Perry’s Scheme of Cognitive and Ethical Development

Stage 1: Dualism
Division of meaning into two realms: Good vs. Bad, Right vs. Wrong, We vs. They. Right Answers exist somewhere for every problem, and authorities know them. Right Answers are to be memorized by hard work. Knowledge is quantitative. Agency is experienced as "out there" in Authority, test scores, the Right job.

Stage 2: Multiplicity
Diversity of opinion and values is recognized as legitimate in areas where right answers are not yet known. Opinions remain atomistic without pattern or system. No judgment can be made among them so "everyone has a right to his own opinion; none can be called wrong."

Stage 3: Relativism
Diversity of opinion, values, and judgment derived from coherent sources, evidence, logics, systems, and patterns allowing for analysis and comparison. Some opinions may be found worthless, while there will remain matters about which reasonable people will reasonably disagree. Knowledge is qualitative, dependent on contexts.

Stage 4: Commitment
An affirmation, choice, decision (career, values, politics, personal relationship) made in the awareness of Relativism. Agency is experienced as within the individual.


Jones-McEwen Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity