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Editorial

Welcome to the 10th regular issue of Integral Review! It was five years ago that we launched IR with our first issue and since then we have navigated our way to where we are now. Our journey has been full of learning and pleasant surprises. We have met many interesting people and gathered colleagues with whom we thoroughly enjoy working. As we continue to grow we look forward to seeing the range and quality of discourse published in IR expand even further.

Part of this process is reflected in the focus this year on special issues. A great deal of time and energy has gone into creating these special issues and we are very pleased with the results of this effort. Our first special issue, Toward Development of Politics and the Political, edited by IR Associate Editor Sara Ross with Thomas Jordan, has been very well received. This brought a number of new authors to IR’s audience which is always a pleasure. In addition to the positive feedback we have gotten on it, we have also seen a significant increase in traffic to our website after its launch.

Very soon (by mid July) we will publish IR’s second special issue, Developing Perspectives for Advancing Metatheory and Theory, edited by IR Editorial Board members Steve Wallis and Mark Edwards. This promises to be a rich collection of articles helping to set out some of the issues in this emerging field. Later this year or early next we will see our third special issue, Research Across Boundaries – Advances in Theory-building, edited by Markus Molz and Mark Edwards. This special issue will be comprised primarily of articles developed for the symposium on Research Across Boundaries (http://dica-lab.org/rab/). As soon as I am finished writing this editorial I will begin driving to Luxembourg to participate in this event attended by many IR contributors.

The other major event on the summer horizon is of course the Integral Theory conference, hosted by John F. Kennedy University and the Integral Institute. In addition to IR associate editors making individual presentations and participating in panels hosted by others, this year they bring their collective presence to a conference panel hosted by IR. It is entitled Integral Discourse: Challenges and Lessons Learned from Publishing Integral Review. Our aim is to foster face to face dialogue with conference participants on the whole range of issues related to creating high quality academic and praxis-related discourse to support the growth of the field. We invite any of you who will be there to come and join us in an in-depth sharing and inquiry on this topic.

In this Issue

With that I move now to making some brief comments on the contents of this issue. In our last issue we had a robust set of responses to Stein and Heikkinen’s article on Models, Metrics, and Measurement in Developmental Psychology, which was published in IR’s June 2009 issue. We also had an article by Sofia Kjellström, The Ethics of Promoting and Assigning Adult Developmental Exercises: A Critical Analysis of the Immunity to Change Process, that has now
drawn responses and a rejoinder. We see this kind of dialogue as a sign of the maturation of IR as a forum for lively public discourse. We also have a response to a book review in this issue.

In response to Kjellström’s article, David Zeitler has written *Coaching Ethics and Immunity to Change: A Response to Kjellström*. David is a recent graduate of Kegan and Lahey’s first coaching certification program and draws on his knowledge of this work to challenge a number of the criticisms that Kjellström raised in her article. He emphasizes that the ITC program is both a structure and a process and depends, like such things, on how one uses it. In particular Zeitler focuses on issues of behavior, her conclusions regarding the ethical aspects of using the ITC process in educational settings, methodological issues and how she uses developmental dynamics.

Zeitler’s thorough response to Kjellström is followed directly by a rejoinder from her. In *Responsibility and Ethics in the Use and Advocacy of Developmental Exercises: Response to Zeitler and Reams*, she engages (primarily) Zeitler’s critique of the perspectives and issues she framed in her original article. She advocates for the continuation of systematic inquiry into the core issues of ethics and most significantly, whether the process actually works.

In addition to these two pieces on the topic of the Immunity to Change process and related issues, I have written a brief *Response to Kjellström* as well. Given that I began this thread with my overview and report for the field on Kegan and Lahey’s book in our June 2009 issue and that I continue to learn through my ongoing use of the process, I thought it appropriate to share a few issues that her article raised for me. I discuss issues of degree of disclosure, difficulties experienced by participants, informed consent, and demands on the facilitator. We hope to continue this lively discussion in future issues.

Next we have *Creating Dynamic Development and Harmony in the Classroom* by Nick Drummond and Joan Berland. This article is the result of years of development and testing of educational practices by both authors. It is exciting to read how deep understandings about the evolving nature of consciousness can be brought to bear on elementary school classroom students. The set of tools Nick and Joan have developed elegantly allow integral principles to have very practical impacts on students’ ability to learn and grow. The stories they tell of classroom transformations bear witness to the power of the interventions they have developed.

Tom Murray, with Terri O’Fallon, provides us with *A Perspective on Kesler’s Integral Polarity Practice*. This article describes Tom’s experience of John Kesler’s work that has integrated Genpo Roshi’s Big Mind process with Susann Cook-Greuter’s developmental sequence and polarity work. Tom shows how the process that can engender state experiences intended to lead to both horizontal and vertical growth.

I am also contributing *Bringing Integral to Management Consulting: An Interview with Rick Strycker* to this issue of IR. Rick has brought the integral framework to his corporate work at JMJ consulting. In this interview he describes the path that brought him to this position and some of the challenges and successes he has had along the way.
IR editorial board member Roland Benedikter presents us with our first German language article in a few issues, Weltanschauung und Politik in den heutigen USA. Barack Obama und der „neue Kulturkampf“ um die Führung der anglo-amerikanischen Weltmacht. The brief English language summary indicates that this is an analysis of the current relationship between politics, culture and worldviews in the US as they play out in the era of Barak Obama’s presidency. This battle of worldviews is seen as the level of strategy and work being done by political parties today and it becomes critical to understand the nature of the issues involved.

A within-the-issue dialogue takes place around the book The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation. IR editorial board Steven Wallis provides a review of the book, and takes both appreciative and critical stances toward it, which gives us a thorough insight into his perspectives on it. One of the book’s authors, Mark Hathaway, provides a Response to Wallis that aims to engage in clarifying and reframing some of the points that Wallis makes. We are glad to see this kind of dialogue in the pages of IR.

Finally, Susan Belford offers Locking Down the South Bronx, an analysis of interior and exterior dimensions of many of the structures and systems that prove to be forces to reckon with in not only the South Bronx she highlights, but also urban ghettos more broadly. This analysis was written as a mid-term graduate course paper, and gives us a special opportunity to express our interest in receiving articles from students who aim their work to meet requirements such as IR’s.

I now need to get my suitcase in the car and head out on the road! We hope that you enjoy the contents of this issue of Integral Review and look forward to meeting and hearing from many of you over the summer.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Reams
Editor-in-Chief
Integral Review
Coaching Ethics and Immunity to Change:
A Response to Kjellström

David Zeitler1

Abstract: The Immunity to Change coaching process has risen in popularity since creators Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey published their second book using this method, Immunity to Change: How to Overcome it and Unlock the Potential for Yourself and Your Organization (2009). Sofia Kjellström (2009) recently published an article taking a critical perspective on the ethics of using ITC in educational and vocational contexts. I argue herein that when used properly, the ITC process avoids most of the criticisms that Kjellström brings to bear on this issue. Furthermore, it is argued that private life and public life (Freud’s “love and work”) are already inextricably intertwined, and methods like ITC give employers and employees the tools needed to navigate what are often highly charged issues, that we might increase our quality of life and increase our efficiency. Finally, the article summarizes the relationship between Subject/Object Theory and ITC, while also addressing the issue of developmental transformations in the coaching process.

Keywords: Business consulting, coaching ethics, coaching methods, developmental level, executive coaching, higher education, Immunity to Change.

Introduction

In the outstanding “rockumentary” Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii, director Adrian Maben asks front-man Roger Waters if the dramatic increase in their use of synthesizers is bad for the future of music. Does this introduction of new technology into music mean that it is somehow easier to make…is the equipment, in fact, making the music? Maben captured the Floyd at their finest moment – recording their seminal Dark Side of the Moon at Abbey Road studios. In addition to some of the most sublime rock music ever recorded, the album includes an early version of the kind of music that would explode two decades later, “electronica.” Not only, then, is Dark Side of the Moon one of the greatest rock albums of all time, it also portended a new musical genre. It was while recording one of these “synthesizer” songs (On the Run) that Maben asked his question. Surrounded by his technical equipment, the ever sharp Waters wastes no time in responding: “It's like saying give a man a Les Paul guitar and he becomes Eric Clapton, and of course that's not true; give a man an amplifier and a synthesizer and he doesn't become... whoever; he doesn't become us.”

1 David Zeitler is an Assistant Professor in the Integral Theory Program and Integral Psychology Program at John F. Kennedy University. He is co-author with Elliott Ingersoll of the book Integral Psychotherapy: Inside-Out/Outside-In. David spent two years as a psychotherapist in locked psychiatric wards with dual diagnosis populations. He has served as an associate director of Integral Institute's Integral Psychotherapy Center, where he helped to develop and present seminars on Integral Psychotherapy and Integral Theory. David holds a black-belt in traditional Kung-Fu and teaches Chen style Tai-Chi.

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The *Immunity to Change Program* (ITC) is like the synthesizers and band in the above example. ITC is both a *structure* and a *process*. This dynamic is true of any musical instrument and individual (or group) using those instruments. Alone, the instrument (structure) may look good, but it is only when played (process) that you can make music. Synthesizers, however, are not one instrument but an electronic representation of many instruments. With them, musicians have enjoyed a new freedom to isolate or merge different sounds like never before. A new world opened up for them. And this is what the ITC processes provide for coaches and consultants: the opportunity to use several instruments in order to assist people who would like nothing more than to make positive changes in their lives (or, their organizations). But not everyone can be Eric Clapton.

Sofia Kjellström (2009) makes a few good points in her critique of ITC, particularly in terms of how ITC can be used. She appreciates the power of ITC, and has specific criticisms regarding both the structure and processes of ITC. I will be addressing four general areas in Kjellström’s paper: her focus on behavior; her conclusions on the ethics of generalizing the value of ITC (between psychological capacities and between public and private life); methodology issues; and her use of developmental dynamics.

