

# Evolutionary Dynamics PRIMER

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**Lesson I**

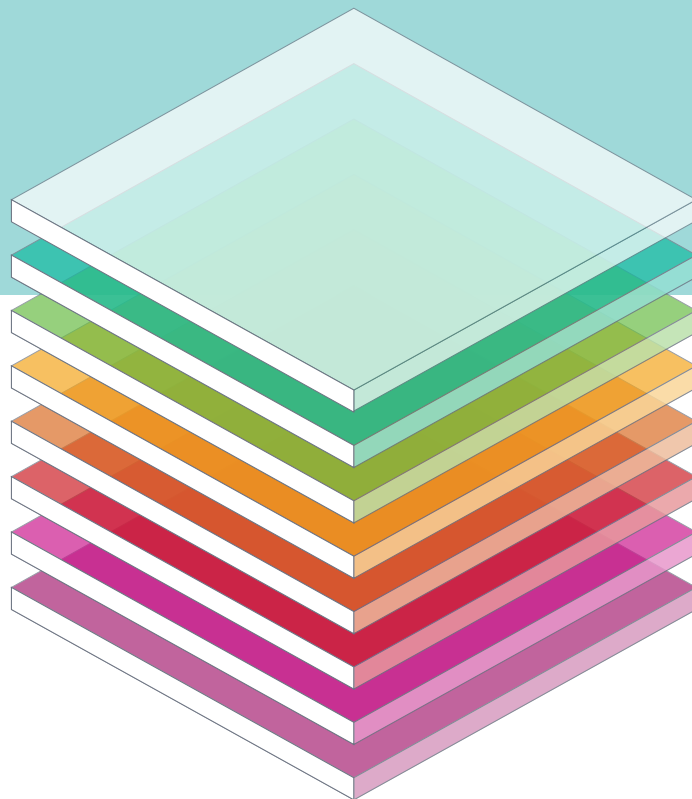
Levels of Development

**Module**

Introduction

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Transcript



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We'll see, as we continue to outline these different levels or stages, how important they are for understanding ourselves and our world, and how much of an impact they're continuing to make on our lives right now.

**Ken Wilber**

# VOLUME I - LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT

## MODULE - INTRODUCTION

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### Chapter 1 - Part 1

What are Levels of Development?

For centuries humankind thought all the objects, phenomena, animal and plant species, and humans themselves, were placed here in a fixed, rigid, and given fashion; that they were, for example, all fixed ideas in the mind of God. By the time of the modern era various philosophers began to question this.

The German idealists for example, Fichte<sup>1</sup>, Schelling<sup>2</sup>, Hegel<sup>3</sup>, all saw the universe as the product of spirit's own evolution. For Schelling, for example, spirit goes out of itself to produce unconscious spirit, or nature. It then produces conscious spirit, or mind.

It then unites nature and mind to reawaken ultimate spirit as spirit. Darwin<sup>4</sup> applied the idea of evolution to biology, psychologists applied it to human development, anthropologists applied it to human history.

Today we have the understanding that, with the big bang, the simplest fundamental particles blew into existence, strings and quarks for example, and began to evolve into higher and higher, more and more complex, more

and more whole entities — with each new stage transcending and including its predecessor.

Quarks came together to form atoms which transcended, or went beyond, and included — or preserved, quarks. Atoms came together to form molecules, which transcended and included atoms.

Molecules came together into cells, which transcended and included molecules. Cells came together into complex organisms, which transcended and included cells. Each more complex entity was also — more conscious.

This process of “transcend and include”, which is the fundamental form of evolution, what Erich Jantsch<sup>5</sup> called ‘self-organization through self-transcendence”, has continued all the way to the human triune brain, the most complex and most conscious entity in the known universe.

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It's connections among neural synapses outnumber all of the stars in the entire universe. On our interiors, this consciousness itself also evolves with each of its stages transcending and including its previous stages.

This is where "levels" come from. This evolutionary drive, also moving toward larger and larger wholes, goes from an identity with a self only, to an identity with various groups (the family, the clan, the tribe, or ethnocentric) to an identity with all human beings (or worldcentric), and ultimately with all living beings (or kosmocentric), a mystical unity with the entire universe, what the Sufis<sup>6</sup> call, the Supreme Identity.

An awakening "of spirit, to spirit, as spirit". Understanding which of these interior stages or levels we're at is crucial for our own self-understanding, as well as understanding the world at large, as we'll continue to see.

After the Idealists introduced the notion of growth, development, and evolution in general, researchers began applying it to all sorts of different areas. When psychologists started studying the stages and levels of growth in humans they found that humans have several different and important types of intelligence, or multiple intelligences.

As we'll see, these include things like cognitive intelligence, emotional intelligence, aesthetic intelligence, moral intelligence, and so on.

As different as these multiple intelligences are (sometimes called "developmental lines"), they all grow and move through the same basic developmental levels: different lines, same levels. These are the 7 or 8 levels we'll be talking about.

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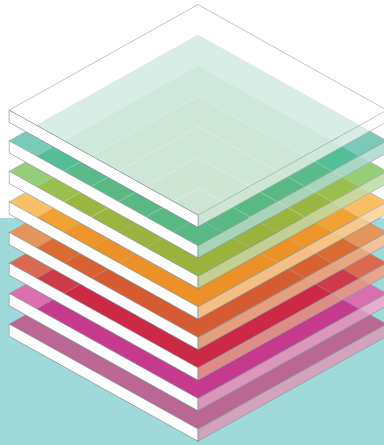
<sup>1</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762 – 1814) was a German philosopher who became a founding figure of the philosophical movement known as German idealism, which developed from the theoretical and ethical writings of Immanuel Kant.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775 – 1854) was a German philosopher. Standard histories of philosophy make him the midpoint in the development of German idealism, situating him between Johann Gottlieb Fichte, his mentor in his early years, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, his former university roommate, early friend, and later rival.

<sup>3</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel (1770 – 1831) was a German philosopher and an important figure of German idealism. He achieved wide renown in his day and, while primarily influential within the continental tradition of philosophy, has become increasingly influential in the analytic tradition as well. Although Hegel remains a divisive figure, his canonical stature within Western philosophy is universally recognized.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Robert Darwin (1809 – 1882) was an English naturalist, geologist and biologist, best known for his contributions to the science of evolution. He established that all species of life have descended over time from common ancestors and published his theory of evolution with compelling evidence in his 1859 book "On the Origin of Species".

<sup>5</sup> Erich Jantsch (1929 – 1980) was an Austrian-born American astrophysicist, engineer, educator, author, consultant and futurist, especially known for his work in the social systems design movement in Europe in the 1970s.



Evolutionary Dynamics

**5 LESSON PRIMER**

Lesson 1

**Levels of Development**



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