculum substrate for teaching/learning processes in classrooms, we need this interface or any other with similar power. Otherwise, it would be impossible to pour the essence of non-dual knowledge into the field of educational institutions. Wilber’s work -see Wilber 1995 and 2017 for his core theoretical ideas, and Wilber 2008 and Wilber et al. 2008 for practical applications – can serve as the interface we need to translate into educational practice the non-dual wisdom expressed in traditions such as Advaita Vedanta.

Ken Wilber’s theory on the development of consciousness must be analysed within the context of his “kosmological” thought, expounded mainly in three of his works (Wilber 1995, 1996, 1997). In those works, Wilber used the term *kosmos* -with “k” and not “c” – to include in his vision of the universe all the five planes of reality, which he refers to, in accordance with many ancient wisdom traditions, as energetic, material, biological, mental and spiritual. For Wilber, kosmos is the totality of what exists, and the components of kosmos are “holons” (a concept borrowed from Arthur Koestler). If something exists, then it is a holon. To be a “holon” means to be simultaneously both a whole in itself and a part of another holon. To be a whole implies that the holon is internally composed by other holons, which are not only included or encompassed by the higher holon, but also transcended by it. To be a part implies that any holon is externally related to other holons, all of them contributing to form a holon of a higher order.

Thus, atoms are holons, stars or galaxies are holons, cells, living organisms and, of course, human beings all are holons, but with different “depths”. As a holon, a mosquito is much deeper than a star, because the mosquito transcends and includes various levels of lower holons, such as cell level holons, molecule level holons, or atom level holons. More depth means two things: a) more complexity – what Bazaluk and Karchenko (2018) would call “progressive complication of the structure of matter”; and b) a broader awareness.

In agreement with nondual Vedanta, Wilber holds that consciousness is pervasive throughout the universe. For him, everything that exists is nothing but an “emanation of Consciousness”, which in Wilber equals to “emanation of the Spirit”. Consciousness manifests or expresses itself in infinite different ways, the vast majority of which are completely oblivious to that essential fact. That is, most holons ignore their true nature as mere modulations of consciousness or spirit. Stars, rivers, trees or stones, all of them ignore that they are external forms in which consciousness manifests itself. It is evident that basic biological forms show a certain “sentience”, but only the human holon is self-aware. Human beings alone are aware that they are aware.

Thus, from an evolutionary perspective, as far as we know, we are the first holons where consciousness has become self-aware. Unfortunately, it seems that we are also the first ones to turn our backs on this fact, to ignore it, to deny it. As the history of humanity demonstrates, we can act in a thousand ways contrary to self-awareness, instead of leading our individual and collective lives by taking that recognition as the foundational ground. In any case, this
resistance is not something that should surprise us. Wilber would remind us that the forces he calls “Thanatos” and “Phobos” are always active and quite often they win battles, although “Eros” and “Agape” will end up winning this evolutionary war.

### 2.1. Some educational implications of Wilber’s Integral Theory

Ken Wilber has not articulated any discourse on education in his more than thirty books. However, along the last three decades, many educators have explored the educational consequences that could derive from Wilber’s Integral Theory, sometimes in the form of specific organizational and pedagogical practices inspired by it. Gidley (2007) said that the educational momentum emerging from Ken Wilber’s holistic approach offers an approach with enormous transformative potential for people and cultures around the world.

In the educational field, the adjective “integral” often has been used to describe a type of education sensitive to the multiple dimensions of the human being (cognitive, affective, social, physical, spiritual). Sometimes the adjective has been used to indicate a type of education where theoretical and practical knowledge are equally important, or a type of education characterized by the convergence or coordination of the efforts by all the agents of the educational community. In this sense, there is a certain “integral inspiration” in different pedagogies like “learning by doing”, “situated learning”, Paulo Freire’s emancipatory education, “learning communities”, “service-learning”, or in the educational ideas and practices of Froebel, Decroly, Dewey, Waldorf and especially Montessori, the Italian pedagogue who very directly talked about cosmic education. Approaches like “multiple intelligences education”, “collaborative learning” or “problem based Learning” also show some “integrality” in their respective theoretical underpinnings.

Our proposal of a [Nondual Vedantic Cosmic Education](#) (NVCE) goes beyond any classical “holistic” or “integral” approach to education. However, our idea of a NVCE is clearly compatible with Wilber’s concept of “integral”. His Integral Theory is organized around five core elements (“Quadrants”, “Stages or Waves of Consciousness”, “Lines”, “Types”, and “States of Consciousness”) and four main processes (Grow Up, Wake Up, Clean Up and Show Up). Each of the five element is specially associated with a particular process. Thus, “quadrants” is related to the Show Up process, while “Stages of Consciousness”, “Lines” and “Types” are closely linked to the Grow Up process, and “states of consciousness” to the Wake Up process. In our view, NVCE would utilise the following general guiding principles, which are inspired in Wilber’s Integral Theory:

1. In relation to the Grow Up process, NVCE should promote the achievement of the maximum altitude in the stages of consciousness of the individual, taking into account all his/her lines of growth as well as the diversity of types among people.
2. In relation to the Wake Up process, NVCE should promote the experience of different states of consciousness.
3. In relation to the Clean Up process, NVCE should encourage “shadow” work, helping individuals to be aware of their fixations and allergies, addictions and resistences of all kind that hinder transitions between stages and between states of consciousness.
4. In relation to the Show Up process, NVCE should facilitate and monitor the ways in which growth and awakening translate themselves into concrete ways of thinking and acting in people’s lives.