Before diving into my analysis, I would like to be as transparent as possible. I have been studying and teaching developmental psychology for almost fifteen years, and my interests and focus have always been on Subject/Object Theory. Additionally, I am currently in training to be certified as an Immunity to Change coach. I have been using the ITC mapping process since 2004, generally during workshops that are part of an overall seminar. My motivations for writing this response paper stem mainly from the fact that I have witnessed many trainers and teachers use the ITC method with wildly varying levels of success. I respond here to Kjellström’s article because I want to begin a conversation about application-value that I hope will extend beyond ITC and into the larger coaching industry. We stand at a precipice – in a few years, all forms of “coaching” will likely be subject to licensing and other forms of oversight. Those of us who enter into the dialogue now will be much better poised to adapt to the coming changes. With any application, there is the value of the “expert” (here, the coach), the value of the “tool” (here, ITC), and the value of the “process” (here, coach-coachee relationship). As per Integral Theory, all three must rate highly in order for any effort to be considered valuable (Wilber, Patten, Leonard & Morelli, 2008). Here is a summary of my response to Kjellström, which I will unpack below. Kjellström’s focus on behavior as both the *source and aim* of ITC is fundamentally flawed. Behavior is one of several components important to the work. Kjellström also makes several arguments about the plausibility of generalizing the value of ITC to business contexts based on her experience in using it as a course assignment; this comparison is not easily supportable. Additionally, her methodology was flawed (to her credit, she acknowledges this may be the reason that she received mixed results). Finally, there are specific dynamics of development, and dynamics of ITC, that Kjellström does not take into account which, when taken into consideration, address most of her criticisms of ITC (Kjellström, 2009, p. 122-127).

Kjellström organizes her discussion into the following three general areas:

- The role and competence of the facilitator.
- The expectations and capabilities of the participants.
- The mental demands and assumptions of the process.
The following is my summary of her main points, which I will address herein:

- ITC requires a level (Self-Authoring-Mind) that is beyond most people.
- ITC assumes that change is always beneficial to all people.
- ITC may be inappropriate for use at the graduate level (or equivalent).
- Participants should be able to enter and leave the process at-will, without fear of reprisal.
- Consent must be continually renewed throughout the program.
- Complexities of mind are not used to screen for optimal value to participants.
- Critical evaluation of transformational exercises is essential for ethical issues.
- A more ethical approach is to allow the determination to change to arise from individuals.

(Kjellström, 2009, pp. 129-130)

**On Behavior**

In their books *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work* (2000) and *Immunity to Change* (2009), Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey make it clear that merely addressing behavior is rarely the most optimal or sustainable way to assist someone (or an organization) looking to make lasting change. In fact, they make every effort to point out that “…if they can make the changes they need by …creating some plan to extinguish certain behaviors and amplifying others…then by all means that is exactly what they should do” (2009, p. 38). Throughout these books, they reinforce the fact that addressing behavioral change is complementary to their intention, which is to address the underlying immunities that people enact. Behaviors are symptoms of these underlying immunities. These countervailing behaviors are identified by the individuals (and teams) themselves, and are not exogenously identified.2

At several points in her critique, Kjellström incorrectly identifies behavioral change as the major goal of the ITC method: “The [ITC] methodology addresses two questions: why changing human behavior is so difficult, and why achieving desired behavioral changes does not happen as often as we would prefer” (2009, p. 117); “The ITC process has two parts…the second [of which] is a series of exercises designed to create change in behaviors” (2009, p. 118). There are also places where Kjellström juxtaposes behaviors and values as components of ITC, but values are incorrectly characterized as the motivation for the true goal of behavioral change: “[Competing commitments] serve as a new explanation of why certain behaviors are not performed, since persons hold values that are in contradiction to and in competition with the other” (2009, p. 119). ITC is indeed concerned with behavioral change; but it is equally concerned with qualitative change in one’s interior dimensions. The fact that exterior behaviors also change is important, but this view alone misrepresents the full spectrum of value offered by ITC.

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2 I follow Kjellström here in her use of the biology terms exogenous as an external influence, and endogenous as something that arises from within the individual.
On Methodology Issues

One of the difficulties I had with Kjellström’s critique was that there are many places where the sophisticated and nuanced presentation of ITC as I have come to know it is reduced to its surface features. This can be seen in her highlighting of behavioral change without the necessary addition of the interior changes that parallel these behavioral changes; it can also be seen in the fact that Kjellström occupied a dual-role (she was the leader of the class, as well as the coach for the class; this is a problem, because leaders are encouraged to do the process alongside of their employees, or in this case, students); finally, Kjellström never discusses the iterative nature of the ITC process (i.e., this is not a linear process; it is more like a chaotic-attractor, where each iteration of a map or test helps clarify one’s big assumption, the essence of ITC work). I can still make out the surface features in her critique, but the iterative nature (the deeper structures within the structure, and the processes within the process) do not appear to have been taken into account.

This tendency to approach ITC using only its surface features is a thread that runs through Kjellström’s method and critique. Additionally, she leaves out some important changes made to the ITC processes between 2000 and 2009, despite a cursory recognition that “…there are substantial elaborations” and additional items “…to support and extend the process” (2009, p. 119). In fact, beyond the original two structures/processes (a Map, and running a test), there are five additional structures/processes (listed below in bold), and several iterations of each of the seven main components, not including any new Maps that may arise (or if the client is interested in pursuing them):

1. Immunity to Change Map (an X-ray of one’s psychological immune system)
2. Personal & Professional Surveys (a “720 degree” approach to relevant feedback; Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 65)
3. Immunity Map Biographies (life-history structured around the Immunity Map)
4. Continuum of Progress (a “visionary statement” of desired goals for thoughts, feelings, & behaviors)
5. Self-Observation (a process of moment-to-moment noticing, structured on the Immunity Map)
6. Running Tests (safe, modest, actionable (i.e., near-future), objective-research-stance tests)
7. Consolidating the Learning (the integration of unconscious “release” with “new assumptions”)  
   (Kegan & Lahey, 2009)

In other words, the ITC process as it now stands is a far more thorough and integrative procedure. Like the synthesizer Pink Floyd used to make their music, there are many, simultaneously moving parts. On the surface the procedure is linear; but in practice, like many things in life, it is anything but linear. We must allow ourselves to meet reality where it is, and not where our maps indicate it should be. Kjellström does not mention this crucial distinction, a theme woven throughout the ITC literature.

There are several methodological issues that I have with Kjellström’s research. For starters, she believes that the first step in the ITC process is to “…uncover the commitments to change”
Zeitler: Coaching Ethics and Immunity to Change: A Response to Kjellström 8

This is not a correct characterization of ITC. The first step in the process has always been to gradually step-back from the things that we say we want, so that we can look at them. This step is similar to the kind of thing that individuals do when creating a five year plan, or when business organizations create a SWOT template (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). This process, as a “natural” occurrence, may or may not involve the “reality-testing” needed for “uncovering,” as Kjellström puts it. What is something that requires “uncovering” are the assumptions behind the ways that we stifle our own achievement (more on this important distinction later).

Kjellström does not explain the “modifications” (2009, p. 120) that she made to the ITC process, nor what she specifically means when she critiques some of her students’ “barely acceptable” ITC maps (p. 121). She does, however, give us several clues as to what some of these modifications were; this includes requiring that students share their experiences with one another (p. 121); having students create their own tests (p. 121); requiring that students include early childhood experiences when generating their biography (p. 121); and making the “admission of vulnerability” (p. 121) necessarily a part of ITC. Kjellström also used two vastly different pedagogical formats for delivering ITC, an online version and a campus version. Finally, the ITC process was obligatory. Each of the above methodological issues bears directly upon the level of success that one is likely to achieve when delivering this content, as I will explain below.

Kjellström admits that as the facilitator, the following issues “may have” (2009, p. 122) affected her research: reasons/intentions for ITC use were withheld; success/failure not held as natural results of the process; hopes/benefits for results not shared; the outcomes were grade dependent (rather than goal success). (p. 121)

Kjellström makes cursory acknowledgment that a key issue of participant control over how much they share is indeed a part of the ITC format, yet does not take this into account in her methods or analysis of her own results. In fact, she mentions this “requirement” to share as a reason why she ceased to make ITC processes a course requirement. My response to this is twofold: 1) Kegan and Lahey are clear that individual participant sharing should properly be a voluntary activity (though this can be a complex issue when used in a business context; more on that point below); 2) depending upon the type of graduate class, the ITC process may not be ideal for learning about ITC or Subject/Object Theory.

3 In an excellent yet sadly obscure article, Robert Kegan and Gil Noam speak specifically to this issue of “uncovering” vs. “developing.” They explicitly state that there is an important difference between uncovering to reveal something that is present yet inaccessible, and the “gradually corrected forms of self-other confusion” (1989, p. 422). This is the essence of moving subject to object, a differentiation that allows for the interior (psychological) and exterior (behavioral) change that only together can be called “adaptive.”

4 For example, a group-process course or effective-communications course may be appropriate, but a course on theory may be inappropriate; however, because Kjellström describes only the students’ programs and not the courses in use, there is no way to determine whether this was a skillful application of ITC.
In fact, ITC advises users that sharing is voluntary. The advice is to work in groups of two and in small groups thereafter, where sharing is always voluntary (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, pp. 65-67). This has been part of their program, quite literally, from the beginning of their first ITC publication:

Ground Rule for you as Speaker: How much or how little you want to let your partner (or partners) in on during these reflections is continuously up to you and you alone. This includes, should you need to elect it, the perfectly acceptable and respectable choice to remain completely silent throughout, keeping all your thoughts to yourself. (Kegan & Lahey, 2000, p. 14, emphasis in original)

Kjellström not only made the ITC process a required assignment, she also required sharing (on campus) and built “sharing” into the fabric of the online course (their experiences were written for all to see). Several students were understandably against this, and refused to share. There are other “ground rules” as well, such as avoiding any positional power difference between partners, and the crucial element of leaders doing the ITC work right alongside their employees/students (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, pp. 80-81). Kjellström is asking of her students that they share with her despite her power differential, and it is at best unclear if she did or did not engage in the process alongside her students. These are additional methodological issues that must be taken into consideration when looking at her results.  

Additionally, Kjellström had students creating their own tests for the big assumptions that they hold. This is something that is to be done in conjunction with a coach or, in the case of a course assignment, their professor. It was only after the students’ test results began to reveal how little the tests engaged their assumptions or fears that Kjellström questioned the validity of the process. Yet, changing the “column two” behaviors, the “test” that many of her students ended up doing, is not a valid test in ITC. The tests must be designed to increase the participants’ awareness and attention of their big assumption – to begin to take it as object, that the person can no longer “be had” by it (Kegan, 1994, p. 32).

It seems to me that Kjellström is criticizing her own version of Immunity to Change, and not the total offering of Kegan & Lahey.

On Generalizing the Value of Immunity to Change

Kjellström laments the fact that she could find no outcome studies on ITC. This is inaccurate, as there have been three books, and several articles and book chapters, all of which have (or are) thorough case studies on the outcomes of ITC (Kegan & Lahey, 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Bowe, et. al., 2003; Wagner, et. al., 2005; Helsing, et. al., 2008; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Kjellström cites the very references I have just listed before mentioning the lack of outcome studies. Yet Kegan & Lahey have always maintained that a successful outcome is when individuals (or organizations) are better able to meet their own stated goals. That is the benchmark by which success is determined, not factors of developmental complexity, though the two are often related (Kegan &Lahey, 2009, pp. 80-84, 87-124). The reason that the successful

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5 I am indebted to Deb Helsing for these helpful perspectives on power and process.
attainment of goals and developmental complexity are so often related is because of the “balance” between public and private life. Most people living in a country that has the infrastructure and economy to support a middle-class must contend with leaders that will often place them in over their heads (Kegan, 1994).

