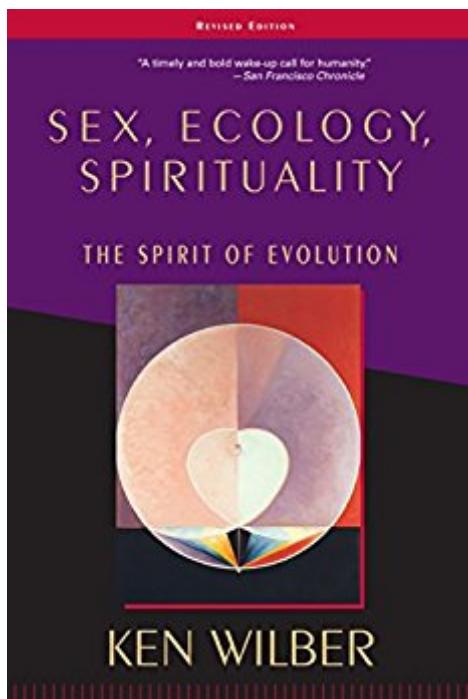


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# Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit Of Evolution



## **Synopsis**

In this tour de force of scholarship and vision, Ken Wilber traces the course of evolution from matter to life to mind and describes the common patterns that evolution takes in all three of these domains. From the emergence of mind, he traces the evolution of human consciousness through its major stages of growth and development. He particularly focuses on modernity and postmodernity: what they mean; how they impact gender issues, psychotherapy, ecological concerns, and various liberation movements; and how the modern and postmodern world conceive of Spirit. This second edition features forty pages of new material, new diagrams, and extensively revised notes.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Ken Wilber's "Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution", is my favorite book. And that isn't a title I award lightly. SES is quite possibly the first attempt at putting together a syncretic, evolutionary worldview since Hegel's "Phenomenology". In an age when truth has been declared dead and multiple perspectives rule the roost, where philosophy lives in the shadow of Nietzsche's madman,

Wilber, in this striking volume, challenges post-modernity. Unlike other challengers, arguing for a retreat to conservatism and cynical (or mythic-literal) traditionalism, Ken proposes a different idea- we need to integrate the strengths of Post-modernity (a recognition of the other, a bird's eye view of ideology, and a profound social and ecological awareness), Modernity (scientific rationality, empiricism, democracy), and Pre-modernity (religious wisdom and cultural bounty) into one complete, "integral" package. Sounds like a tough mission for any thinker to take on. Of course, Wilber- living outside the academia, blending his scholastic pursuits with Zen practice, and doing his best to live his own philosophy- is no ordinary thinker. In the 551 pages of text (not including extensive endnotes and bibliography), Wilber essentially lays out his "theory of everything". Based in the psychological work of Freud, Piaget, Kohlberg, Maslow, Jung, Gebser, and other thinkers, Wilber first constructs a socio-psychological map of civilization's evolution to date, and shows how it integrates with hard scientific data. Dividing the world into subject and object, Wilber shows how modern empiricism has attempted to colonize the subjective sphere by trying to render it irrelevant- a condition he refers to as "flatland".

For me, the modern age is characterized by some interesting excesses, and Wilber satisfactorily identifies many of them in his spiritual journey here. Three favorite targets I found were: (1) the attempt to make things simpler than they really are in order to explain them, which analytic philosopher Dan Dennett calls "greedy reductionism," (2) the "rage against reason" found in much postmodernism that rejects the notion of objective reality and confident knowledge; and (3) extreme conservative thinking unable to come to grips with the vision of a complex evolving universe. Wilber has a brilliant imagination and he is a very engaging writer, and this book (probably his best) deals with all three of those excesses in a fascinating way. His overall approach is not original of course (it is essentially a spiritual interpretation of systems and process metaphysics, but there are some very original elements sprinkled here and there). And probably the best thing about this book is that it does a competent job of presenting and integrating ideas from many diverse fields, in addressing the modern excesses, and trying to come up with a satisfying spiritual worldview for our complex age. This is beautifully ironic, since what he attempts is the very essence of reductionism (!), something Wilber rails against mightily in this book when the "reductionists" disagree with his ideas because the "reduction" is not spiritually meaningful. For comparison, the conservative religious/creationist critique of Darwinism holds that a universe composed of material elements that interact algorithmically ("machines") cannot also contain spiritual meaning. The Catholic Pope avoided that bind in support of evolution by imbuing material with living Spirit.

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