In the next section, we will describe in more detail the curriculum structure of NVCE. In so doing, we will indicate the connections of NVCE with some tenets of CET, our cyclic...
cosmological theory (Pulido-Moyano, 2021) and, with the help of Wilber’s concepts, we will describe in general terms each of the three great curriculum realms around which NVCE is organized. Though the three realms are inextricably linked to each other, for practical purposes each realm can be thought as a relatively separate field of educational practices, which would include specific goals, learning contents, activities and methods of evaluation (all of which are beyond the scope of this article). Any advance in one of the three realms contributes to the advance in the other two. However, the first realm (“Purifying the Mind”) precedes the other two in the sense that it is a requirement for an adequate development of the second (“Controlling the Mind”) and the third (“Expanding the Mind”).

As we will see, each realm connects with different ways of unification or “yogas” in the Hindu tradition. Thus, the first realm relates itself to the practices of Karma Yoga (Action Yoga) and Bhakti Yoga (Devotional Yoga), whereas the second realm relates itself to Raja Yoga (“Royal” Yoga or Yoga of Mind Control, in Patañjali’s sense) and third realm to Jnana Yoga (Yoga of Knowledge). In this sense, it is interesting to compare the educational usage of these four traditional yogas in this NVCE proposal with the position held by Elena Roerich, one of the “three major options for the Russian cosmic pedagogy” singled out by B. V. Yemelyanov (2004, quoted by Bazaluk & Blazhevich, 2012).

One of the foundational principles of Elena Roerich’s Agni Yoga “is the continuous and infinite evolution of human spiritual qualities in unity and harmony with the Cosmos, with the society, and with the human being him/herself.” (Bazaluk & Blazhevich, 2012: 151). In our view, among the three major options for the Russian cosmic pedagogy indicated by Yemelyanov in his article The Cosmic Pathfinders for the Russian Pedagogy, the option represented by Elena Roerich’s Agni-Yoga (“Live Ethics”), is the only one that seems to be somehow compatible with the nondual vedantic cosmic education implicit in Vivekananda’s and Aurobindo’s thought. The other two options, represented by Konstantin Wentzel’s cosmic pedagogy and by Daniel Andreyev and his Rose of the World (“Роза Мира”), seem not to be compatible. Notwithstanding their great insights and philosophical contributions-, as far as we know their discourses neither contemplate the centrality of God – as “One without a second” – nor develop a concept of education as the perfection of human inner divinity. In one of the Agni Yoga books -allegedly written by Elena Roerich – she said (1929):

161. Let us see wherein lie the similarities and differences between Agni Yoga and the preceding Yogas. Karma Yoga has many similarities with it as far as earthly realities are concerned. But when Agni Yoga provides ways to the realization of the far-off worlds, the difference becomes apparent. Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga are all separate from the realities of routine life, and because of this they cannot enter into the evolution of the future. Of course, an Agni Yogi should also be a Jnani and a Bhakti, and the development of the forces of his spirit makes him a Raja Yogi. How beautiful is the possibility of being fit for performing the tasks of the future evolution without rejecting the past conquests of spirit! One should not boast of bringing innovation, because only by a synthesis of the old and the new is a renewal of possibilities attainable.

We think that Elena Roerich was wrong in believing that “Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga are all separate from the realities of routine life”. Thousands of yogis throughout history have used the practice of their respective yogas as an experiential ground from which to conduct their lives in very benefitial ways for their communities, thereby contributing to the social and even economical development of the latter. The idea that “they cannot enter into the
evolution of the future” seems unfair and unjustified to us. What Roerich did not say—as far as we know—is that, according to the several traditions of Hinduism, the four yogas do not exclude each other, and that all of them lead to the same goal: knowledge of Brahman or the recognition of our divinity.

For NVCE, the four yogas are four useful frames of reference to keep in mind in designing educational contexts and practices. All of them must develop themselves simultaneously along the educational career of our students, though one of the yogas could have some temporary preponderance over the other three during some educational levels, in some specific social and cultural scenarios or for some type of students.