Forcing change is not the goal of ITC; nor is alleviating the anxiety and depression that results from the arrested development that can happen when consistently being in over one’s head. The goal of ITC is to meet people and organizations where they are right now, developmentally or otherwise. This idea of meeting people where they are in terms of their development, while providing the supports and challenges necessary for continued growth, is best captured in Kegan’s notion of bridge-building (1994, pp. 42-45; 278-279). There, Kegan teases apart the nuanced orientation that is required of parents, educators, and leaders interested in development. According to decades of research, many of us are being asked to construct the world in a way that is beyond our capacity. There exists a large gap between the claims being placed on us, and our capacity to meet those claims; ITC effectively addresses the suffering that occurs when we are in over our heads. (Kegan, 1994, pp. 42-45; 278-279)

A key issue in Kjellström’s critique has to do with the question of responsibility for those in power, be they senior executives or professors. How much responsibility is on the shoulders of the individual, and how much is on the organization, with respect to the communication of trust and safety in the disclosure of information (particularly information that might jeopardize their employment or their grade)? This is indeed an important issue. Kjellström asks a question that is imperative for all coaches and facilitators: “…do teachers [or coaches and consultants] have sufficient psychological training to support the students [or clients] adequately?” (2009, p. 123).

Steven Berglas asks the same question in his article, The Very Real Dangers of Executive Coaching. He surmises that the single worst thing that coaches and consultants do is to see outward behavior as reflective of inward change. As I have already shown, when used correctly ITC is a hedge against this danger. This stems from its foundations in Subject/Object Theory. The ITC process is exquisitely designed to help people look at the assumptions that they once unknowingly used to look at the world. In other words, the big-assumptions that are revealed during the process are a small part of an overall system of mind. We live in and through these systems of mind, and they inform our meaning-making. Each level of mind represents a more complex and nuanced capacity to distinguish ourselves from the world around us. In the ITC process, an excellent testing phase would see the coach skillfully assisting someone as they safely distinguished themselves from their assumptions.

Table 1. Levels of Development in Immunity to Change (adapted from Kegan & Lahey, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>System of Mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5</td>
<td>Self-Transforming Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Self-Authoring Mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 3  Socialized Mind

Stage 2  Instrumental Mind

Which brings me back to how ITC, when done properly, is a hedge against the danger of confusing behavior alone for interior transformation. This is particularly important when considering the shift from Socialized-Mind to Self-Authoring-Mind. Kegan has always maintained that individuals who construct their world through the lens of social-norms, who locate principles and values outside of themselves as the measure of meaning, are prone to alter behavior when in the presence of a leader. Furthermore, in the absence of such leadership, they can have a difficult time maintaining the meanings behind those behaviors. Berglas’ argument is that any coaching program that focuses on exogenous sources of meaning will be neither optimal nor sustainable. (2002, p. 90)

ITC, by grounding the process in someone’s professional or personal goals, denies attempts to construct meaning outside of oneself without neglecting the support that the person needs. In other words, ITC avoids the two main pitfalls that Kjellström and Berglas raise of working with people who construct reality according to the Socialized-Mind. It meets clients where they are, and it engenders the construction of meanings at the person’s “leading edge of development” (Wilber, 2000a, p. 52, 158). This is also one of the reasons why Kegan & Lahey always recommend that every person in a group engage in their own ITC process before engaging it as a group. It is clear that coaches and consultants who use psychologically structured processes like ITC should fare better than those who do not. What I mean by this is that coaches who do not attend to or otherwise circumvent the actions of those who might manipulate them (or simply not fully engage them) will be spending energy without achieving desired results. This is another area where I am in general agreement with Kjellström. Berglas also comes to this conclusion, and furthermore recommends that executives be psychologically screened for proper preparation; unfortunately, he does not provide any idea of what this might look like. (Berglas, 2002, p. 89-92)

Finally, there is a larger question that Kjellström puts to the ITC community that no coaching or consulting process should be asked to shoulder by themselves: to what extent should individuals in a business context be encouraged to share (“coercion,” as Kjellström puts it; 2009, p. 123)? I have already summarized Kegan & Lahey’s position on this matter. However, I would like to add some reflections on the issue. There are certain realities of working for an organization that must be reckoned with.

Most people that are employed by an organization are employed “at will.” In other words, they have the freedom to choose their employer. But their paycheck is contingent upon the successful completion of their organizations’ goals. Every stakeholder in an organization is under pressure to complete goals, and the specter that another person can both do my job and share during a professional development training can be a powerful endogenous motivator. Kjellström claims that this is a form of organizational coercion. Yet I wonder if the motivation is solely exogenous, which would indeed be coercion. If I know that there are other people willing to do my job, including the sharing that I do not wish to do, then I may feel a motivation to share
that is all my own. Is this coercion, or the healthy expression of at-will employment and individual freedom? I am not as willing as Kjellström to make any quick decisions on an issue that clearly belongs in a larger dialogue on social values and employment.

ITC should not be singled out for what is in fact a systemic issue: where is “privacy” in the postmodern world? Privacy is increasingly becoming an issue in our ever-connected world, where every cell phone has a camera, and our collective appetite for voyeurism seems to be growing. Even with such a charged issue, ITC may offer us some wisdom. Rather than shy away from the implications of this future, Kegan & Lahey take it head on: “…anxiety is the most important…private emotion in public life” (p. 48). After all, “public work” has already infiltrated “private life,” as any visit to a restaurant or coffee shop will make clear! The constant interruption of our privacy with work has already happened. This is no one-way street – as Deb Helsing puts it, “…our hidden commitments, big assumptions, and difficult emotions are already in the professional world – showing up as dysfunctional work/leadership!” (personal communication, 2010). It seems only fair (or natural) that our public work begin to integrate the very real concerns of our private hopes, fears, and dreams. This possibility could take sterile notions like “morale” and “corporate culture,” and turn them into actual shared agreements.

A larger point is that leaders of organizations who themselves show developmental transformation from one level to the next tend to show more successful (and more ethical) leadership. The life work of Bill Torbert (2004, pp. 104 – 120) has shown that developmental transformation to what he calls the “Strategist” and “Magician” (the two stages in his model that correspond with Kegan’s Self-Transforming-Mind) can be of great benefit to all employees in a learning organization. He is worth quoting at length here on this issue of later stage development and leadership ethics:

…leadership is a process that is noncoercive, multidirectional, influence-oriented, real, and mutual… [This] is very close to the concept of transformational leadership practiced by late stage managers…Later stage leaders are apt to lead organizations, direct projects and take on issues which reverberate across many horizons. Therefore, when they err, their negative impact may be far greater than whatever temporary, local waves an earlier stage leader's actions have. Late-stage leaders are working with major archetypes of awareness and thus with the 'symbolic resonance' of actions, not just with the details or outcomes of specific behaviors. Since the resulting effects are symbolic, meanings and interpretations are made by individuals surrounding the leader. However, such interpretations are likely to be limited, for two reasons. First, if developmental theory is right, the complex and subtle judgments and actions of very late stage leaders are undecodable by earlier stage participants. (my emphasis; Lichtenstein, Smith, & Torbert, 1995, pp. 103-105)

As Ken Wilber has pointed out, every level has both dignities and disasters (1995), a theme that also runs through Torbert’s work. What Kegan & Lahey add to these considerations is the fact that when all members of an organization work with their eyes wide open, the private anxieties that are often painful can assist with the public lives that we must lead. There is always individual risk when embarking upon a group effort, but we cannot deny that this larger issue of privacy in public life is one with which we must reckon. ITC provides a safe, measurable, ethically grounded way to do so. The possibility that ITC might actually be ethically beneficial
for all involved is never suggested in Kjellström’s critique, but seems plausible given the preliminary evidence in the ITC case studies that have been published, and the studies by Torbert on leadership and organizational transformation (Rooke & Torbert, 1998).

**The Developmental Dynamics of Coaching**

The central issue that Kjellström takes, developmentally speaking, is that the ITC program goes over the heads of most people who will be engaging the process. Kjellström cites two sources for this: the first is from the meta-analysis that Kegan & Lahey report in their book *Immunity to Change*, which shows that 58% of people will not be at the level of *Self-Authoring Mind* (p. 28). The second is from a study by John Manners, Kevin Durkin, and Andrew Nesdale (2004), which looked at the hypothesis that stage transformation can be promoted.

The first important distinction I will make is that Kjellström tends to fuse conflict with disequilibrium. While it is true that disequilibrium can involve conflict, from a developmental perspective disequilibrium also opens the possibility of beneficial change into wider perspectives. As Kegan is fond of saying, if you can help someone to understand a more complex perspective, they will prefer it (1982, pp. 56-57). Kjellström minimizes the potent effect of genuine leadership within such a dynamic: “With a supportive facilitator, some people will be helped [to] perform tasks at the systemic [i.e., formal] stage” (2009, p. 129). In fact, the effect is far greater than Kjellström acknowledges. Furthermore, the disequilibrium is “conflict” for the old self that is being disidentified from, but “repudiation” for the new self that is performing the disidentification. This is a developmental nuance of Subject-Object Theory that is not represented in Kjellström’s analysis.

Kjellström also states that development can occur without disequilibrium: “…there are interventions that promote development without being designed to be structurally disequilibrating” (2009, p. 123). Here, she refers to the Manners, et. al., study on the promotion of stage development. The position that stage transformation can occur without disequilibrium represents a fundamental misunderstanding of developmental dynamics, and in fact, the study that Kjellström cites actually claims the opposite: “The effect of the program was greatest among those for whom the intervention was most disequilibrating in relation to their existing ego structures” (p. 25) and there were minimal to no changes for the control group “…because for them the program was not structured to be disequilibrating” (p. 21).

An interesting aspect of the Manners, et. al., study that bear upon ITC is that the researchers identified three key ingredients for promoting stage development, ingredients that the *Immunity to Change Program* contains:

1. Must be personally salient (e.g., investment through personal/organizational goals)
2. Must be emotionally engaging (e.g., the direct engagement of anxiety and hope for overcoming ones’ anxiety)
3. Must include an interpersonal dynamic (e.g., working with an *Immunity to Change* certified coach)

(Manners, et. al., 2004, p. 25)
This brings me to the most disturbing charge that Kjellström weighs against the ITC process, that it is going over the heads of 58% of any group that uses it. Were this true, it would represent, at best, a cruel irony for Kegan who wrote a book on avoiding this very dynamic. However, my analysis below of ITC and Subject-Object Theory shows us that this charge cannot be supported.

