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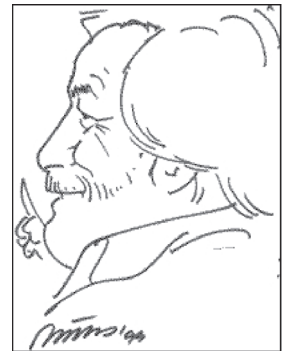


Notes from the Field

Integral Theory Conference

Russ Volckmann

There have been a plethora (appropriately so) of comments about the Integral Theory Conference in various blogs and list serves. Therefore, the accounts that are presented here provide opportunities for a variety of views on the conference. One in particular to check out that is not published here is Frank Visser's offering: <http://www.integralworld.net/visser35.html>. There were multiple tracks for each time-frame, so a variety better supports getting an overview of the conference.



Sean Esjborn-Hargens, Mark Forman and David Zeitler offered a well-coordinated welcome and introduction to the conference on Thursday evening. It was entitled, as was the conference, "Enacting an Integral Future: Integral Theory and Its Applications."



Sean asked the question of "Who Are We?" as explorers in things integral. For example, he compared participants in the integral conference with participants in the Tucson Consciousness Research Conference. The Tucson crew included 63% who "carefully examined their own beliefs," while ITC participants were 90%. Spiritual orientations or principles broke out:

- Mysticism: 43% (Do you suppose they are the folks who think there are unanswerable questions? If they are, I am with them!)
- Pantheism: 27% (I think these are the folks that favor diversity in spirituality.)
- Agnostic: 12% (We, the doubters.)

Participants were also asked:

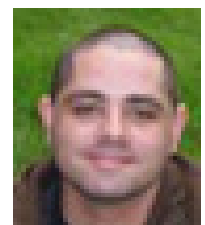
What do we in the integral community of scholar-practitioners understand the least?

Levels 25%	Lines 18%
States 24%	Types 25%

What is the most difficult element to explain to peers/colleagues in other disciplines?

States 44%

Mark Forman offered four principles about the relationship between integral and AQAL, Remember that a theme in this conference involved differentiating integral from one particular source, namely Ken Wilber. The consensus that I heard was that Wilber's work is important, even foundational and it is important for theorists to stretch and build on that



foundation. Here are the principles:

“• In order for an approach to research, theory, or application to be integral, it must address *at least* the five elements of AQAL—quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types.

• But AQAL is not simply/only a set of Wilberian constructs; it is best seen as: *the refined response... coming out of a particular philosophical tradition...that addresses an underlying set of philosophical questions...questions that address epistemological inclusivity, meta-theoretical issues, normally with transcendental elements.*

• *Therefore, there is not simply one AQAL. There are many versions of AQAL; Ken Wilber's is only one vision and interpretation of AQAL.*

• *We need a deep consideration of other existing AQAL approaches, evidence, and research as well as a historical review of AQAL.*”

This deep consideration includes our looking for the antecedents of Wilber's work with a like result being “a robust view of Integral Philosophy on par with Modern, Postmodern, Classical, etc...that is not reducible to one person's viewpoint.” This would result in a series of stages:

- Integral Beta: The Early Integralists
- Integral 1.0: The Distillation of AQAL (1995)
- Integral 2.0: Coalescence and Application
- Integral 2.5: Differentiation, Diversity, and Research
- Integral 3.0: Integration: A Mature Integral Academics

Note that the focus of this development is integral theory in an academic context.



What followed was an explication of the approach that could be used that would result in integral being seen more as an intellectual lineage, rather than the work of one person. Mark followed this with a fascinating exploration of the work of Pitram A. Sorokin that demonstrated how his thinking parallels, but predates, that of Wilber. Sorokin identified three cultures:

- *Sensate – Reality is Physical*
- *Ideational – Reality is Spiritual*
- *Idealistic – A balanced intermediary of the two*

He quoted Lawrence Nichols (2005):

“Sorokin argues for a relationship of complementarity among the three channels, in the sense that each provides a type of knowledge that is not available to the others. Thus, the channels make harmonious contributions to the total knowledge of human beings.”

Mark also pointed out that there is a close parallel between Sorokin's and Wilber's treatment of critics.

Sean closed this first evening presentation reviewing the state of the integral enterprise. This is showing up in academia, publications, and the like.