3. The structure of a nondual vedantic cosmic education

3.1. First curriculum realm of NVCE: Purifying the Mind

“The true purpose of education is to make the heart pure and thus obtain a clear vision of the purpose of life and how to live life” (Bahr, 2021: 314). NVCE will promote the elimination of all selfish tendencies in students’ minds. The ideas of “I” and “mine” should be progressively eradicated as core elements of our identity. As Aurobindo said, “in the economy of man the mental nature rests upon the moral, and the education of the intellect divorced from the perfection of the moral and emotional nature is injurious to human progress” (SACW1: 389). Obviously, this position is unacceptable for any educational system based upon materialistic philosophies in agreement with capitalism and social darwinistic ideologies like the ones that form the plot of our world today. NVCE aspires to trigger the deepest world spiritual revolution by redefining the meaning of human life. NVCE is not just a mere “humanistic” educational alternative—like Waldorf or Montessori schools—attractive for parents who are unhappy with market-oriented educational practices. Vivekananda expected that our education would take a fresh turn attaching primacy to its essential purpose:

True education being manifestation of inner perfection brings out the spiritual nature of man, endowing him with divine qualities, such as non – violence, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquility, aversion to fault – finding, kindness to living beings, freedom from covetousness, modesty and steadiness (Shandarshananda, 2021: 411).

According to CET -the cyclic cosmological theory that we use as the overall frame of reference—each holon has two sides (“being” and “aware”) and is subjected to four drives, its constant “tetradic structural field”: self-Preserving or Phobos drive, self-Transcending or Eros drive, self-Dissolving or Thanatos drive and self-Adaptative or Agape drive (see figure 1)

Along the horizontal axe (see figure 1), a holon is subject to either an increase or a decrease of its being side. In one extreme of this axe, Phobos drives the holon -through strong nuclear interaction, according to CET – into a decrease of its being side by isolating itself from other holons of equivalent complexity. This Phobos drive is the root of all our selfish tendencies as human individuals, which can adopt pathological versions in certain schizoid personalities. That is why NVCE must promote its annihilation, by pulling our mind towards the other extreme of this axe, namely, the Agape drive. Bakhti Yoga and Karma Yoga suit perfectly for this goal. Agape drives the holon -through electromagnetic interaction, according to CET – into an increase of its being side by union with other holons of equivalent complexity. In human terms, Agape is not only a pro-awareness drive, but also a source of brotherhood, of sense of oneness and, above all, an efficient antidote against the “ego disease.”
NVCE should design learning experiences aimed at liberating us from the tyranny of our ego, that powerful agent that unceasingly makes plans for its own benefit, be it in the form of power, money, prestige or recognition, plans that we constantly feed and use to build our identity around them.

It is obvious that any advance in the “purification of mind” as defined by NVCE must automatically translate itself into specific behavior in real-life contexts. A purified mind leads to a more virtuous behavior in our life, that is, to a constant manifestation of generosity, compassion, acceptance, patience, sincerity and other qualities of our everyday conduct. This has to do with what Wilber calls “Show Up”, the process of externally manifesting our inner cognitive and spiritual development in terms of attitudes, behavioral patterns, relationships, social involvement and habits. Any educational advance in a NVCE sense should manifest itself in our students’ observable conduct. The practice of the aforementioned virtues is the only empirical evidence acceptable as a proof of a purified mind.

In one of the three scriptural sources of Vedanta, the Baghavad Gita, the doctrine of Karma Yoga was described as the true way for purification of our minds. Götz (1995: 490) holds that, “in a sense, the Gita itself provides an answer to the conflicting claims of modernization and traditionalism, science and spirituality, the material world and the self.” According to Götz, this appears in the Gita’s doctrine of Karma Yoga. Students need to develop a sense of duty so that they can fully engage themselves in accomplishing their works, but they have to learn how to renounce the fruits of those works. The most virtuous action is the one done without expecting any personal benefit. However, living according to these virtues is like swimming against the powerful current of our materialistically oriented societies. In fact, the whole idea of a curriculum realm of “purification of mind” understood as an anti-ego effort is clearly opposed to current education all over the world. Our educational institutions and philosophies base themselves on the idea that students – judged as “citizens in the making” – will enjoy the many things waiting out there for them, either in the form of material goods or other types.

Our young people fantasize about their future job positions, payroll or other monetary rewards, job promotion, prestige and a long list of related issues. They know that the day is getting closer when they finally enter the world of paid work, and that very few will actually be able to choose where they will work. The vast majority will accept the least bad of the options presented to them – if not the only one – and many will see how the years go by

Figure 1. The tetradic structural field of all holons
without any option being available. Let us not allow education to be “the secret arm of this oppressive system, an institution complicit in the economic system which, instead of helping human consciousness and the balance of society, is serving the perpetuation of the status quo and, at the same time, hypocritically, of ignorance” (Naranjo 2014: 183). In relation to this idea, Miller (2002) talked about Maria Montessori’s cosmic education by echoing her words:

Modem societies, due to their pervasive materialism, have neglected the spiritual forces that animate the human being, and our institutions, particularly schooling, have become repressive and damaging, turning people into “slaves” of the machine rather than cultivating their spiritual sensitivity, she wrote. Modern people are ill prepared to deal with the great moral challenges of our age, and are unable to resist the demons of nationalism and war that threaten to engulf the world. To address this imbalance, Montessori envisioned a curriculum for elementary school students that she called “cosmic education” (p.6)

For many young people, and for the vast majority of adults, to have a relatively stable and “decently” paid job is the goal. It matters little if the economic activity in which that job is inserted contributes or not to the degradation of nature, or if it gets close or not the limit of fraudulent, or if it is a direct or indirect source or not of oppression against people. When Edgar Morin explained the reasons why the education of the future should “teach an ethic of the human race”, he spoke about how “the weakening of global perception leads to that of responsibility and that of solidarity” (Morin, 2011: 54-55), and of “(…) the false rationality that, used in the economy, has led to environmental disasters (id.: 58-62).