Firstly, 40% of a typical group is between Socialized-Mind and Self-Authoring-Mind (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 28). This means that even in the worst case scenario (58% - 40% = 18%), 18% of any group is the highest number that might miss the more nuanced aspects of ITC. However, there is every reason to believe that this is not the case. When used correctly, ITC “meets” individuals who are either at Socialized-Mind or in between Socialized-Mind and Self-Authoring-Mind extremely well (see below). The other 18% can be divided into the roughly 10% who are limited to Socialized-Mind, and the 8% who are pre-Socialized-Mind (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 28). Following Kegan & Lahey’s lead, I will call this prior level Instrumental-Mind, for it represents a level of development where people see the world through their own needs, and see others as instruments or tools to achieve the satisfaction of the need. They have great difficulty coordinating their needs with the needs of another (or a group), which is the hallmark of Socialized-Mind.

The question of whether people at this level are merely developmentally arrested, or are pathologically sociopathic, or if those are two sides of the same coin, is one that I do not have the room to address herein (see Kegan, 1994, pp. 38-44; see also Bubiak & Hare, 2007). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that regardless of etiology, there are individuals who are limited in their capacities to coordinate personal needs with group needs. It is worth noting here that not every adult who is exhibiting Instrumental Mind will be psychologically unhealthy or pathologically manipulative. Berglas (2002) claims that executive coaching is at best inert when confronted with such people, and at worst, can actually assist the psychologically unhealthy people who are at this level with enacting their unsavory schemes. ITC has built-in defenses against such manipulation, as it both identifies a personal need that someone has in the form of their own goals, and then calls the person into a group process where personal goals and group goals are being coordinated by a coach or consultant in conjunction with group members. In other words, ITC does not go “over the heads” of individuals at the Socialized-Mind. Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that even at Instrumental-Mind, individuals can be helped to look at needs rather than be them (in a way that is one-half step beyond what they can

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6 58% is the figure that Kegan & Lahey give for the percentage of people who, according to developmental research, have yet to develop into the level of Self-Authoring-Mind. This figure is made up of 40% of people who are in between Socialized-Mind and Self-Authoring-Mind, and 10% of people who are at Socialized-Mind, and 8% of people who are below this, at Instrumental-Mind. (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 28)

7 Rather, it might be better to say that “manipulative” is an unnecessarily pejorative term; from the perspective of Instrumental Mind, my manipulation of others is no different from manipulating clay to make ceramic objects. Like most psychological conditions, sociopathy lies on a continuum, with degrees of impact on others.

8 Paul Babiak and Robert Hare (2007) have published a book on the havoc that these individuals can have in a business organization. Their 10% estimate on the number of people who reflect these characteristics of Instrumental-Mind is in general agreement with Kegan & Lahey’s meta-analysis, and with other developmental researchers (Cook-Greuter, 1999).
self-generate). Those are precisely the conditions for optimal development that Kegan and other developmentalists have outlined (see for example Loevinger, 1976).

As noted above, even with Instrumental-Mind, individuals are likely “held” by the ITC processes. So those individuals at Instrumental-Mind may only get from the process that their goals may or may not line up with the goals of their team or their organization. Individuals at the level of Socialized-Mind, however, will certainly possess the capacity for self-generating the constructions necessary for ITC processes. Kjellström’s criticism here is that

The exercise is built on the requirement that all participants are able to use, at minimum, formal stage thinking...because the persons need to see themselves responsible for the commitment [and] an adequate understanding of personal responsibility is a formal stage concept which requires formal stage reasoning. (2009, p. 127)

Again, I must disagree with Kjellström on the grounds that her argument does not rest on solid developmental theory. Full formal-operational cognition is the foundation for Self-Authoring-Mind; however, Kjellström is incorrect that full formal-operational cognition is required for engaging in ITC. In fact, individuals with early formal cognition, which is the foundation for Socialized-Mind, can readily self-generate the meaning-constructions that are called upon for ITC. Seeing oneself as responsible for one’s commitments, and holding up your own end of an agreement – these are precisely the sort of qualities that emerge with transformation to Socialized-Mind. As I have pointed out, even with Instrumental-Mind, a maxim of developmental psychology is that when someone can be helped to understand a perspective that is one-half step beyond that which they can self-generate, they will generally prefer it. This means that when it is used skillfully, ITC can avoid the potential pitfalls of dealing with Instrumental-Mind, and even holds the possibility of assisting those individuals with their continued development. Finally, individuals who are at or just beyond Socialized-Mind already have the necessary endogenous complexity of mind to benefit from ITC.

Conclusions

Near the end of her article, Kjellström uses the ITC Map itself to evaluate ITC processes. In particular, her elucidation of columns three and four do not reflect a particularly good way of creating an ITC map. In her column two, Kjellström lists the designs and explanations of ITC as “inadequate,” and the column three competing commitment is listed as “to not admit weaknesses in ITC” (2009, p. 128). She was perhaps being a bit tongue-in-cheek; however, column three is properly a competing commitment that, through reverse-engineering, is revealed as the source of the column two behaviors. In other words, neither column two nor column three would satisfy the basic requirements for a good ITC map. Column four, which she lists as an assumption that “…more mental complexity is always right and good” (2009, p. 128), is both an incorrect analysis of Kegan & Lahey’s intentions, and an incorrect use of the ITC process. The column

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9 A “good” ITC map is one where the column one goals are true for you; the column two behaviors are things you yourself are doing to get in your own way; the column three competing commitments feel like they have a lot of gravity and help explain the column two behaviors; and the column four big assumption is a source of catastrophic thinking – even the thought of it brings anxiety.
four big assumption is supposed to be something so feared, that to even consider it creates what cognitive-behaviorists call catastrophic thinking. It is this assumption that fuels the entire immunity map.

Kegan & Lahey do not believe that more complexity is always right and good, which should be clear from the fact that in their first book on ITC, no developmental language is used. It is also clear from the way that Kegan ends his book In Over Our Heads – with a reminder that whenever we predetermine how someone should grow, or the point of that growth, we lose something. We lose the passion of life that makes life worth living, the fragile passion that promises new life (and, in a business context, even new products and services). Passion is its own reward (1994, p. 354).

They are equally clear that that healthy, supportive change is good, and that many people are in over their heads, whether they like it or not. This rift between what we can developmentally accomplish and what we are expected to accomplish is crying out for a system that can soothe the endogenous force of evolution, with the exogenous claims being placed upon people. The Immunity to Change process was born of the recognition that this rift exists, and its purpose is to assist those individuals who find a similar need in either their private or public lives.

I agree with Kjellström completely on the issue of ethics. ITC coaches can and should make the claim that although the general structures and processes of ITC are available to anyone interested in pursuing lifelong change, the help of skilled practitioners is crucial when considering questions of ethics and quality alike. Like the synthesizer that Roger Waters was using during his interview, the ITC program is a simple instrument, with complex possibilities. When used skillfully, it meets people where they are in terms of their level of development. When used skillfully it has been shown to be highly beneficial for assisting people (and organizations) meet their own stated goals. When used skillfully, it can be a powerful tool for personal and organizational transformation. Wilber claims that the single greatest achievement that humanity can make at this time – something that would move our species a long way towards solving the many global crises that our species currently faces – would be to assist the 40% of us who are poised to transform into Self-Authoring-Mind (2000b, p. 56, 88, 104, & 126; 2006, pp. 179-182). Following Heifetz, Kegan & Lahey call this the sort of adaptive change that

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10 Is the main purpose of ITC to help someone transform from one level to the next? My answer to this is a qualified “yes.” You see, Kegan & Lahey (and anyone who is skillfully using ITC) are first and foremost interested in those areas where someone feels stuck. From the beginning of Subject/Object Theory, the goal has been to assist people with their own ongoing evolution. A good analogy is that of the new field of epigenetics. Epigenetics is a field that sees not a static set of building blocks encased in a nucleus, but an ongoing process of exchange and incorporation between the environment and the organism. ITC coaching is not trying to get people to grow; ITC coaching is trying to assist people who are already embroiled in the process of their own becoming. Subject/Object Theory tells us that we are never “static” in our development, it is always happening. But we can and will often get stuck. In the lumber industry, log jams are broken up when divers plunge into a river and search for the one log that started it all – the “key-log.” By removing this key-log, the natural flow of the river can continue, and so can the logs. The logs and the river are granted their own distinctness, yet maintain their relationship with one another (i.e., the logs are not removed to solve the problem, nor is the river diverted). That is what ITC coaching is about – helping people find their key-logs, in the form of their big-assumptions, to free up the trapped energy that is causing them pain and stifling their development.
can meet the adaptive challenges that our species is facing (2009, p. 29). I believe that ITC coaching has an innovative design, with the unique characteristics to help us meet the adaptive challenges that our species is grappling with.

Life is messy. One of my favorite quotes from the eminent Jane Loevinger is that “Nature does not promise us an orthogonal universe, a world arranged in rows and columns, where every distinguishable trait is statistically independent of all others” (1976, p. 176). When properly used, the ITC process is not about an artificial arrangement of rows and columns, it is a Map that helps practitioners sift through the messiness of life, that we might understand the underlying patterns. Because life is nonlinear and messy, I understand why a system that is as elegant as Immunity to Change, with the layers of depth and scalability that it has, can be seen for its surface or deep features (hopefully, for both, as both are necessary). I hope that my response can be seen from the spirit of spirited dialogue; at the same time, I feel a responsibility to highlight what I see as the significant offering that ITC has for the world in this time of crisis.

The elegance of the Immunity to Change process makes it appear simple. In some ways this is true – creating an initial ITC Map can take as little as one hour. The full ITC process, however, is a much richer endeavor. When David Bowie was interviewed for a documentary on the evolution of rock music during the 1970’s, he chuckled at the relationship between engineers and musicians. Engineers, in Bowie’s estimation, were trying their best to recreate the sound of individual instruments through synthesizers; musicians, on the other hand, cared little for the engineer’s vision, and wanted to create new sounds with the synthesizers. If they wanted a horn, they would play a horn, not an electronic representation of one. But if they wanted a future-sound, the sound of waveforms mingling together, they needed a synthesizer. Being an Immunity to Change coach is like being a musician in this sense – the beautiful music comes not from the repetition of scales, but from the iterative flow of harmonic resonance.