In the days that followed I was focused mostly on leadership related topics, including some of the adult development presentations. The first I attended was Otto Laske and Jean Ogilvie's “Strengthening the Ability to Engage with a Complex world: Assessing the Cognitive Line with the Constructive Development Framework.”



If you don't know Laske's work you can find several examples in the pages of *Integral Leadership Review*. Laske is a fascinating individual. His work with adult development assessment in which he draws Eliot Jaques has been the centerpiece of his training programs on developmental coaching. Yet, his background would not suggest this would be a path he would follow. For example, note this material from one of his websites, still under development:

"The Otto Laske" website, presently in progress, will give an overview of Otto Laske's artistic work and will comprise:

- An artist statement
- A list and description of musical compositions, with electronic downloads
 - Instrumental music
 - Vocal music
 - Mixed instrumental/vocal music
 - Electroacoustic music
- An overview of poetry, both English and German
- A listing of texts on cognitive musicology including some major articles plus a summarizing article.

Laske and I were born in the same year, he in Germany, I in Minnesota. His work in Music began in Germany but is truly international. Note this excerpt from *silenteditions.com*

After leaving Germany in 1966, Laske began working in (classical) *electronic music*, first at Brandeis University...then in Montreal in 1969, and in a more focused way in *computer music* at the Instituut voor Sonologie in Utrecht, The Netherlands, starting in 1970. Between the time of leaving Utrecht (1975) and the establishment of his own studio in Needham, MA (1989), Laske traveled to many international studios to produce his compositions. In...the 1990s Laske produced several instrumental compositions (String Quartet, Organ Piece). Thereafter, he focused increasingly on electro-acoustic music using as before Koenig's *Project One* program for score synthesis, but now in conjunction with Scaletti's *Kyma/Capybara* system...Laske was the first [to] use the notion of *score synthesis* (by computer) and has consistently used computer programs...to craft the majority of his instrumental, vocal, and electro-acoustic works.

(<http://www.silenteditions.com/laske.htm>)

There were to allusions to his music in this presentation. Rather, this was an assertion of the primacy of the cognitive line in adult development. He contrasted his focus on the cognitive with the work of Kegan, Loevinger/Cook-Greuter, etc. on the socio-emotive. Essential to cognitive development is dialectical agility (see Laske, "Change and Crisis in Dialectical Thinking: On the Need to Think Again When Getting Involved with Change," <http://www.integralleadershipreview.com/archives-2009/2009-10/2009-10-12-article-laske.php>).

Laske certainly has the credentials to address these issues, following his Fulbright Scholarship in music that brought him to the United States, he completed a MA in Clinical Psychology under Michael Basseches and a PhD at Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology. He has been consulting with organizations since the early 1980s.

I find his to be an extraordinary life history and range of interests. He and others with similar scope in their lives are major contributors to the development of more comprehensive and useful perspectives and approaches to dealing with the challenges we face in the world today.

One of his most challenging comments was that perspectivism is a “flat” approach. Rather, we need dialectical approaches. I might say this a little differently. The perspective approach is useful for snapshots. Dialectics is useful for the movie.

I moved on from Otto to a presentation by Toni Gregory and Michael Raffanti of Union Institute and University, “Climbing a Great Hill: Integral Diversity, Maturity Illustrated in the Auto-biographies of Nelson Mandela and Malcolm X.” See their earlier article in the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, “Integral Diversity Maturity -- Toward a Postconventional Understanding of Diversity Dynamics,” <http://www.publishersrow.com/Preview/AboutBook.asp?prSOC=&shid=161&pg=1&pid=225&bid=4222&fid=31&tim=1&o=1280938956219>.



As I said, I was focused on presentations related to leadership. In this case, though, I need to be clear about a bias I have. Toni is Associate Dean in the program I teach integral leadership in at Union and she is a friend and colleague.



One of the challenges of this conference is that there are a few well-known and sometimes revered presenters such as Roger Walsh and Allan Coombs, both of whom presented at this time. There were also presentations during the same time slot by other somewhat familiar names like Marilyn Shutz, Clint Fuhs, Cindy Lou Golin, David Zeitler and Mark Edwards (although scheduled to be there, Mark was not able to make the conference.) Thus, it is not surprising that few people showed up for Gregory and Raffanti. The shame is that they missed a fine presentation with an important theme. Ideologically and cognitively most conference attendees would support the notion that diversity is important. But few, in my experience, comprehend an integral view of oppression that we find in the world, and within ourselves.