In fighting against *Phobos* and in favor of *Agape*, NVCE also educate for peace, which requires the awakening of an ecological awareness in students as well as the development of attitudes against voracious consumption or a ruthless competitive vision. Without a true spiritual dimension in our educational aspirations, not very much can we expect from any teaching effort aimed at social responsibility, equity, justice, or community wellbeing. Young people should know that it is possible to be an entrepreneur or to be a rich person and, at the same time, being honest and respectful of the natural environment and the wellbeing of our fellow human beings. Perhaps in this way some of them would feel inclined to move away from jobs based on the spread of fear, on the plundering of natural resources or on the mobilization of the worst tendencies of the human being, such as greed, anger or envy. The best job is not the one that provides us with the most money, but the one that causes the greatest wellbeing -or the least harm – to most of us.

By erasing any trace of spirituality from the educational scene, we make it easier for materialism, the desire for consumption and the dictates of the market to reign freely in the minds and hearts of the new generation. It is difficult and painful to live in a world based on the permanent stimulation of desires. Instructionally speaking, the least we should do is to raise a debate in the classroom and make young people think about where all this is leading us to, and to help them free themselves from the slavery of certain tricky aspirations, such as accumulating material wealth, assuming that happiness depends on it. What does “success in life” means? Is there a greater or more desirable aspiration than that of not harming anyone, always doing good and helping all beings?

3.2. Second curriculum realm of NVCE: *Controlling the Mind*

A central element in Ken Wilber’s theory is “States of Consciousness.” Following spiritual traditions such as Vedanta, Kashmir Shivaism or Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism), Wilber points
out that there are three states of consciousness, and they would correspond to (1st) waking, (2nd) dream and (3rd) deep sleep. In accordance with some tenets of those traditions, each state is associated with a “energy substratum”: physical or “gross” for the waking state, “subtle” for the dream state, and “causal” for the deep sleep state. In agreement with the explanation given by some spiritual traditions, Wilber adds two more states: (4th) witness and (5th) nondual.

This terminology is often rejected by those who adhere themselves to a rigid scientific-materialist vision, and it is not surprising that the educational institutions almost completely ignore the reality of the states of consciousness. The Wake Up process, as Wilber calls it, receives very little attention – if any at all – within modern educational institutions. However, the existence of several states of consciousness is a fact, and these states determine which realm of reality is accessible to consciousness at a given moment, that is, which realm (gross, subtle, causal) can be observed and interpreted from the stage of growth reached by consciousness. If the stages of consciousness determine the “epistemological position” from which the subject interprets a spectrum of objects, the states of consciousness delimit the “ontological spectrum” available at each moment for the subject.

Given the importance of this point, it is convenient to explain in more detail what we mean when we talk about expanding consciousness and its different states. The measurement of brain wave frequencies offers a scientific picture of the states of consciousness and their underlying energetic realms. Each state/realm correlates with different frequencies. From “gross” to “causal”, the “density” of the underlying energetic body decreases, thereby losing “thickness” and gaining “subtlety”. The less “dense” the energetic body underlying a state is (using the terms of spiritual traditions), the lower the frequency of synaptic exchange pulses (using the terms of neurophysiological research). The Gamma and Beta waves predominate in the waking state, and the Alpha and Theta in the dream state, while the Delta waves are typical of the deep sleep state. Although all of them coexist in the brain simultaneously, there is always one prominent frequency.

The states of consciousness, in Wilber’s approach, delimit which domain of reality has a certain priority, so to speak, at a given moment of consciousness. In other words, these states tell us which specific realm (gross, subtle, causal) is being observed and interpreted. However, observation and interpretation are cognitive operations determined by the stage reached by consciousness (as we will see in the subsection 3.3). As we said before, states of consciousness delimit the most readily available “ontological spectrum”, while stages of consciousness delimit the “epistemological stance” from which to observe and interpret this spectrum of objects.

Grow Up is the process through which the subject is “objectified” once and again, as he/she ascends towards the next stage by objectifying his/her previous self in the old stage. On the other hand, Wake Up is the process in which the object is “subjectified”, since it consists of a progressive elimination of false identifications, until the complete dissolution of the subject/object duality occurs (the nondual state), making consciousness recognize itself in everything (either gross, subtle or causal), since everything is made of the same substance: consciousness itself.