Reference List


Responsibility and Ethics in the Use and Advocacy of Developmental Exercises:
Response to Zeitler and Reams

Sofia Kjellström

In this response I circumscribe the nature and scale of the rejoinder to refocus on the ethical and theoretical implications of utilizing developmental exercises, of which Immunity to Change (ITC) is seen as an example. I welcome Zeitler’s and Reams’ continuation of the ethical discussion, and I want to reclaim and develop some of the delicate points and consequences that were described in my original article. The line of reasoning is based upon the presupposition that developmental methods and techniques are used in the real world with people and consultants with limitations and strengths, in conditions that are neither optimal nor perfect. Among all theoretical and ethical questions, I found the most profound issue to be: does it work?

Reflections upon Methodology as a Means for Improved Ethics

One overarching argument is that my use of a “flawed methodology” invalidates the critique I am making of the ITC process, reducing my observations to “criticizing her own version of Immunity to Change, and not the total offering of Kegan & Lahey” (Zeitler, 2010, p. 8), leading to his conclusion that, if the process is ‘properly’ employed, it avoids most of the criticism. Some of my adaptations were less than optimal, as Zeitler and Reams note, but I think most ethical implications and theoretical issues in the article can be generalized beyond a single case. The aim of the article was to illustrate significant theoretical and ethical implications that arose in the interplay among (a) the role and competence of the facilitator, (b) expectations and capabilities of the participants, and (c) the mental demands and assumptions of the process, and these implications were generalized beyond my particular performance. Consequently, the theoretical critique can be valid regardless of how I implemented the process.

My point in sharing the methodological modifications and shortcomings were to illustrate how the process could be used and adapted to an educational setting, and by sharing this experience, create a space for learning and reflection. Attentive readers could use this space to contemplate their own experiences of participation, of leading others, and the ethical issues that

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arise in those situations. My presentation, therefore, was designed to be as transparent and as succinct as possible. A concise account does not imply an incomplete or inadequate understanding.

For example, one of my ethical points in the article addressed the delicacy of voluntarism in participating and sharing. I used examples from my experience to draw out ethical implications. As I describe in depth in the article, this dimension of participation—the students’ rights to exercise personal discretion and protect confidentiality—was something I discussed at length with my students, including sharing Kegan’s ground rules (Kjellström, 2006; Kjellström, 2009, p. 120). Despite my awareness of these dimensions, my efforts to inform them, and my explicit statements on these matters, some persons nevertheless felt uncomfortable. The point is that the voluntariness of participation and sharing is a relevant topic each time you are in the context of having tasks to be performed in a course or attending a workshop. Some people will do things that they should not have done outside of that context. Ethical awareness and acknowledgement is the first step of handling it.

Another main point is the topic about positional power issues between teacher and students, as Zeitler and Reams also discuss. ITC ground rules state that employees should not share their personal immunity change issues with their leaders. In the educational settings the teacher is the coach and leader, as Zeitler points out. But again this can be used to raise more general points. Even in a business setting where a coach takes on a group, the coach is both a coach and a leader. As soon as a person is put in the centre as an authority figure, in this case a psychological authority, he or she turns into a leader and an asymmetry of power arises. Not even a skilled practitioner will avoid or escape the possibility to be seen as a leader.

**Thinking and Behavior**

Zeitler argues that I incorrectly focus on behaviors as the source and aim of ITC.² It is possible to interpret it that way, but this was not my intention. One of the main points with both ITC and adult development theory is the focus on people’s different ways of meaning making and complexity of mind. But the way a person sees the world also has significant effects on how he or she acts. Kegan and partners use this rhetoric to argue for the value of the exercise. Since behavioral change is difficult and does not happen as often as we might like, ITC could be used to stimulate change, since ITC focuses on the underlying meaning making. But the argument does not end here. Internal thinking does affect behavior—an important point: what is the point of changing internal thinking if it never leads to changes in actions? In my opinion, for ITC to have a real function in society, it is not enough for it to change peoples’ thoughts; new thoughts must lead to better actions. But how do we know whether ITC leads to better thinking and better actions?

² Zeitler points out that I use the word values in juxtaposition with behaviors. I have rather used commitments and values as synonyms. Commitments can be interpreted as things that are valued as important. In Swedish language the translation of commitment is an awkward term not very often used in ordinary language. The students were all taking classes on ethics, therefore the use of values was seen as an adequate choice. This translation was communicated and discussed with the students (Kjellström, 2006). No teaching of adult development theory was included in the courses, to answer another question by Zeitler.
The Need for Scientific Studies to Show That It Works

According to Zeitler “Kjellström laments the fact that she could find no outcome studies on ITC. This is inaccurate, as there have been three books, and several articles and book chapters, all of which have (or are) thorough case studies on the outcomes of ITC” (Zeitler, 2010, p. 8). I was not “sad” (i.e., I did not “lament”) that I was unable to find such studies; I was surprised by the absence of independent and scientific outcomes studies given the attention and strong advocacy that ITC was enjoying in the general literature. That Zeitler classifies case studies as examples of outcome studies leads me to conclude that Zeitler’s definition of an “outcome study” differs in significant ways from mine. Or perhaps it is a difference in my preference for independent assessments, that is, studies performed by persons with no financial interest in the process, which raises another ethical question—conflict of interest.

In the article, I emphasize the need for critical studies that address possible inadequacies or tests of effectiveness (Kjellström, 2009). There is a need for critical texts that openly discuss weaknesses in the structure and/or process of ITC, which is what prompted me to write of my experiences. Most previous written works that Zeitler interprets as support for successful outcomes have coauthors that have financial interests in promoting the ITP process and certifying new coaches; by definition, these financial considerations negate the independence of the view or critical voice on the ITP. Some people might argue that this is an important part of the difference between “marketing research” which is motivated by a desire to determine how best to sell the product, and scientific research, which should be done independently. I further argue here that there is indisputably a paucity of tests for effectiveness and outcomes, and that is what is needed to persuasively demonstrate that ITC is an effective process. Effective outcome studies … demonstrate that a treatment works; it moves the field forward by revealing what interventions are helpful within a given treatment; and it provides data to move beyond emotional allegiances into rational selections of treatment. (Najavits, 2003, pp. 317-318)

Case studies are not outcomes studies as Zeitler suggests. To illustrate the kind of scientific work and research that is needed for establishing that the ITC works, I quote at length the three stages of research needed in the development of a therapy, and how different outcome studies could be designed (Rounsaville, Carroll, & Onken, 2001):

**Stage 1—Early Therapy Development.** In this stage, the focus is on careful development of the treatment and basic scientific testing. A treatment is conceptualized, repeatedly refined by trying it with patients, and pilot tested. The pilot test may be a simple pre-post design, or may include a control condition. The usual products of this stage are a treatment manual, an adherence scale and training plan for therapists, relevant assessment instruments, and the results of the pilot test, which can provide such information as the effect size to use in the next stage. Stage 1 is sometimes conceptualized as two stages, 1-A and 1-B, where the former is focused solely on treatment development (e.g., developing the manual and associated materials), and the latter focused on pilot data. Stage 1 typically takes from 2–3 years.
Stage 2—Efficacy Testing. In this stage, the goal is to determine whether the treatment works under the best possible conditions; that is, with intensive training, supervision, careful selection of appropriate patients, and in-depth assessment. The study design is usually a randomized, controlled study to rigorously test the treatment, comparing it to either no-treatment, treatment-as-usual in the community, or an existing alternative treatment with known efficacy (e.g., in the field of addictions, comparing a new treatment to 12-step drug counseling). The usual products of this stage are the results of the randomized controlled trial, as well as more refined treatment materials than at stage 1 (e.g., adequate psychometric properties of the adherence scale and other treatment-specific measures, descriptive data on the patient and therapist samples, a final version of the treatment manual, and some type of “dismantling” test linking the theory and techniques of the treatment to outcomes). This stage usually takes 2–4 years.

Stage 3—Effectiveness. Also known as “generalizability” or “transferability,” the goal in this stage is to evaluate how well a treatment performs in real-world conditions, rather than the highly controlled study of stage 2. Thus, the treatment might be implemented in a community setting with minimal training and supervision, and applied to a broad range of patients. The typical products of this stage are outcome data collected from the effectiveness study (which may involve multiple clinical sites), specification of dissemination strategies and their feasibility, and data on therapist outcomes. This stage typically takes 2–3 years. (Najavits, 2003, pp. 319-320)

Implementing these three stages in outcome studies of ITC has barely begun and has stalled on the first stage. The ITC has been tried out as case studies but there are no scientific tests with pre/post designs. Case studies can be used in the first stage to test out hypotheses, but even that has not been done in a systematic manner with the ITC process. To really establish the value of ITC, we must proceed to stage two. In addition to the criteria mentioned, a longitudinal design is recommended. It would be very interesting to examine whether the performance of ITC helps people transform and to more generally assess what happens to them that can be persuasively linked to their experience with ITC. How do people of different orders of mind or phases of development perceive the process? And is it possible to show that changes in life are due to the process, and not to other personal circumstances? For which kinds of individuals, with what kinds of problems, with what kinds of support is the ITC efficient and effective? One main reason for conducting sound studies is that they can build the foundation for a more ethical, respectful and developmentally aware usage of the ITC process.

The Need for Genuine Developmental and Ethical Options

One of the main advocacy points in my article is to expand the responsibility to include organizations and individuals. If a leader is in over his or her head, it is not solely a problem for the individual to handle, nor is it a fact to accept, but it is also the result of bad recruitment by an organization. For example, take a formal-stage-thinking person who does not live up to the requirements of a systematic-stage job description. A more ethical way to handle such a situation would be to give the following (hypothetical script) options/information.
We have this process (e.g., ITC); several studies have suggested that the process can allow formal thinkers a chance to develop the skill of systematic thinking, which is the requirement for performing adequately in your current job position. We know from these studies that only 24% of those who commit to the process are able to make this transformation. You should also be aware that the process is emotionally intense, and if you decide to take this path, you will have a better chance of success if you have good support from your family and friends. Making this change could be arduous, but we will support you on this journey. If you do not have the support or are not prepared to go through this emotional challenge, then we have this second proposal for you. We will help you to find a new job position which is better suited to your current way of functioning, and we will support you in that process as well.

This ethical management is currently difficult to achieve since there are no scientific (outcome) studies or systematic evaluations to consult. The example is also based upon the assumption that the employer has the knowledge and competence in adult development and the ability to apply understandings of the level of complexity both in organizational positions and in people. The change and development of organizations needs to be carried out by individuals. In order to achieve change, the individual has to experience change as meaningful, which means that changes need to be set up in a wider context where the individuals subjectively experience these induced changes as meaningful.