The team drew upon the work of Roosevelt Thomas to lead us to a stage theory of diversity maturity (mostly my words, not theirs):

- Rewiring: confronting our traditional orientations to diversity,
- Clarifying: self-reflective and self-observing transition in values, intentions, actions
- Mastering: gaining competencies in diversity maturity, and
- Transcending: producing transformative outcomes.

Gregory and Raffanti’s exploration of the role of maturing appreciation of diversity focuses on Malcolm X and Mandela. They showed us how both Mandela and Malcom X moved through these stages. Perhaps the biggest surprise to me was when Gregory held up a page from the *New York Times* proclaiming Malcom X’s humanism.

Speaking of snapshots and movies, Susan Wright maintained in her presentation, “Perceptions and Preferences: Multi-Rater Assessment in Integral Leadership Development,” that a 360° assessment is like a movie, not a snapshot. Also, lines of development can represent competencies or behavioral intelligence. It offers multi-rater perceptions, should be accompanied by coaching to provide effective utilization of the feedback and can provide useful potential for integral research data by including feedback on variables representing all of the quadrants for the individual.

I closed the first day’s presentations by attending a panel on “Key Criticisms of Wilber’s Work: What is the Achilles Heel of Integral Theory.” I had to choose this one over a panel on “Spiral Dynamics in the Academy:

Transdisciplinary Dance of Necessary Dissonance” with Marilyn Hamilton and others. I hope to learn more about what happened in this discussion. Fortunately all of the sessions were recorded. I look forward to listening to this one.



What drew me to the “Key Criticisms” panel were the members of the panel. It provided a chance to meet Frank Visser who is one of my heroes of integral. He is the author of *Ken Wilber: Thought as Passion*. His work on www.integralworld.net and its participating authors has given us all much to consider. Jeff Meyerhoff is one of the frequent contributors to the *Integral World* site. Bonnita Roy is a fellow member of the Editorial Committee of *Integral Review* (integralreview.org) whose paper in 2008 received an award and whose work on process theory I greatly admire. Zak Stein works with Theo Dawson and is a PhD student at Harvard; his work on adult development assessment has received a lot of attention at 2008, as well as 2010. Sara (Nora) Ross is on the Management Review Committee of *Integral Leadership Review*, founder of ARINA, Inc.—a not for profit focused on community change and provider of *Integral Review*. Her brilliant work with Michael Commons on a *World Futures* special issue on hierarchical complexity is just one example of the many contributions she has made. Marcus Molz organized the recent integral conference in Luxembourg and is preparing a special of *Integral Review* with Mark Edwards. I think you would agree that this is a stellar cast. Ray Greenleaf chaired the panel; he is chair of the Transpersonal Psychology Department at JFK University.

The themes from this discussion are many and varied. I encourage you to listen to this one if you can. But here are a couple that will provide a taste of what was discussed. Frank Visser led off affirming the importance of debate regarding Wilber’s work. Wilber is best served by being challenged. There were allusions during the panel to Wilber’s responses to the material on integralworld.net. Frank indicated that it is vitally important to attend to the shadow side of integral.

Jeff Meyerhoff indicated the Achilles heel revolves around partial truths. He is particularly concerned about Wilber’s orienting generalizations. Regarding integral methodological pluralism, there is still the requirement to evaluate, to apply concepts like healthy and unhealthy. The problem is one of who is doing the judging and the use of values. In Wilber’s work there is too much emphasis on development. There needs to be attention to deterioration and death, as well.

Sara (Nora) Ross asked what kind of theory is integral; it is a theory of what? She suggests that there is no coherent theory and contrasts it with the work of Ervin Laszlo. She is concerned that maps built from integral theory, such as AQAL, are static. Furthermore, in applying them the elements in the map must be blurred to conduct an analysis. The categories are not rigorous or coherent.

Bonnita Roy expressed concern about how adult development theory has been applied through the notion of “transcend and include,” rather than the use of an evolutionary perspective. She sees development as complex and nonlinear, unlike the linearity suggested by the transcend-and-include notion; later forms cannot be derived from prior forms.

