

# Integral Leadership Review

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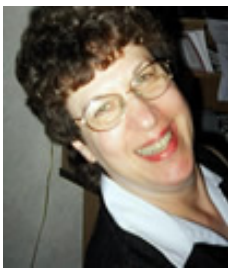
### August 2010



## Notes from the Field

### 2010 Integral Theory Conference

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I offer these observations of the conference with the caveat that these reports are viewed from my perspective and reports from trusted but anonymous colleagues who attended workshops other than those that I selected. I did not choose to present a paper this year but rather to enjoy it as a learner, having just moved through a significant transformative period in my life.

My friend and I signed up for the pre-conference all-day session on the Three Faces of Spirit owing to several concurrent interests. We find ourselves ever-awed by the depth and breadth of **Diane Hamilton's** teachings and try not to miss an opportunity to be with her. We had an admitted curiosity about how **Marc Gafni's** life conditions had changed him as a teacher, and what **Sean Esjborn-Hargens** would offer on spirituality when in the company of two well-known spiritual teachers. I was particularly interested in their unique perspectives, since I had found myself already resonating with **Terry Patten** whom we recently hosted in New York. Joanne Rubin and I were deeply engaged in developing our curriculum for our forth-coming Integral Spiritual Mentors and Integral Ministers program at One Spirit Learning Alliance, and I wanted to absorb their particular wisdom so that I might translate it for our students.

The three faces of Spirit that each teacher presented were Love, Sacred Texts, and Nature; and each face contains the other two. All three will be necessary during this phase that they referred to as reconstruction, which is occurring after the deconstruction of the assumption of meaning. If we cannot reconstruct the assumption of meaning, then we have no reason to stake our lives on anything in this world. This concept spoke to the very heart of the book that I am (still) writing on why we need to restore meaning within education, and that restoration feeds directly into their sense that life has meaning, and that their actions have consequences that have value to them. The entire workshop gave me deeper understandings by which to approach my own topic.

I had not previously heard this stage described as one of *reconstruction*, and I felt a slight rise in my heart rate as I contemplated the potential within that term. The normally mordant descriptors of today's "battle with postmodernity" were reconstituted into a period of rediscovery of the luminosity around us. My mood brightened considerably as **Diane** explained that the three faces of Spirit each disclose the other two.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective (3<sup>rd</sup> PP) we were told radiated luminosity through the monad of reality as disclosed by the great scientific discoveries, the noble dharmas, the universities and churches. Of course the 3<sup>rd</sup> PP represents the IT, but the IT discloses the other two faces of Spirit. The 2<sup>nd</sup> PP of I-Thou was brought forth by conversations, and they radiate between I and The Beloved by whatever name. The 1<sup>st</sup> PP, the “I AM”, is the experience of the ultimate reality living in *me*, with *me* participating and being at One-ment with the Great One. Nests within nests revealing one another as we unpack them; each spiritual practice discloses all three of the faces of Spirit. And each Face plays differently at each level of consciousness.

**Diane** had begun the session with what I initially considered to be an ice-breaking exercise: “How shall we remember your name today?” A clever way for us to introduce ourselves was then woven into her presentation in a manner that caused me to recall how each of us represents ourselves, and what that manner might disclose about our connection to “meaning” itself.

I was raised in Dallas, Texas by a Southern mom and New York dad. My mother did what all good Southern women did back then: gave me a double first name. I am legally LYNNE-DONNA (with no middle name) Feldman. But when I entered Columbia University, Northerners could not grasp the logic of a double first name, and kept calling me Lynda, which I deplored. To escape the explanation or the irritation, I went with the more acceptable uni-forename and accepted the amputated “Lynne”. More confusion arose with my two different surnames of Feldman and Fields. The reason behind this dualism has no place here, although I have created a palatable public explanation for it. When I enter a doctor’s office and they ask me *who I am*, I get a bit flustered trying to remember how I am registered with that practitioner. Now onto why this became important to **Diane’s** presentation....

“I AM MEANING”, But I and MEANING got separated and lost from one another. How do we reconstruct this separation? By being conscious of it, we then can harness the creativity and vitality that it takes to reconstruct the unification into a new dharma. **Diane** then used voice dialogue, which in her hands is a sterling exercise, and asked to speak to the Voice of the self---”WHO AM I?”---beginning with the egocentric up through the Kosmic Self. What is true about the self? Which perspective does it take? Can it be enlightened? No, it will always speak in 3<sup>rd</sup> PP.

**Sean Esjborn-Hargens** picked up the thread by engaging with the 3<sup>rd</sup> PP known as Nature. **Sean’s** presentation was startling and luminous, and as I look at my notes I find that I wrote very little, being completely absorbed in his demeanor and content. My friend, who is more attuned to subtle energies, reported that as he spoke, sparks of light danced about his head. I urge you to listen to his section on the MP3 since I cannot do it justice here. What stood out was that the IT of Nature contains all three faces of Spirit as well. We contain Nature enfolded into us. It is IN US and then we externalize it.