I end by repeating my concern about the lack of an integrated ethics component in the ITC process. Zeitler states that the benchmark is that “individuals (and organizations) are better able to meet their own stated goals” (Zeitler, 2010, p. 8). To me this is an insufficient criterion for a successful process. First, it is highly subjective, even if it is judged in the affirmative by the person, partner, and co-worker; arguing that “it is good, only because we have decided it to be good” is inadequate and needs to be supplemented by other criteria. Secondly, there are no explicit ethics built into the ITC process. As a developmental exercise, ITC invokes the implicit assumption that usage results in better thinking and actions, and consequentially to improved ethical action. But by using this criterion for success, there is an open possibility that the method will be used in business as a means to pursue conventional goals of higher productivity and financial gains. This is a limited use of a process that claims to overcome the immunity to change so that people can realize higher levels of their potential

**Responsibility as a Mental Demand of the ITC process**

The idea that the ITC process goes over the heads of some of the users is a challenging one. I use the issue of responsibility to expand, deepen and illustrate this point even further by (a) demonstrating the developmental character of responsibility and (b) examining what kinds of responsibilities are required by the ITC process.
The Developmental Nature of Responsibility

Research shows an empirical basis for a developmental sequence in reasoning about responsibility issues.\(^3\) Research on the attribution of responsibility for negative events (e.g., illness) shows a specific pattern of assigning responsibility, from mere association to the importance of the knowledge and intentions of the agent (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1973; Mantler, Schellenberg, & Page, 2003). Adult development studies show that considerations about responsibility issues evolve in people in three different ways. Firstly, several studies independently discovered that talk about individual responsibility arises spontaneously in different domains at a certain level and only after that is individual and social responsibility discussed in combination (Dawson & Gabrielian, 2003; Gilligan, 1982; Kajanne & Pirttila-Backman, 1999; Kjellström, 2005; Kjellström & Ross, 2009; Robbins & Greenwald, 1994). Secondly, people have different abilities to comprehend and take responsibility due to different interpretations of themselves, others, and the world (Gallagher, 1988; Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2003; Loevinger & Blasi, 1976; Rybash & Roodin, 1989). People see themselves as responsible for different things (e.g., thoughts, roles, emotions, and actions) depending on their demonstrated level of development (Kegan, 1994) and the sphere of things for which they are able to take responsibility increases in later stages of development. For example, nurses who were at later stages of development (measured by Loevinger’s ego development) scored significantly higher on a personal responsibility measure, where personal responsibility was defined as the ability to attribute the causes of their behavior to personal choice rather than to the situation or dispositional actions (Gallagher, 1988). Nurses at earlier stages ascribed more of their behaviors to external factors than to internal ones. Internal factors are recognized at more complex levels of development through reflection (Fischer & Pruyne, 2003). Thirdly, the term “responsibility” means different things to different people depending on their stage of development. Using concepts like causes, personal performance, and duties to define the core meaning given to “responsibility” does not occur until the abstract reasoning stage (Dawson, Xie, & Wilson, 2003). Once that concept is developed, it can be built upon. For example, the compound concept of personal responsibility is at the next stage, formally operationalized in Piagetian terms (Dawson & Gabrielian, 2003). Responsibility has different meanings at different stages of development – what the content is within a stage differs as well as across stages.

The Demand of Responsibility in the ITC Process

Having established the developmental nature in the ways people perceive responsibility and are able to act responsibly, the essential questions are: what kinds of responsibilities are required in the ITC process, and what are the mental demands?

In the first version and description of the ITC process, step number two in filling in the table is framed in terms of personal responsibility (Kegan & Laskow Lahey, 2001). To use the terminology “personal responsibility” implies a level of formal operational in Piagetian terms (Dawson & Gabrielian, 2003).\(^4\) The task to complete in step two is to give an account of what

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\(^3\) This paragraph is a slightly modified version of a passage in the article by Kjellström & Ross (2009).

\(^4\) In the article I discussed the possibility that to do the ITC table could require systematic stage capacity to put formal relationships together (Kjellström, 2009, p. 127, pp. 129-130). A correction to Zeitler’s
s/he is or is not doing in order to live up to the first commitment, which the authors describe as moving from blaming others to describing their own inadequacies. To ascribe decisions and actions to personal choice options rather than to projecting to others and situational factors indicates a developmental level of approximately the conscientious stage of ego development (Gallagher, 1988; Loewinger & Blasi, 1976). Kegan and Lahey describe the second step in the following way:

…we invite the room to be filled up with the language of responsibility, declarations of or unproductive actions and inaction. [...] We tell stories so we can stop being our stories and become persons who have these stories. We tell stories so that we can become more responsible for them. (Kegan & Laskow Lahey, 2001, p. 37).

Using Kegan’s theory, I interpret this as an ability of self-authoring persons, or persons who are aware of the authorship of their lives. Kegan has discussed the issue of responsibility extensively in his books, particularly in In Over Our Heads (Kegan, 1994), and he gives several examples of what kinds of responsibilities are possible with each order of mind. “The third order of [socialized] mind is both capable of, and subject to socialization. It is not able to reflect critically on that into which it is being socialized. It is responsive to socialization not responsible for it” (Kegan, 1994, p. 288).

With a socialized mind a person is able to take responsibility within a given role and show loyalty to an organization. But in order to take responsibility for your life or your story of your life a self-authoring mind is needed.

Zeitler argues that a person at the socialized-mind stage is able to see and take responsibility for a commitment, which is questionable. In order to be responsible for a commitment, the person needs to have it as an object. It presupposes an ability to take a critical stance relative to the commitment. An illustration of this stance can be found in the definition of a personal commitment on Wikipedia “Distinction is often made between commitment as a member of an organization (such as a sporting team, a religion, or as an employee), and a personal commitment, which is often a pledge or promise to one’s self for personal growth.” (Wikipedia, commitment, personal commitment, June 1, 2010). It is the second version to which ITC primarily refers, according to my interpretation. “Seeing oneself as responsible for one’s commitments, and holding up your own end of an agreement – these are precisely the sort of qualities that emerge with transformation to Socialized-Mind” (Zeitler, 2010, p 14). I propose that it is possible to hold up one’s end of an agreement and be responsible to a commitment, but not to be responsible for it in the sense of being responsible for your commitments. Interesting to note, Zeitler at the end concludes that “I feel a responsibility to highlight what I see as the significant offering that ITC has for the world in this time of crisis” (Zeitler, 2010, p. 16). In other words, his job or duty is to highlight the beneficial contributions. I would suggest that feeling a responsibility to highlight both positive and negative features of ITC to be a more balanced option to pursue.

argument is to accurately attribute the quoted text (page 14 in Zeitler and page 127 in the original). Only the first part of Zeitler’s quote belongs to me and, it is unclear what is being referred to in the second part by “systemic stage,” but systematic is the label used for the stage after formal in the Model of Hierarchical Complexity (Commons, 2008).
If my interpretations are adequate and valid, I suggest that the ITC process itself includes elements that presuppose a self-authoring mind. Zeitler suggests that the process could be adapted to people in earlier stages, but I think it is an open question if their needs are best met with this process or some other. Since we have different opinions on the mental demands of the process, I suggest that we need some better assessments of the types and levels of demands respondents experience so we can adjust our practices on the basis of evidence rather than opinion. What I think is clear is the importance of acknowledging the mental demands of the ITC process as one basis on which to compare alternative processes and available therapies/techniques that aim to help and transform people’s ways of thinking and acting, but this kind of comparison is only possible once we have adequate assessments across the range of options.

There is no point in elaborating with numbers of how many do or don’t manage the process sufficiently, since that would require studies of how different people and groups handle the process, and no such numbers are available. My personal experience (which I shared with Kegan (Kegan & Laskow Lahey, 2009) and others (BusinessDigest, 2009) is that some people struggle with the process. The reason they struggle is probably a combination of where people are (e.g., developmentally, emotionally, motivationally, phase in life, genetically), skillfulness of coach (e.g., developmental awareness, coaching experience, time, interpersonal skills), and the structure and process of the ITC (its developmental demands, instructions, etc.).

**Conclusion**

There are a lot of important ethical questions regarding the usage of developmental exercises; for example, voluntary participation and sharing, informed consent process, power asymmetries, boundaries for privacy and public life, leader competence and skills, conflict of interests, built-in ethics, and individual goals as compared to organizational goals. One of the overarching issues is: How can we create a society that is designed to allow individuals to develop their full potential and that has a place for all kinds of people at all “levels” of development? The thesis of Kegan’s work is that lots of individuals are “in over their heads” in the modern society, that the demands put on them are more advanced than what they can perform. The inferences Kegan, Lahey, and Zeitler make seem to be that we must help individuals to develop a self-authoring or self-transforming mind. There is also an assertion that the ITC as a developmental exercise has the potential to create the needed transformation in people. But there is an indisputable lack of rigorous scientific studies that show the effectiveness of the ITC and similar exercises. Is it ethically justifiable to work with life-changing exercises without a convincing evaluation literature that shows “success rates”? Consider being asked to choose a physical or medical treatment. Patients must be informed of the potential benefits and risks, the advantages and the disadvantages, the possibility of adverse reactions, the probability of success, and the rigors/demands of the various options. The most fundamental ethical question when promoting and assigning adult developmental exercises is to know that they work, for whom, and under what circumstances. And there are scientific methods to determine this information. In the absence of such studies, maintaining a certain level of skepticism seems the prudent position.
References


Response to Kjellström

Jonathan Reams

In The Ethics of Promoting and Assigning Adult Developmental Exercises: A Critical Analysis of the Immunity to Change Process, Sofia Kjellström has broadened the discourse around Kegan and Lahey’s (2009) Immunity to Change (ITC) process with her critical examination of issues related to this work. She identifies ethical concerns, facilitator capacity, informed consent and the cognitive demands of the process as areas deserving attention to enable the intentions of this work to best serve a growing community of practitioners. Reading Kjellström’s article, I noticed a number of points that I want to respond to. Since my recent report from the field (Reams, 2009) I have had the opportunity to run the ITC process with three different groups, which has given me new insights into what can be sometimes implicit areas. In the future I hope to engage in a deeper analysis of a few specific areas that have caught my attention. For now, I will present some preliminary thoughts based on Kjellström’s article.

My first response is of appreciation to Kjellström for opening up the space for critical discourse in this area. While I will present some views contrary to hers on some of the issues she raises, it is only due to her having raised them in the first place that I have been motivated to reflect on them. Her inquiry helps to identify what may be some implicit assumptions of the authors of the process. While neither of us can speak for Kegan or Lahey, we can present opinions drawn from their writings and our experience.

