

Editorial to the Special Issue of Integral Review on European Academic Trends and Contributions to Integral Studies

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The Meaning of and Contribution to Europeanness by Academic Integral Theory and Practice

What does ‘integral’ mean in the context of the European academy? This special issue of *Integral Review* aims to address this question through highlighting integral theories, methodologies, and research practices related to the European context. It is important to raise this question in this manner at this time in order to distinguish between the popular usage of integral as an umbrella term for various kinds of worldviews, often with a spiritual connotation and the historical and emergent academic movements towards “integrative approaches” and “grand theories.” European thought would differentiate between two dialectical tensions related to these two fields, which could be described as a) (quantitative and analytic) natural science and (qualitative and holistic) humanities/art (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and b) religious dogma and spiritual experience. Whilst in this sense engaging in both of these fields may have a specific role to play in the unfolding of what “integral” means in the European context, our focus in this special issue concerns deepening understanding of academic integral theory as a process which assumes possibilities of advancing the integration of such knowledge stemming from the natural sciences as well as the humanities, practically, theoretically and meta-theoretically.

In our view the Special Issue is timely as there are some recent developments within European society and the European academic context that make it not only necessary to develop more integrative engagement, but also indicate some “proto-integral” trends. The whole European idea started as a myth of integration of the union of human beauty and wisdom, with the bull the symbolic representation of strength and fertility (Everett-Heath, 2000). And today “Europe is a dynamic plurality of ideas and rhythms which aspire to finding common ground within a framework of diversity” (Prats & Raventos 2005, p. 27). Of course such common ground can never be achieved easily and as a final solution. Deep forms of dialectical thinking therefore have quite understandably emerged within the European context and shaped academic endeavours towards striving for temporary synthesis and complementarity which is always aware of its often dilemmatic and discontinuously changing Gestalt. Such development can for example be seen in recent debates on the migrant crisis, where blame games and disunity stand against a growing understanding of the need to find new and better solutions to such complex crises. In such discourse an underlying European theme can be found which might best be described using Vergara’s (2007) statement that Europe is constantly working towards a common identity, which, from the point of view of human diversity (both individual and collective), should have as



the basis and intangible beginning of the old and yet new European identity mankind and its individual, social and transcendent rights [...] Europeanness is a quality far richer than any unilateral reductionism brought about by modernity. Above all, it is a way of being and acting, which has had, as the non-renounceable basis of its construction and historical identity, mankind and its moral, intellectual and transcendent character. (pp. 15-22)

In the field of academia the 5th Euroacademia Global Conference “Europe Inside-Out: Europe and Europeanness Exposed to Plural Observers” held in Barcelona, Spain in March 2015 might be an example of recent explorations of such Europeanness. It is as well a topic for current organizational research within academia. The authors Meyer and Boxenbaum (2010, p.738, pp. 751-752) regard this research in Europe as being rooted in a long-standing humanistic tradition of a more philosophical and social scientific nature. For them European research is often grounded on the work of grand thinkers. Equally, Europeanness leans towards more macro-oriented, critical, and processual approaches. Receptiveness to alternative paradigmatic perspectives is more accepted within European academic cultures. In this sense current European integrative frameworks like syncretism (Martinez, Peattie & Vazquez-Brust, 2015) advocate the reconciliation of economic imperatives and environmental concerns via the reintegration of corporate objective (or systemic) and subjective (or constructionist) contingencies. Within European thought the struggle of “Widening horizons beyond national boundaries” (Hickson et al., 1980, p. 1) is a constitutive driving force.

The few attempts to define Europeanness in a positive way include terms such as multi-disciplinarity, reflexive methodological stance, critical scholarship, and socio-political orientation. The authors conclude that Europeanness, if the term is applicable yet, reflects a spirit of engaging with grand thinkers of the present and the past in attempts to integrate the different linguistic communities included in the respective research. This linguistic and multi-disciplinary diversity often stimulates European research to reflect on the nature of relationality and integration of disparate findings from a more complementary and/or comprehensive perspective. In such attempts a proto-integral orientation can be seen, in light of which the contributions in this Special Issue can be contextualized.

Nevertheless Europeanness still focusses on a hyper-rationalistic, multi-linguistic but still language bound research orientation in a post-modernist way. This assessment leads to the following exploratory attempts at a journey into an alternative, maybe post-postmodernist research perspective. The articles in this special issue indicate possible ways of how such integral thought could contribute to the current state and defiances of European academia. In these recent developments of sense- and meaning-making structures, integral thought quite naturally participates by being grounded in the current European life-condition and concomitant historical cultural tradition.

In this sense the special issue is highly relevant to today’s changing European Gestalt and can contribute to the emergence of its more integrated shape which might be more adaptive to the pressing complex issues at hand.

The Content of this Special Issue

Shaping a structure for the content of an issue of *Integral Review* is not a trivial task to undertake. In the best sense of the term “border-worker” (Horlick-Jones & Sime, 2004), all the contributors in this issue share an intellectual work that all too often stems from the respective author’s condition of living on the borders of the academy and civil society while engaging in their work in addressing a rich diversity of complex problems. Accordingly, submissions from European researchers presently working in the academy are brought together with such contributions from primarily independent scholars.

