



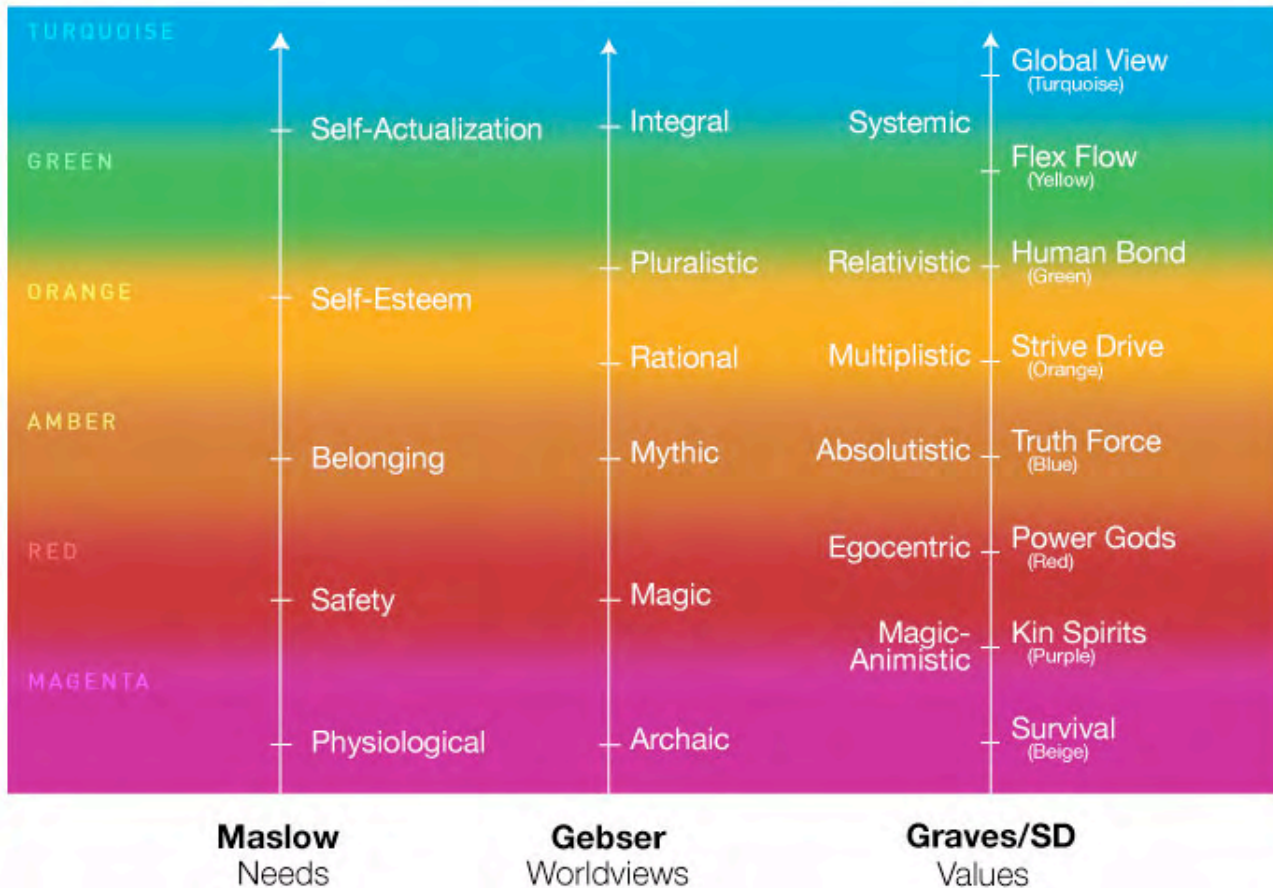
What are the Altitudes?

A Brief Explanation of Altitude

The concept of *Altitude* is a radically new approach to development created by Ken Wilber and presented in his newest book, *Integral Spirituality*. In Holons, we use Altitude as a measure of development in both culture and consciousness. A simple way to explain it is to say that Altitude indicates the degree of developmental unfolding of items such as complexity, consciousness, and the number of perspectives one can take. For example, in consciousness development as indicated below, one goes from the capacity to take only a 1st-person perspective, to also being able to take a 2nd-person perspective, to also being able to take a 3rd-person perspective, and so on. Thus, in this example, you can see that the capacity for love increases (from being able to love only me, to being able to love us, to being able to love all of us, to being able to love all sentient beings...). For convenience, Altitude follows the natural colors of the rainbow, so you'll often hear us refer to degree of development or degree of consciousness or degree of capacity to love, etc. by a particular color of the rainbow (as you will see below).

We have selected three well-known examples of psychological models to show how easily Altitude can be used to measure them: Abraham Maslow's "Needs," Jean Gebser's "Worldviews," and Clare Graves' "Value Systems." To show the usefulness of Altitude of consciousness, if we say at a given time a person is acting "AMBER," it means that generally their *needs* are for belongingness, their *worldview* is mythic, and their *value system* is absolutistic. Various cultural events can also be measured by their degree of development or their Altitude—and their movement from one to another as they unfold can also be followed: from tribal (MAGENTA/RED) to traditional (AMBER) to modern (ORANGE) to postmodern (GREEN) to integral (TURQUOISE) to even higher structures that are now evolving, and which we lump together and refer to as INDIGO. We estimate the Center of Gravity (COG) of a cultural happening (such as a book, movie, etc.) and place it on the *Culture By Altitude* chart. As always, these colors follow the rainbow and are identical wherever they appear.