Not only do we go through all the states of consciousness every day, but also all of them are accessible to the individual at all times. The waking state / “gross” realm and a portion of the dream state / “subtle” realm -the portion that takes place when we think or immerse ourselves in our dreams, thoughts, fantasies or plans – constitute our habitual space while we are awake, about sixteen hours per day or so. The other portion of the dream state / “subtle” realm -when we have dreams during the REM sleeping phase – lasts between four and six hours each night. The deep sleep state / “causal” realm corresponds to the Non-REM sleeping phase, although it
can be said that we are in this state every time we find ourselves in the interstitial space between two thoughts, that is, every time thought disappears.

The latter idea is very important. *Deep sleep* state is the state of authentic peace. *Deep sleep* is not “absence of consciousness” but “consciousness of absence”, when only pure consciousness remains because there is no object present, no sensation, no perception, no thought, no emotion, no feeling, no oniric content. This state refresh us and gives us strength for the next day.

3.2.1. Mindfulness and meditation in NVCE

Controlling the mind through the turning inwards of our abilities of attention and concentration should be essential for a NVCE. In this respect, the key elements are learning how to focus our attention, how to meditate and how to observe our inner mental functioning like *raja yogis* do. Schools must embrace any practice oriented towards experiencing bodily and mental stillness in the “now”. Should educational institutions be truly interested in fostering students’ inner peace, they should favor the abandonment of the agitation of the body and mind through meditative practices. If we do not teach children how to look *inside* themselves, how to witness the dynamics of their minds and how to explore it for themselves, we are condemning them to look the world *outside* through distorted lenses. Flanagan et al. (2012) said that some writers note that, at a basic level, children have limited opportunities and space for reflection and contemplation in their busy lives, something they feel intuitively that must be detrimental to the young person’s development. The authors echoed words from philosopher and poet O’Donohue:

If you look at the educational system and you look at most of the public fora in our culture, there is very little time or attention given to what you could almost call learning the art of inwardness or a pedagogy of interiority (O’Donohue 2007, quoted in Flanagan et al., 2012).

Throughout all school years, teachers and parents make a constant demand from their children/students: “get concentrated!” Thus, “the first thing the teacher has to do – Aurobindo remarked – is to accustom the pupil to concentrate attention” (vol.1: 404). Children’s concentration on the task seems to be a basic requirement for a good performance. However, who – and when – has taught children to concentrate? Children and adults, if they are going to excel at something, it will be in what they practice most regularly, especially if they have received some training for it. Unfortunately, most of us are very good at the “art” of distraction. Many authors do not hesitate to consider the propensity of our children and youth to distractions as a true “epidemics of modernity” (Ruff, 2005). School should promote the meditative practice, which has shown its benefits over the millennia. As Naranjo said (2014: 170) “we should have an education that favors the contemplative disposition of the mind, and not only its intellectual and psychological aspects.”

In a clear correspondence with the *Samadhi* section of the *Eightfold Noble Path* exposed by Shakyamuni Buddha, this second curriculum realm of NVCE paves the way for the practice of meditation. Whether serenity-seeking oriented, analytical, contemplative, devotional or prayer-like, meditation is undoubtedly the engine of the spiritual path. If we do not teach our young generations to meditate, we are depriving them of what may be the greatest source of personal growth and spiritual awakening in their lives. Sitting meditation often appears as a paradigm of the practice of stillness in the present. In the Japanese Zen tradition, the term “shikantaza” represents this aspect of spiritual practice. When we sit (“taza”) we surrender the body in the immobility of the posture, and this bodily stillness will help to quiet the mind. But not only that.
“Shikan” means not doing anything other than what is being done in the now. Focusing and concentrating is the imperative of the present moment, a moment that has no duration because it is outside of time. Let us teach our students that, whatever they do, they must do it with total exclusivity, giving all their attention to it!

There are many different approaches to the use of mindfulness in educational contexts (see the Handbook of Mindfulness in Education, edited by Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2016), but NVCE would tend to promote those with a clear spiritual basis. Thus, NVCE can adopt the practice of correct mindfulness (samma sati in Pali) from the Buddhist point of view. It is interesting that samma means both “correct” and “integral”. The practice of mindfulness is “correct” if it is strongly linked to other practices mentioned in the first curriculum realm (Purifying the Mind, which would roughly correspond to the Sila section of the Eightfold Noble Path exposed by Shakyamuni Buddha), and those included in the third curriculum realm (Expanding the Mind, corresponding to the Prajna section of the buddhist path).

This practice of mindfulness can contribute to the gradual dissolution of three illusory separations that weave the fabric of our lives, namely, the separation between body and mind, between subject and object (the “root” duality), and between myself and others. We can overcome these three separations through the practice of focused mindfulness, open mindfulness and empathic mindfulness respectively.

In any case, as a training of the capacity to control our attentional resources, mindfulness is only a first step in the mastery of our mind. Meditation is the next step. NVCE would deliberately promote a meditative mind in our students so that they can reach the experience of oneness in different states of consciousness. In other words, meditation is the key practice to induce the mystical experiences that Wilber describes in the “Wake Up” process. From the NVCE perspective, education should help students to feel their deep interconnection with natural environment and with all human beings (what Wilber calls “natural mysticism”), with all mental realities (“subtle mysticism”), with their witnessing power as pure consciousness (“witness mysticism”), and ultimately, each student must ideally experience the absolute sameness of the witness and the witnessed (“nondual mysticism”).