Zak Stein expressed concerned about the engineered popularity of integral through marketing. This is one of the factors that causes academia to resist Wilber’s work. Also, he is concerned about the broad progressive vision of integral leading to growth-to-goodness assumptions.

Marcus Molz is concerned about the lack of building bridges between Wilber’s work and other communities of discourse concerned with similar issues. Examples include transdisciplinarity and metatheory. Dialogue among these efforts is just beginning. We need a range of lenses; there is much work to be done on this.

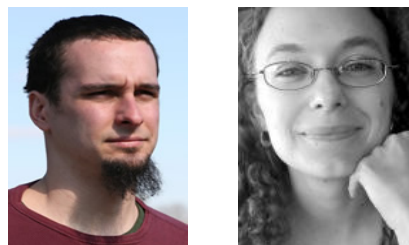
The discussion that followed affirmed that there is much work to be done and bridges to be built in the process of evolving more holistic theories and their applications. Again, if you can, listen to the recordings.



My Saturday morning began with John Schmidt, Alain Gautier and Terri O’Fallon presenting, “Actualizing Presence-Centered Leadership: The Integral Imperative.” See the announcements section of this issue of ***Integral Leadership Review*** to learn how you can participate in their research. John Schmidt began with a presentation about the challenges faced in the “world of extraordinary change” today and data about factors that will influence how we proceed. We are in a period of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and potential surprises. There are pressure that could lead to collapses—not unlike what we have seen with the economy, but even worse—by in energy and the environment, as well. This suggests a compelling call for leadership to address these and other issues.

Alain Gautier, member of the ***Integral Leadership Review’s*** Integral Leadership Council, and contributing author to the ***Integral Leadership Review***, talked a bit about presence and the Diamond Approach, developed by Ali Hameed Almaas. His approach links the mystical and psychological. As Wikipedia notes, “Depending on one’s perspective, he might be termed, among other things, an Integral theorist, mystic, spiritual teacher or an exponent of the perennial philosophy.” Gautier indicated the need to explore practices related to head, heart and *hara*. These related to presence in self and in relation to others.

Terri O’Fallon, who also has published in the ***Integral Leadership Review***, elaborated the concept of presence before Alain described the research they have been doing. This research involves the use of a survey, which you can participate in (see announcements). Their findings to date are based on a small sample. Perhaps the major point is that their work is focused on higher stages of development where a (hopefully growing) minority of individuals and institutions can be found.



Saturday afternoon I went to Zak Stein’s presentation with Katie Heikkinen, “Developmental Differences in the Understanding of Integral Theory and Practice: Preliminary Results from the iTEACH Project.” This re-

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search is being done with JFK students and Stein and his colleagues (including Theo Dawson) are looking to expand their small database. Perhaps their most interesting finding to date is that there is no correlation of significance with any demographic variables—age, sex, years of study of integral, numbers of Wilber books read, meditation practice—and understanding of integral theory, except for one: participation in “intentional sex.”



Finally, I participated in a panel with Sara Ross, Bonnita Roy, Tom Murray, Jonathan Reams, and Marcus Molz: “Integral Discourse: Challenges and Lessons Learned from Publishing Integral Review.” Needless to say, I found it difficult not to expand the scope of this discussion by including *Integral Leadership Review*, Integral Publishers and other publications and publishing houses that were making integral articles and books available. This is the kind of information that is generally available to readers of *Integral Leadership Review*. In addition, there were points made about the importance of quality and the challenges of addressing that.

Because of other commitments I left on Sunday morning and therefore missed to events I had wanted to attend: Marcus Molz’s “The Many Faces of Integral,” while also wanting to attend the panel on Metatheory with Tom Murray, Bonnitta Roy, Steven Wallis, Lauren Tenney, Roger Stace and Alike Nicolaides.

You may have noticed, that there are certain names that repeat in this informal report. They are among my favorite theorists and practitioners and reflect my own biases, including that I always learn from them. There are many people who attended the conference who I would have loved to have long conversations with and did not even get the chance to say hello. That is one of the challenges of an event like this.

I want to thank all who helped make this conference the success that it was.

Reference

Lawrence T. Nichols (2005). Integralism and Positive Psychology: A Comparison of Sorokin and Seligman, *The Catholic Social Science Review*, 10:21-40