Altitude colors measure essentially similar degrees of development wherever you see the same color (e.g. RED is always some version of egocentric, self-protective, magical-power—and you know this will be essentially the same whether you're measuring culture or consciousness or capacity for love or capacity for ethics). We often speak of Center of Gravity, for the central part of the action system, whether individual or collective, and the colors are primarily assigned to COG.



Some representative instances of the major colors:

MAGENTA (egocentric—able to take a 1st-person perspective): **MAGENTA** Altitude tends to be the home of egocentric drives, a magical worldview, and impulsiveness. It is expressed through magic/animism, kin-spirits, and such. Young children primarily operate with a **MAGENTA** worldview. **MAGENTA** in any line of development is *fundamental*, or "square one" for any and all new tasks. **MAGENTA** emotions and cognition can be seen driving cultural phenomena such as Burning Man, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or superhero-themed comic books or movies.

RED (ego-to-ethnocentric—able to take a 1st- to 2nd-person perspective): **RED** Altitude is the marker of egocentric drives based on power, where "might makes right," where aggression rules, and where there is a limited capacity to take the role of an "other." **RED** impulses are classically seen in grade school and early high school, where bullying, teasing, and the like are the norm. **RED** motivations can be seen culturally in Ultimate Fighting contests, which have no fixed rules (fixed rules come into being at the next Altitude, **AMBER**), teenage rebellion and the movies that cater to it (*The Fast and the Furious*), gang dynamics (where the stronger rule the weaker), and the like.

AMBER (ethnocentric—able to take a 2nd-person perspective): **AMBER** Altitude indicates a worldview that is mythic, and mythic worldviews are always held as absolute (this stage of development is often called *absolutistic*). Instead of "might makes right," **AMBER** ethics are more oriented to the group, but one that extends only to "my" group. Grade school and high school kids usually exhibit **AMBER** motivations to "fit in." **AMBER** ethics help to control the impulsiveness and narcissism of **RED**. Culturally, **AMBER** worldviews can be seen in fundamentalism (my God is right no matter what); extreme patriotism (my country is right no matter what); and ethnocentrism (my people are right no matter what).

ORANGE (worldcentric—able to take a 3rd-person perspective): In an ORANGE worldview, the individual begins to move away from the AMBER conformity that reifies the views of one's religion, nation, or tribe. The ORANGE worldview often begins to emerge in late high school, college, or adulthood. Culturally, the ORANGE worldview realizes that "truth is not delivered; it is discovered," spurring the great advances of science and formal rationality. ORANGE ethics begin to embrace all people, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...." Ayn Rand's Objectivism, the US Bill of Rights, and many of the laws written to protect individual freedom all flow from an ORANGE worldview.

GREEN (worldcentric—able to take a 4th-person perspective): GREEN worldviews are marked by pluralism, or the ability to see that there are multiple ways of seeing reality. If ORANGE sees universal truths ("All men are created equal"), GREEN sees multiple universal truths—different ones for different cultures. GREEN ethics continue, and radically broaden, the movement to embrace all people. A GREEN statement might read, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal, regardless of race, gender, class...." GREEN ethics have given birth to the civil rights, feminist, and gay rights movements, as well as environmentalism.

The GREEN worldview's multiple perspectives give it room for greater compassion, idealism, and involvement, in its healthy form. Such qualities are seen by organizations such as the Sierra Club, Amnesty International, Union of Concerned Scientists, and Doctors Without Borders. In its unhealthy form GREEN worldviews can lead to extreme relativism, where *all* beliefs are seen as relative and equally true, which can in turn lead to the nihilism, narcissism, irony, and meaninglessness exhibited by many of today's intellectuals, academics, and trend-setters.... Not to mention another "lost" generation in students.

TURQUOISE (worldcentric to kosmocentric—able to take a 5th-person perspective): TURQUOISE Altitude marks the beginning of an integral worldview, where pluralism and relativism are transcended and included into a more systematic whole. The TURQUOISE worldview honors the insights of the GREEN worldview, but places it into a larger context that allows for *healthy* hierarchies, and *healthy* value distinctions.

Perhaps most important, a TURQUOISE worldview begins to see the *process of development* itself, acknowledging that each one of the previous stages (MAGENTA through GREEN) has an important role to play in the human experience. TURQUOISE consciousness sees that each of the previous stages reveals an important truth, and pulls them all together and integrates them without trying to change them to "be more like me," and without resorting to cultural relativism ("all are equal").

INDIGO (continues and deepens kosmocentric—able to take 6th-person perspective and higher): Evolution and development continues growing, and we have no reason to believe it will stop with the stage that we are at now. We have indicated all of these higher possibilities with the next color in the rainbow after TURQUOISE, which is INDIGO.

For a more complete discussion of *levels and lines of development*, and the AQAL model in general, [click here for a free PDF](#).

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