While in this sense being aware that the contributions of each author have theoretical as well as practical relevance, the issue is nevertheless separated into two sections. While section one *Integral Theorizing in European Academia*, includes papers that are dealing with issues that are more focused on theoretical and methodological reasoning, section two, *Integral Practice and Applications in European Academia*, covers contributions that are dealing with and focus on integral practice and/or applications.

In section one several authors have inquired into which modalities of knowing can be identified as legitimately scientific from an integral academic perspective as outlined above. This suggests the importance of engaging in research on philosophy of science, sociology of knowledge, and economics. The authors have critically dealt with a wide range of integrative approaches and streams of thought especially including those of European origin in service of this inquiry. But these papers not only deal with topics related to deepening our understanding of what “integral” might mean in a European context. Rather they also approached the topic using integrative methods, mixed methodological inquiry, the scholarship of integration, and transdisciplinarity.

Lucas’ art-inspired and phenomenological inquiry delves into an integrative investigation of developmental trends bringing together first, second and third person multi-method approaches. Self and long-term societal transformations are being merged and united in a visionary process-form of a Moebius strip. The dialectics of art and science foster such a movement. The whole process is being reflected within the philosophy of complexity, adult developmental theory and recent scientific findings especially from neuro-psycho-economics.

Hagström and Stålné enter such an arena via a more adult developmental perspective. In their article especially the generality claims of some of these theories are being reflected upon. Such claims are usually interpreted as being opposed to each other in every general model of adult development and therefore are usually seen as incommensurable. Seemingly they contradict existing domain specificity claims as well. In interrelating Kegan’s Subject-Object-Theory with Common’s Model of Hierarchical Complexity within a thought experiment, the authors explore dialectical reasoning to come to a more complex re-resolution to a long-term debate within adult developmental psychology. Again, subjectivistic and objectivistic scientific positions are being pacified and postindustrial societal relevance of such complex reasoning is being discussed.

Laske explores the social dimension of collaboration e.g. within profit organizations via his dialectical thought form. Such self-awareness fosters late adult cognitive development post

formal reasoning by integrating e.g. Bhaskar's dialectical theorizing with social-emotional components. Adult developmental approaches are being incorporated in a grand theory approach discussed here.

Fein closes the more theoretical articles included in section one by showing how such integral thought – as explored in the three articles before – relates to recent trends within organizational studies. By comparing the so-called Practice Turn to its forerunners within classical modernity of science from a more integral perspective, she appreciates the emergent qualities of such post-modern practice oriented theorizing and as well indicates a surplus which could be given when a more integral perspective would be taken. Again complexity, inter-relatedness, cross-field multi-perspectivity and multi-method inquiry as well as the developmental perspective are being demonstrated as a genuine integral contribution within European integral thought.

In section II, other responses in this Special Issue highlight and inform how such integral approaches are relevant for addressing a multitude of ecological, economic, societal and individual-related issues in Europe. These papers give an impression of what impact integral practice and applications can have. For this they are describing examples of practice and applications of integral thought in such diverse fields as organization and management studies, collaborative learning in educational programs, nation building, and climate change engagement. One of the aims of this special issue is to showcase European academic talent and projects in such endeavours, that combine individual with collective (large-scale) as well as inner and outer perspectives on such pressing topics.

In this sense Küpers, Deeg and Edwards use the inter-relational metaphor of a bridge for their phenomenological investigation into “syn-integrality” within organization studies and practice. Dialectical and integrative orientations are being explored in their relevance for a new approach to organizing. Lucas' more phenomenological-visionary, Hagström's and Stalne's more developmental and Laske's more dialectical lenses are applied to Fein's organizational topic.

Aschermann and Klenzan give an insight into recent research in the field of pedagogics. A constructivist perspective and as they say trans-disciplinary approach is combined with their Cologne model which is built upon a four quadrant heuristic widely utilized in integral theory. In their discussion – as in Laske's article - again collaboration, self-awareness and learning stand in the center of the practical considerations. Their aim is to give a fresh perspective and some practical advice for teacher training to foster such collaborative learning.

Wagner gives some insight into a large-scale application of classical integral models within nation-building processes. Through the Yalla program – initiated and supported by the German Federal Foreign Ministry – he was one of the leading designers in shaping intercultural management trainings in which young leaders from the Middle East and from Germany were brought together under human developmental and value systems perspective. The Spiral Dynamics model was used as a lens for the training and development research undertaken.

Hampson and Rich-Tolsma offer some perspectives on the relevance of transformative learning for engaging climate change, by suggesting the necessity of developing a complex integrative, or reconstructive postmodern, worldview in order to address this wickedly complex

problem. The article is an opinion piece exploring this transformation of worldview in terms of regenerating practices, perspectives, and principles. The authors draw particular attention to the critical contrast between atomism as an attractor for modernism, and complex integration as an attractor for an ecological worldview, and attempt to valorize transformative learning as one apt approach for facilitating this critical engagement.

All in all the papers in section two give some insight into the wide range of relevant, complex and pressing challenges integral approaches engage with from a European perspective. Together with the articles from section one a rich selection of European academic thought and practice is presented in this special issue, which outlines the different aspects of Europeanness discussed at the beginning of this editorial.

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