I will begin at the beginning, at least in terms of how one begins the ITC process. In describing how she introduced the ITC process to participants, Kjellström “emphasized that they should not disclose more than they felt comfortable sharing” (p. 120). I have taken a slightly different approach to this. I emphasize to participants that they will get out of it what they put into it. Thus the more they can connect with something personally meaningful, the more potential for insight the process can offer. Upon reflection, I can also see the value of including the kind of framing Kjellström describes.

Kjellström describes doing this process both over a two hour class period and though a web platform. Both of these settings raise issues for me based on my experience. I have been fortunate to have whole day classes or workshop settings to work within, and have been able to take at least four hours for the process. From these experiences, I would not want to try running the process in any less time. In running the process through a web platform, she describes how the students read two articles, listened to a lecture and then filled out the four columns according to written instructions. Based on my experiences, I cannot imagine trying to run the ITC in this manner. I have found an ongoing need to reframe and re-interpret the instructions to participants. Part of this may be due to language issues, (many of them have been Norwegian, with varying degrees of competency in English), but I believe that more of it arises from the normal

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differences in understanding and interpreting language constructs based on stages of development differences as well as cultural and life experience differences.

Thus when Kjellström notes that failures for the participants occurred due to either failure to complete it or refusing to do it, I cannot help but think that a good proportion of those failures could be attributed to the limitations of time and format utilized. While I have also observed the process to have less than optimal results for some participants, I would not have called them “failures.” I have also not had anyone refuse to participate.

The difficulties Kjellström identifies with participants having troubles putting appropriate content into the columns is familiar to me. I recall the first time I ran the process, one participant filled out all four columns in 15 minutes! She treated it like an action plan, and thought she had done what was asked. This kind of experience led me to guiding participants through the process by giving them one task at a time, each on a separate worksheet and only after doing three of the columns put them together on one page. This allowed me to control the focus of attention better, which I came to see as a significant issue.

The primary issue which led to my greater interest in having more control over the focus of participants’ attention was that I noticed them going down what appeared to me to be habituated tracks. One of my reflections is that this process is inherently asking people to pay attention in a direction that is not familiar or habitual. The work appears to many as being continually counter intuitive. From this, I have experienced a constant need as a facilitator to work with participants on keeping their attention focused in the intended areas.2

Kjellström describes difficulties for participants in articulating a personal fear or worry that could then be turned into a competing commitment. I have also seen this issue. My perception is that it can arise from two things. One is that people often tend to place more qualities than behaviors in column two. This makes it more challenging to imagine doing the opposite and getting in touch with such a fear or worry. (This is also related to the importance of landing a good first column commitment, as if this does not happen, everything that follows is more difficult to find). The other is that I have an impression that the deep seated defense mechanisms of the big assumption underlying the particular system people are inquiring into can foresee its own exposure coming so to speak, and take measures to blind a person to it. As Kegan and Lahey say, when you get to the big assumption you often encounter warning signs like “do not enter,” or “danger ahead.” It may be that these defenses begin to operate earlier, at the first hint of exposure. Thus extra guidance or facilitation could be required to help participants keep moving down the intended path.

In examining facilitators’ choices and capacities, Kjellström recognizes how the perceived failures or negative responses to the process may have been impacted by how she led the process. This leads into an examination of issues focused on the role of the facilitator. I agree that here it is important to distinguish this aspect from the impact of the process itself. Any tool is only as good as the person using it. At the same time, if one has a poor tool, even the best facilitator will be hard pressed to do a good job with it. The issue of facilitator capacity is a broad

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2 In the future I hope to explore in depth the nature of this phenomenon from the perspective of David Bohm’s notion of thought as a system.
topic and time does not permit me to do more than briefly mention a list of issues I perceive as related. There is of course the issue of cognitive development, that a facilitator will only be able to work with what they can perceive and that the subtler movements of attention by participants can be hard to track. The quality of presence, or interior condition of the intervener, (to recall a key element of my earlier review of Scharmer’s Theory U), is also a critical issue for facilitators and not an easy one to address. As well, the skillful means of the facilitator will be important as I have found that practice looking after specific issues related to running the process helps! Finally, how can a facilitator use all of the above to enable participants to scaffold up into a space where they can, (if such assistance is needed) at least temporarily operate at a required level of cognitive functioning to enable the successful completion of the 4 columns? All of these and more issues of facilitator capacity seem relevant to me in relation to the “success” or “failure” of participants’ experience with the ITC process.

I agree with Kjellström that the ITC process needs to be carefully introduced or framed. She notes the importance Kegan and Lahey give to advocating for the value of the process. Enabling participants to have a good reason for engaging in the process is critical. If they feel coerced due to expectations of following authority in the form of a teacher, then it will indeed be much harder to connect to the work in the way I feel it is intended.

It is within the context of introducing and framing the ITC process that the issue of informed consent arises. Kjellström raises this as an ethical concern, that if people really knew what they were getting into then they might choose not to participate. Her view is that the “ITC process seems to be constructed on a major implicit assumption of change as always beneficial to all people” (p. 129). She thus recommends that a richer informed consent be used and that it “is determined from within the individual” (p. 129). This raises a number of related questions for me which I will explore briefly.

I think she is correct in that some might have illusions about what they are getting into, and choose against participating if they really understood what was to come. I can think of many times in my life where if I had known what was coming I might have declined to engage a certain experience. As a counterpoint to this, I could say that if participants had it all spelled out for them in advance so that they had such fully informed consent, it would in some ways circumvent the process. My view is that the “surprise” elements of the ITC process simulate real life issues where we often encounter situations that stretch and challenge us and that in the end we perceive as having been good and even essential for our growth, but that we would not have engaged in if we had a choice and known, from our previous consciousness, what exactly we were getting into. This seems to me the point that Kegan and Lahey make when they say that when we enter the territory of the big assumption, we often encounter “do not go here” signs, as the defense mechanisms that protect identity from its natural evolution would by doing their job (as the competing commitments and 2nd column behaviors show) and thus keep us from ever going there. This seems to me to be the point of calling it an immune system – it has a powerful ability to detect and resist change.

3 I would question even being possible as even if we give participants words about what they may experience through the ITC process, those words may not convey the depth of what they may experience, leading to them saying “you didn’t tell me you meant this” with us responding “but that is what I told you when I said ….”
There is also the issue Kjellström mentions of teachers being in an authority role and having great power in choosing what curriculum students are exposed to. As a comparison, parents often take such responsibility for their children, encouraging them to try things that they feel are going to be ultimately good for them even if they don’t like it at the time. My experience is that a similar process often goes on, where as a teacher I encourage students to engage in activities that from their current perspective may not be their first choice, but from my perspective as being responsible for guiding their education, are something that can serve them well. Thus I feel that while the issue of informed consent is important, it is also complex and requires real attention to how we as teachers and facilitators introduce the ITC process.

Along these lines Kjellström asks “what right does a teacher [have] to create optimal conflicts in peoples’ lives?” (p. 123). While I can see how this question arises from her focus on perceived ethical concerns with the ITC process, I also have a different view of this. My experience is that change is indeed the only constant in today’s world. As well, creating such “optimal conflicts” can be seen as similar to Ron Heifetz’s view of leadership as creating a holding environment for people to do the adaptive work that the challenges of life bring them. So I do not feel that the creation of such situations is outside of participant’s everyday life experiences. In fact, it could be seen as helping them by bringing such situations into focus so they can be reflected upon. It can also be seen as doing this in the relative safety of a somewhat controlled learning environment, where the consequences are not as direct and serious as when one might attempt to deal with such things in everyday settings. So this question could be reframed to see the creation of such situations not as a right of teachers or facilitators, but as a duty or gift to give.

In thinking about the perceived desired outcome of developmentally oriented change, Kjellström raises questions that lead her to ask “if this is “adult development” or manipulation?” (p. 126). I agree with her that as with any tool, much depends on the motivations of the facilitator and that manipulation is of course a possibility. However, my sense is that the majority of us using this work are drawn to it from motivations arising from our experience of the value of developmental work. My own view is that we cannot force or manipulate development anyway, but can merely lead people towards the opportunity and see if they take the step for themselves. As well, it appears to me that much of this work is planting seeds that we may or may not see any fruit from during our interaction with participants. In this way I do have the same concerns as Kjellström about manipulation.

Kjellström also raises the issue of how people at earlier stages of development may experience the ITC process. While I agree in part with her saying, “I do not think the solution of encouraging people to change and “develop” is either possible or an ethically-sound solution for all situations, because it will create expectations that are too challenging and over the heads for some” (p. 126), I also feel that it is possible to go too far in protecting people from growth and challenge. Life will generally bring us challenges, so working to help people find better ways to utilize these challenges by providing some support in the form of the ITC process. It is not a panacea for all issues and all people.

I do believe that the ITC process can, done with good framing, proper time and settings and appropriate facilitation, produce significant results. My most recent experience was with the second year of the Masters in Organizational Leadership course I mentioned in my report from
the field last year. Applying all that had been learned from previous experience, the results were a significant improvement from last year. This was not only evident from observation, but also from reading the exam essays and course feedback. While it was clear that the depth of what was gotten from the process varied according to the reflective capacities of the students, it was also evident that each got out of the process something that was significant and appropriate for them.

There are many other points that I would like to respond to, but time has not permitted me to complete this in the depth I originally intended. I will leave the more detailed critique of Kjellström’s article to David Zeitler’s article in his issue. My hope is to return in a future issue to a more rigorous exploration of some of the subtler patterns of attention that I have noticed in my more recent experiences with the ITC process.
Creating Dynamic Development and Harmony in the Classroom

Nick Drummond and Joan Berland

Abstract: The article describes a childhood education program for developing the individual and collective “consciousness” of a class of children. The word consciousness is used to refer to the level of an inner awareness, and responsibility being held by an individual and or group of people. The authors view consciousness as being a fundamental part of our experience, and although not easily seen, it is something that can be pointed to, described and developed. Practically, this means learning how to give attention to the “interior” as well as exterior dimension of a classroom environment and discovering how these are intrinsically connected. A set of tools are presented that can enable teachers and students to learn about this inner dimension of our experience – how to bring value and focus to it – and the effect it has on our choices and behavior. When consciousness is recognized and given importance it becomes something that can be experienced by everyone at any moment. When it is intentionally focused on and developed, an atmosphere of dramatic possibility, true discovery and infinite potential can be created in any classroom. Whenever this happens, children and adults alike are able to experience, envision and become attracted to new and more mature possibilities in the way they learn, teach, communicate and relate to each other.

Key Words: Awareness, childhood education, consciousness, rubrics, values, vertical development.