**Marc Gafni** is a master teacher as well. Trying to take notes on his part of the presentation was similar to taking class notes while zooming along on Space Mountain’s roller coaster at Disneyland. Or trying to concentrate on character development while watching “Avatar” at an IMAX. I tried, I really did, but I became one with the room, with the content, with the energy. What I can report comes from my years of study of Jewish sacred texts from an Orthodox Kabbalistic Jewish POV, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal approaches. Yet when **Marc** led us through the well-known Genesis story of Leah, Rachel, Jacob and Laban, I had entered new territory. Using Integral approaches, he reconstructed, energized, revitalized, and created new meaning and depth to the story. BLISS---LOVE---AWE---restored and reconstructed. I urge you to share in the magic of this pre-conference workshop to hear and experience what we found ourselves enveloped within.

As the conference got into full swing Friday morning, the Hilton clerk took me aside and inquired what type of conference we were attending. He said that he had never seen so much hugging and loving greetings.

That is not to imply that this was hegemony of “ditto-head thinkers” drinking the Kool-Aid; what we found ourselves observing is the very freedom and joy that results when we are able to discuss, often contentiously, important issues utilizing the same vocabulary and with ego set aside in service of Kosmic centric ends. There was a sweet energy everywhere, a peaceful vitality, if you will.

Friday morning I attended **Zak Stein’s** brilliant discussion on the use of the term “Integral”. He is an Integral star and I will leave a discussion of his groundbreaking paper and presentation to others. I next went to **Roger Walsh’s** encomium to “The Ethics of Integral Living” which engaged me as an area of my research and writing that has not often been refracted through the Integral lens. He led us feel into the difference between being among unscrupulous people and then among loving people. Our bodies were relaxed, and we felt safe; thus, ethics is how we make a safe container. But that begs the question “so what?” “Why be ethical?”, a question I was asked constantly by my high school students over the years. And my own query was reflected in his talk: How do you cultivate ethics?

We need to engage in deeply engrained ethical work prior to non-dual realization, which becomes an intentional motivation for our action, a superordinate ethical motivation. What will lead us to a mind-state that will power the choice to ethical action? By examining how we feel when and why we act unethically. This lack of ethical action speaks to a lack of self-trust that we will do what we already know is the right action. Roger then gave us seven practices to cultivate virtue which will be readily adaptable to the students in our spiritual courses.

**Dustin DiPerna** did a masterful presentation; I recommend his paper as artfully written, and felt it to be one of the best. It is the type of writing that I find myself underlining and writing notations as in discourse with the author. He is a powerful presenter and another rising star within the Integral constellation.

I will not recount **Bob Kegan’s** keynote for similar reasons that I suspect many others will critique it. The most moving and unexpected joy of the conference for me was **Bert Parlee’s** presentation on optimism. In honorable self-disclosure, I dearly love Bert, and consider him to be one of the most influential people in my life. That revealed, I will report that the room in which he presented overflowed, and at the end he received an unstoppable standing ovation. A widely traveled presenter, he began by stating that Integral will inform the time ahead of us as it brings more Good, True, and Beautiful to the world. He explored his premise with what he does best. (other than hug; Bert has the uncanny ability to embrace you and transmit what I would call a 3-body hug where I feel completely at-one with/inside him, no boundaries. Second on my list of Best Integral Huggers is **Jonathan Reams**, who transmits overwhelming selfless love.) He wove cartoons and movie clips in while narrating his thesis, taking us from guffaws to laughter to sad sighs to silent horror and then to resolution and acceptance.

He outlined for us a spectrum of optimism and pessimism by creating a “Striving--- Surrender” polarity which line up opposite one another from the moderate zone of cautious optimism/reserved pessimism down to the extreme zone of naïve optimism/apocalyptic pessimism. I would not wish to report more on the hushed, emotional, sobbing, joyous, quiet responses that occurred during the presentation. What I would suggest is that you ask Bert to come to your community and present this 2<sup>nd</sup> tier approach to 21<sup>st</sup> Century optimism.

**Susanne and Beena's** presentation on polarities was attended by three full classrooms of listeners and for good reason. I took five pages of notes on their evolution and concept of opposites, which I found theoretically fascinating and also thoroughly practical. **Beena** and **Susanne** conducted their tour-de-force with a gracious sense of playfulness, all the while presenting fascinating charts that appear in their paper on stage-related polarities. This is another paper and MP3 that should be enjoyed and analyzed.