Obviously, the vast majority of students would complete their schooling years without having reached the culmination of this sequence of mystic experiences of oneness or cosmic unicity. Each human being has a particular predisposition, sensitivity or propensity to experience those states, and education can only help to a limited extent. However, any advance would be a success. Education must plant the seeds of meditative practice in students’ hearts, with the hope that these seeds will flourish in adul life, their small fruits being a more serene, peaceful and joyful life, and their biggest one being the transcendence of individuality and the recognition of our true nature as Brahman.

This second curriculum realm of NVCE relates itself to the field known as Education for Peace, which implies promoting the practice of silence of the mind. Peace requires progressively breaking the ties of our conceptual mind, all those ideas, words, images, fantasies, fears and all kinds of mental objects that prevent us from recognizing that we are pure consciousness, the absolute subjectivity witness to all of them, but not identified with any of them. Schools should train students in their ability to detach themselves from enslaving thought, teaching them how to use thought without been enslaved by it. Inner peace reaches its maximum expression when we are able to “think without thinking”. Let us help students to know how to master their thinking, up to the point of knowing how to silence its noise completely.
3.3. Third curriculum realm: Expansion of Mind

Wilber defines “stage of consciousness” as the structural altitude reached by the development of consciousness in a holon. We can describe these stages metaphorically as the staircases of a ladder. Each staircase is cognitively more complex than the previous one. In the case of the human holon, Wilber has found numerous characterizations of these stages in various academic fields. In so doing, he has showed how the stage-like structure is intrinsic to whatever developmental “line” is under consideration. These multiple lines – also known as “streams” in Wilber’s theory – are equivalent to the so called “multiple intelligences” in Howard Gardner’s theory (1993), but also include other developmental sequences specified by research on emotional, ethical or artistic development.

A person can be at a certain altitude in one line, and at a different altitude in another line. The “average” altitude of all his/her lines would be something like the “center of gravity” that this person is currently enjoying within the spectrum of stages. Another element, “Types”, contributes to the dynamic nature of this theoretical characterization of stages. Within each line, the altitude reached by individuals may be subject to variables such as age or gender, but also to social or cultural variables of all kinds (like ethnic identity, religious beliefs or social class). Wilber defines “Types” as specific varieties within a line.

“Consciousness – our author explains – is not, in itself, one line [of development] among others, but the space in which all those lines emerge”:

Consciousness is emptiness, the opening, the clearing in which phenomena emerge, and when these phenomena develop through a series of successive stages, they form an evolutionary line (cognitive, moral, self, values). And the more phenomena that can emerge in the consciousness of that line, the higher the level reached in it will be” (2006, p.121). [A definition that he repeats almost literally in Wilber, 2017: 201].

In words reminiscent of Vedanta or even Mahayana buddhist discourses, Wilber says that “consciousness, ultimately, is not a thing, a process, an event or a system, but rather the opening or clearing in which things, processes, events and systems appear” (2017, p.201). From the perspective of humankind’s cognitive evolution at a historical or civilizational scale, we find Jean Gebser’s theory (2011) and its five stages: archaic, magical, mythical, mental, and aperspectivic (Wilber calls the latter “integral”). In the domain of individual cognitive development, we find theories such as Piaget’s and its four main stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, formal operations (and fifth or post-formal operations, according to some neopiagetian researchers). And in the domain of social adjustment, just to mention one more “line” of development, Wilber mentions Spiral Dynamics, a theory originally conceived by Graves (1970) and later developed by Beck and Cowan (1996). This theory distinguishes up to eight axiological structures or worldviews, ranging from a first level of survival, focused on the purely physiological, to a higher existential transcendent level.

In Aurobindo’s opus magnum The Life Divine (2003, vols. 21-22) there is another theory based upon a sequence of cognitive development which is very important, both for Wilber and for our interest in depicting a spiritually oriented cosmic education. Aurobindo describes the consciousness spectrum from the “Unconscious” to the “Supermind” (see Figure 2). Medhananda (2022) summarized Aurobindo’s main argument with these words:

Divine Consciousness, Aurobindo claims, is “involved” in everything in the universe and progressively manifests itself at each stage of the evolutionary process from matter to life to mind, and ultimately, to Supermind. Up to this point, he claims,
humanity has evolved to the stage of mind, which is only a transitional stage on the way to the culminating stage of Supermind, upon reaching which we will realize that we are none other than the one infinite Divine Consciousness playfully manifesting as everything and everyone in the universe. Moreover, he argues that the evolutionary transition from mind to Supermind is inevitable, since the Divine Consciousness “involved” in the human mind will necessarily press forward until it can manifest itself here on Earth to the fullest extent (p.97).

Wilber often refers to Stages of Consciousness as “Waves of Consciousness” to highlight the fluid or wave-like character of their upward movement. Leaning on the vision of the biochemist Rupert Sheldrake (1990) and the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1978), Wilber affirms that we can understand these waves as kosmic habits inherited by morphic resonance and formative causation and by prehensive unification. This means that they first emerge as creative and undetermined novelty, but later become established as morphogenetic grooves inherited by later development.

Wilber has synthesized the contribution of different authors and, borrowing their terminologies, he has suggested a unified sequence of stages, as shown in figure 2. The “planetary and cosmic personality” mentioned by Bazaluk (2012: 155) roughly correspond to a person established in what Wilber calls “advanced vision logic” stage (see figure 2). Such a person is “capable of thinking tactically and strategically to the extent of planetary and cosmic scope and is also capable of organizing an interaction of the processes within a local material object and within the cosmos” (Bazaluk, id.).

Figure 2. Ken Wilber’s spectrum of stages of consciousness based upon his unification of distinct terminologies related to cognitive development.

Grow Up is the process through which we move upwards. It is the process by which consciousness unfolds itself “vertically” as it were, becoming itself more and more encompassing, transcending and including the lower stages. The Grow Up process corresponds to the “self-Transcending drive” (Pulido-Moyano, 2021) mentioned in CET, where it is
associated to gravitational interaction. It is regulated by what CET described as the *Second Law of Holons* (all holons tend to transform themselves in a more complex holon with the minimum amount of time in this process), and the *Fourth Law of Holons* (all holons tend to make the most efficient use of energy for their adaptative purposes).

The *Grow Up* process amounts to a progressive increase in the complexity of consciousness, that is, an increase in the quantity and variety of objects, and in the number and kinds of perspectives on them. In this sense, a growth of consciousness equals to a qualitative enrichment of the representational capacity of the mind. The *Grow Up* process involves transitional phases between stages. During those transitional phases, any individual – any human holon – finds some obstacles in its upward movement due to – using Wilber’s terms – either “fixations” with the old stage or “alergies” in relation to the new one. At a cosmic level, Bazaluk (2012, quoted in Bazaluk & Kharchenko, 2018: 8) described this turbulence of transitional phases when he mentioned the cases of “Bioinert” and “BioIntelligent” matter:

> [T]he “transition” states of matter complicate the systematization of knowledge, because, on the one hand, they are structurally and functionally the highest structures of the “mother” state of matter, on the other hand, they are included in the more perfect blocks of the “daughter” state of matter.

“Fixations” and “alergies” are nothing but resistences to change. As such they are due to what CET called the *First Law of Holons*, in virtue of which “all holons tend to conserve the space they occupy”, and the *Third Law of Holons*, in virtue of which “all holons with mass tend to conserve it” (Pulido-Moyano, 2021: ibid.).

Wilber introduced the *Clean Up* process in his Integral Theory precisely because those “fixations” and “alergies”, those critical relationships with “mother” and “daughter”, must be healed in order to get an adequate stabilization of the upper stage. We will not develop here the intricacies of the *Clean Up* process in Wilber’s theory. Suffice to say that it is necessary to face the “shadow” side of our psychic configurations, because this cleaning up plays a crucial role for a successful *Grow Up* process.

In sum, “Mind expansion” corresponds to the *Grow Up* process in Wilber’s terms. For NVCE, *Grow Up* is the training of the mind functioning by which our cognitive potential can reach its maximum level. In this respect, most of the classical cosmic education models are perfectly valid, in the sense that they talked about an increase of holistic and global thinking accompanied by an increase of social sensitivity. “A more evolved mind for a more compassionate society” could be the motto. Let us stop producing narrow patriotic minds through our national educational systems. We need citizens of the universe equipped with the most advanced minds.

NVCE shares the idea that “the object of the cosmic education is the permanent improvement of the intelligent matter of the Earth” (Bazaluk & Blazhevich, 2012: 153). However, the ultimate purpose of NVCE is to help students to reach the most important goal of their lives, namely, the knowledge of the absolute or Brahman (or God, Tao, Buddha Nature or whatever name we use from so many spiritual traditions). In that sense, NVCE would deliberately promote a kind of synthesis of yogas through which we can discover within ourselves our perfect nature as God.

NVCE is in favor of any cognitive enrichment of our intellect and any growth of our mental representational abilities only insofar as they contribute to our knowledge of Brahman or, at least, to purify our minds and hearts so that we can help others by improving life conditions in this world (the first curriculum realm).
When Bazaluk and Kharchenko (2018: 9) say that “in the philosophical tradition, knowledge is the way to the Divine”, we suppose they refer to the dualistic traditions that view knowledge as a gradual progression towards our final union with God. In any case, knowledge and rational analysis are mere instruments in Vedanta, used to discover or recognize that we are God already, so there is no God waiting for our union with Him/Her. To some religious people this can sound even blasphemous, but we are God-substance (or Consciousness) already. Many layers of mental conditioning veil this essential truth, and that is why we have to use the mind “against” itself, dissolving those layers. This path is Jnana Yoga, literally the “Yoga of Knowledge”. Thus, the “way” to the Divine is ultimately a “no way”, because it is beyond any space, time or causal constraint.