**Elliott Ingersoll** is a master teacher and presenter. His physical prowess is matched by command of the stage and the depth of his research. He began by asking whether we were born storytellers or born liars. I agreed with his stance that our metaphysical assumptions are never examined. But then from his deep knowledge of the pharmacology of the brain/mind, he stated that research indicates that there is no "illness" that is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. Pills for endogenous depression help only 50% and, if I copied this down correctly, bipolar 1 is traced to neuronal circuitry that can be identified in the first year of life.

Some of the epistemological methods that have become mistakenly confused with ontological claims include:

- Fix the brain, and you fix the mind
- Behaviorism shows that we are just like animals, and research on animal behavior gives direct insights into ours
- The brain acts like a computer, and we can analogize its functioning by references to software, rebooting, etc.
- The psychodynamic belief that traumas are repressed and must be rediscovered
- There are physical markers for mental disorders.

His final points:

- Psychology must at last embrace its heritage in philosophy.
- We need to find ways to enter into power positions in academia so that we are no longer marginalized; which ontological holders currently hold power over psychology?
- We possess valuable operational constructs and definitions that we must be in a position of institutional power to share.
- We need to learn to make our stories objects of awareness and create shared signifiers with one another.

The Spiritual Teachers panel was next, consisting of **Maryana Kaplan**, internationally known writer on spiritual issues and very pregnant with her soon-to-be-born child with **Marc Gafni** who was also present, along with **Diane Hamilton**, **Craig Hamilton**, **Terry Patten**, and newcomer **Rev. Tom Thresher**. Tom is someone to get to know and to read his new book *Reverent Irreverence*, which I had brought to the panel and held aloft for people to see. **Diane** brought up a critical issue about power, be it between teacher/student, and lovers. We are terrible at negotiating issues of power in any of our interactions; ironically, the group that is leading the way in open negotiations is the S & M community, where every detail of their relationship is specified and negotiated beforehand. As a developmental model she found it worthy of research: we first learn to identify with the Other, we develop differentiation, then need to learn how to exit with dignity and formality.

Three other points made were:

- Transmit a context of meaning, a field of meaning in your life that becomes contagious,
- Awaken to the authentic Self, the One who creates; and
- Grow into your edge, love and hold your heart open through the pain.

Finally, I have decided to omit the presentation of my colleague **Joanne Rubin** whose groundbreaking paper was well received by Ken Wilber. I found her a strong and caring woman during her presentation, and will leave it to others with some emotional distance to speak of her.

### **Summary Critiques**

1. There was not enough time to explore the wonderful posters in the session with a filled room vying to get close to the presenter and to hear more about their work. They were no less groundbreaking and exciting as the hour-long sessions. Please figure out some better way to honor their contributions.
2. The “stars” drained audiences from other marvelous presenters, and I felt very badly for those who spent months of research and writing only to have 4-5 people show up. There must be a more effective organizational structure to permit all of us to attend Walsh/Stein/Cook-Greuter et al. and then permit the niche presentations a better hearing.
3. Susanne noted that so many of us are “independent researchers” and not associated with a university. She noted that perhaps it was time to create some type of academic consortium for us all. I hope someone takes that and makes it happen.
4. I heard many critical comments about the Integral Feminine panel, but having not attended it, I will leave that for others.
5. And finally, I bow to Sean Esjborn-Hargens and Mark Forman for giving us such a rich, glorious, loving, challenging conference, and for sending out the papers in advance. Well done!

### **About the Author**

**Lynne D. Feldman**, M.A., J.D., is an attorney and educator who has been active in creating and sharing Integral applications to education, parenting, law, mediation, transformational change, leadership, and spirituality. She worked closely with Ken Wilber and Integral Institute and was to serve as Vice-Chancellor of the planned Integral University. She is on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Integral Theory and Practice, and is an Integral Scholar. Her writings have been published in the AQAL Journal, Kosmos Journal, New York Times letters, and legal publications. She created the Center for Integral Education, Integral Education Consultants, and New York Integral, which presents workshops and services in the NY metropolitan area. She presents workshops on Integral spirituality, leadership, Life Practice, and the AQAL map at the One Spirit Learning Alliance as well as the New York Open Center, Rutgers University, Maezumi Institute, Eagleton Institute, the Integral Theory Conference, and Integral education seminars. Her work with adolescents has won her praise and honors from the White House, “Dateline” on NBC, Peter Jennings, Teen People magazine, Eagleton Institute, the New Jersey State Legislature, and board of education. The governor named her to his Character Education Commission, and she headed the action team of the NJ Character Education Network. She is a member of the Marie Garibaldi Inn of Court for Alternative Dispute Resolution, is a N.J. certified civil and matrimonial mediator along with many associations that relate to mindfulness, cognition, education reform, attachment parenting and alternative dispute resolution. She lives in New Jersey.