Here we can see the radical difference between any previous model of cosmic education and a NVCE. All models of cosmic education described in the last 150 years have been conceptually built around what here we have called, following Wilber’s terms, the Grow Up process. All of those models failed to separate mind from consciousness, a mistake also inherent to current neuropsychology and other cognitive sciences. NVCE demands a strong articulation between Grow Up and Wake Up processes, which ultimately is an articulation between Knowing and Being. If we teach our younger generations how to reach the deepest meditative state, they will know how to “dissolve” their minds, an experience in which any differentiation between knowing and being simply disappears. This temporary experience of mind dissolution is the most precious treasure a human being can enjoy in this life. We can formulate the basic idea in very simple terms: in dissolving the mind, I discover that I am not my mind. This discovery makes me utilize my mind in much more efficient, healthy and virtuous ways, both for “my own” benefit and for others’ benefit.

On the one hand, Grow Up is the process by which subjects are objectified, so to speak, or put it in other words: I grow up insofar as I am able to observe myself, analyze myself, take some distance from myself and, thanks to this distance, I make a progress, transcending my previous self. On the other hand, Wake Up is the process by which objects are subjectified, so to speak, or put it in other words: I wake up insofar as I can experience “oneness”, as we have described it above.

It is a fact that human minds can become more and more holistic, more and more global in both a planetary and a cosmic sense, by increasing the scope of their representational power, and by deepening their understanding of more complex realities. However, the ultimate goal of human life, in terms of nondual Vedanta philosophy, is the recognition of our true nature, that is, God-Consciousness. The only way to reach this goal is by inducing the absence of all mental activity. Mind, our extraordinary instrument for survival, must be transcended. Consciousness is not a by-product of mind but “mind at peace”, and mind is “consciousness in action”. They are not two. As we said in the previous article:

Like any “material” object, the mind is just a type of modulation of consciousness. More specifically, the mind is a type of activity, but never an entity itself. This activity consists of sensing, perceiving, and thinking, that is, being aware of things/objects. When we say “I am aware,” we mistakenly assume that the “I” who is aware is an individual separated entity -an ego – that has the quality or property of being aware. In so doing, we simply ignore the fundamental truth that the only “I” that is aware is consciousness itself, not me, not you, but consciousness (Pulido-Moyano, 2021: 98).
Concluding Remarks

The core message of Vedanta – that Man is essentially divine – is exceedingly valuable, and therefore, as admitted by Ashokananada, “we believe that it is going to be one of the major tenets of the future religion. I am almost willing to say that the future religion will fail to realize itself, unless the belief in the divinity of one’s own nature is emphasized” (2019: 147). NVCE’s overall purpose is to nurture this belief in new generations.

NVCE could help students to free themselves from their fears, which is the same as helping them find their true nature or recognize themselves as the pure consciousness or pure presence. Obviously, this would require a complete transformation of educational thought, not to mention the training of a new generation of teachers.

It is our contention that this world has no future unless spirituality becomes the substrate of educational processes. NVCE would be just a way to raise the educational building from spiritual pillars. In NVCE, to educate is to guide others and ourselves on the path that leads to the nondual experience. Paradoxically it is not a state that we can reach, since we cannot achieve something that we have already! It would be more correct to speak of a recognition or a remembrance of the non-duality of reality. This recognition is only possible from the practice of stillness. That is the rationale behind the second curriculum realm in NVCE.

NVCE invites us to commit ourselves to the new moral or categorical imperative that Wilber points out for each one of us: “act as if your behavior were to form part of a fixed structure that governs all future human behavior” (2015: 103). To a certain extent, NVCE is a social and educational initiative that promotes a sort of “spiritual activism.” Vivekananda used to say, ‘My religion is to learn.’ His master, Ramakrishna, maintained that life, from beginning to end, is one term of education in “the university of nature”. As Gnaneswarananda reminded us:

We are here on Earth for education. From the very first day to the last we are going through different phases of it. We are turning over leaf after leaf in the vast book of experience. We may yet have to go through many more lives to ‘graduate’, to manifest our Divinity. It is the manifestation of our inner, potential perfection which is the goal of all education. If education does not lead us towards that goal, it only confirms and consolidates our ignorance (id.: 48).

According to our Consciousness Endomitosis Theory, the frame of reference for NVCE, the life of a holon is the path this holon has followed in solving the inner tension between its original being-awareness unlimited nature and its acquired space-time limited condition. In nondual vedantic terms, this means that our life is the path we must walk in attempting to rediscover our true divine nature, the ultimate goal of life. The behavior of any holon is aimed at resolving that inner ontological tension, which basically consists of restoring a state of equilibrium. NVCE should facilitate this process of equilibration. Only a Nondual Vedantic Cosmic Education will enable us to dissolve all our imaginary acquired self-limitations so that we can recognize our real eternal divine nature and live on the Earth in accordance with this recognition.

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