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Introduction

There are exquisite moments in every classroom when there is a heightened sense of awareness as everyone in the room seems to become a part of the same energy. Sometimes it's quiet and deep like inward and outward breathes during a deep state of relaxation. Other times it’s loud and rambunctious. Whatever is happening feels like fun and there's an air of charged electricity in the room. Those present are aware that something out of the ordinary is happening, even if it can't totally be explained. An eight year old student in Joan's class this year described it "as if something was being created from nothing". If this can happen sometimes, how can we make it happen on a more regular basis? Is it something that can be learned or taught? Would it make the experience of school and learning more effective?

Learning can be defined in many ways: as an act, process or experience of gaining knowledge; to become informed or acquainted with; to become aware. Dynamic Development and Harmony was created in order to bring an inner and outer awareness to the learning that happens in the classroom environment beyond the academics.

The outer dimension includes becoming acquainted with how each individual exists in the classroom space. Some children seek attention by being silly, or physically sit in such a way that they appear to close themselves off if something is too hard. Others simply don’t say anything at all. Plastic water bottles are squeezed loudly or spilled on the floor. Hands are in desks and attention may be on shaving an eraser into bits or peeling the paint off the pencil. If there is no awareness on the child’s part that this is happening then they probably aren’t aware of how distracted they truly are or that there is another way to participate as a learner in school.

While many children can voice their preferences, likes, dislikes, hard and easy academic subjects, they may not be aware of the inner dialogue going in their mind throughout the school day. During a math lesson is one’s attention on their understanding of the concept being discussed or on lunch, the soccer game after school, how they feel about themselves or another student? Learning is also the process of experientially becoming connected to ourselves. What if we take it a step further and realize that the choices we make as individuals affects not just us, but everyone in the class? A sense of connecting and discovering something that is both “new” and meaningful can transpire. We are only just beginning to become aware of this kind of learning and that the more we give it attention and value it the more we will learn about it.

A Utopian Class

What would we start valuing? What kind of choices would everyone start making? What if you found yourself teaching children not only math, reading and writing, but doing something as unbelievable and audacious as learning how to direct the future trajectory of human cultural development? What if this potential was so creative and positive you could never know in advance what new potentials would emerge from the process or the people participating? What if this became a new potential in education? What if this potential was so profound that our ability to tackle global challenges rested upon it?
Working With Consciousness

The kind of learning we describe is very much based on recognizing the role consciousness plays in education. We define consciousness as the level of inner awareness, presence, inclusiveness and responsibility being held by an individual and or group of people. We view consciousness as always being a primary part of our experience, and although not easily seen or widely recognized, it is something that can be pointed to, described and developed. Fundamentally this entails that we go from only having an “exterior” perspective to learning, of seeing ourselves as a separate individual working with other separate individuals, to also including an “interior” perspective were we are working with consciousness, the most deep-seated part of who we are in every moment. As educators, this means learning how to give attention to the interior as well as the exterior dimension of the classroom environment which includes discovering how these two dimensions are intrinsically connected and continually influencing each other. It also means recognizing our own level of consciousness, and the importance we give to it, as not being separate from affecting this relationship. We outline a set of tools (It’s Your Choice, Where Are WE Right Now?, Sitting Still, and Talking Without Raising Hands) that can enable teachers and students to learn about and bring value and focus to this inner dimension of our experience, and the effect it has on our choices and behavior. Indeed it was our own experiences of this with our own students, several of which we describe below, that played a key role in developing this program. If we recognized every problem as being a problem of consciousness, of where we are directing our awareness and attention, then the simple solution would be to raise the level of consciousness in and outside the classroom, because as Einstein said, “We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

Experiencing a Positive Compassionate Energy to Develop

Three years ago, after 24 years in as an elementary school teacher, Joan Berland had an experience in her classroom that would forever change how she taught. It was not rooted in a better or different way to teach the prescribed curriculum, but in something profound and more intangible. While sitting in a circle on the rug and sharing personal stories, Joan noticed a sense of quiet and calm she had never felt before. A second later the very air in the room seemed to get bigger. It felt as if someone had flipped a switch and filled the room with the most positive compassionate energy she’d ever felt. Her students felt it too, but couldn’t put it into words. What exactly was this energy? Where did it come from? Could it happen again? Was it always present but had never been tapped into before? How to create that energy and keep it alive in order to go somewhere no class had ever gone before was a thrilling prospect.

Concurrently in Sweden, Nick Drummond was working in an elementary school teaching anger and conflict resolution skills. He had been asked to teach a set of social competencies that the school wanted all the students to be taught. The challenge however was not only to teach these skills in as few hours as possible, but to do it in a way where most if not all the children were actively interested and motivated in what they were learning as well as putting the skills into practice!
It was at this time that Nick had a pivotal discussion with Patrick Bryson.\(^2\) Nick was fascinated by Patrick’s description of a conversation he’d had with a group of children in London. He talked about a depth of interest in the discussion that he experienced as something they were all sharing and actively creating together as they were speaking. Patrick explained the challenge, “Often when children are not interested or become bored, they physically slump over and start fidgeting, playing with things or looking out the window. They basically get distracted in themselves.” When Patrick described children transforming almost instantaneously in their ability to listen to one another, respond to one another and remain focused on the one subject, Nick realized that it was of a whole different order than any of the discussions he had ever experienced with his own students! Their ability to listen and care for each other seemed to go way beyond a set of skills. Patrick explained, “Their interest is awakened, and that makes it very interesting to go with them in that and explore it. When this happens they seem to touch on a depth of knowledge that you wouldn’t expect to see in young children. You wouldn’t normally expect them to change this much so quickly. And that’s probably because we are not used to seeing such dynamic and positive vertical change in children and also because we know very little about the conditions necessary to facilitate and support vertical emergence.”

**We Can Choose to Express the Highest Part of Who We Are Right Now**

Imagine a child in your class saying “I’m never going to be able to do this!” “I can’t!” Whenever you encourage them they reply, “But, but, but!” Imagine being able to help them untangle themselves from negative beliefs about what is possible. Imagine them saying “I will!”

In his work in the Swedish school system Nick was having discussions with different groups of students about the positive and negative choices they were making every day. This crystallized into what eventually became the staircase model “It’s Your Choice!” (see figure 1).

It has become a practical way to bring in the moral dimension of free choice in a way that is very understandable with all age groups. The model points out that you – and no one else – are always responsible for the choices you make and that you can always choose between two fundamentally different responses to what you are experiencing. You either see yourself as having a choice to respond differently, or choose to see yourself as a victim of circumstances and unable to change your response. It does not say how challenging this choice can be or what you should do; only that it is possible. There will be times when things can seem effortless and other times when life circumstances and experiences will be very difficult and challenging. It presents us with an opportunity and a perspective that says the kind of person we are is not something predestined, but the result of choices that have moral implications and that no matter how easy or difficult it seems how we respond always lies in our own hands.

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Figure 1. It’s Your Choice! Developed by Drummond and Edin in 2004.

The model is not about changing what we have done or changing how we feel in order to make a positive choice right now. It’s a choice to reframe our experience, to face what is, to take responsibility for our negative tendencies, to act differently in a way that will change the future in every moment. It means becoming aware of our inner position towards what is happening and expressing what we deeply care about right now. So because our actions are not predetermined or random, it’s our job to align them with our deepest intention. “Which side of your self are you living from right now?” Do your actions match what you, and we, care about? To find out you only need to look at what you are doing right now. The information you need may be no more complicated than to observe how you are sitting, listening and participating and what you are putting your attention on. When we make positive choices we express a creative potential, and care about the future and for other people. From this position we can make decisions and take action that could lead to positive development for everyone. And if we are on the negative side we never need to wait longer than a second or prepare in any way before we can choose to express the positive side. It could be as simple as saying to yourself, "I will" or "I won't". The model helps children, adolescents and adults understand, through concrete experience, that everything is dependent on where we choose to put our attention, and that this choice results in immediate as well as long term consequences.

Nick first recognized this potential in a meeting with a group of twelve year old children. Everyone was seated in a circle except the girl to his right who sat with her back towards him. She played with her hair and cast glances to the others, wanting their attention. Nick stopped,
turned to her, and asked which side she wanted to live her life on. Without hesitation she responded, “The positive side of course!” He asked her why. She looked at her fingernails, “Because I want my parents to be proud of me. I don’t want to grow up and hear people say I have bad parents.” He asked her what side she had been expressing up until a moment ago, and again without hesitation she pointed to the negative side. He asked her that if she really did love her family how she would behave if she was on the positive right now. To his amazement she faced the group and put her hands on her knees. At that moment the atmosphere and attention in the group shifted significantly.

The staircase illustrates a vertical perspective towards life. It points out that our choices and behaviors are not all equal. What we do actually does matter! Negative choices lead downwards to a position of less and less care. We see our choices, our behavior, and who we are as being separate. As kids see it, you’re basically digging yourself a very deep dark hole to be all alone and feel very unhappy. Positive choices lead to deeper and deeper levels of care, awareness and integration. When we see our self as the person on the staircase, we recognize our potential to choose which side of our self we want to identify with and express in the world in every moment. Of course we may not be conscious of that fact and that is why a model like this can help shine light on this aspect of our life and any unwillingness we may have to face it and learn more about it.

Where Are WE Right Now?

In October 2007, Joan first asked her class of eight year olds to answer a simple but powerful question: Where are you right now as learners in school? Using a developmental scale developed by Drummond and Edin which had 5 levels ranging from very bad behavior (I use bad language; I am sent out of the room; I speak without listening) to very good behavior (I take responsibility for what I do and say; I contribute actively to a positive atmosphere in the classroom) she organized her students responses accordingly (see figure 2). Not surprisingly, 23/39 of the things they’d written down fell into the Level 1 and Level 2 categories. This matched Joan’s experience that her class was easily distracted, not able to take responsibility for themselves as learners, and unaware of much beyond their own personal needs and desires.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>How Good a Student am I Right Now? Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5     | * When the teacher asks me to do something, I do it the first time.  
      | * I take responsibility for what I do and say.  
      | * I participate actively in all subjects and activities throughout the day.  
      | * I put 100% effort into everything I do.  
      | * I contribute actively to a positive atmosphere in the classroom.  
      | * I think about how my behavior affects other people in the class. |

3 Published in: “Ordning och reda i skolan – ett steg på vägen mot dynamisk harmoni i skolan”, 2006 Fortbildningsförlag Stockholm, (Order and Discipline in the School: One step on the Path to Dynamic Harmony in the Classroom).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4     | * I make an effort to pay attention and do my schoolwork.  
* I understand how my behavior affects others and nearly always choose to make positive choices.  
* I behave and concentrate on my work.  
* I ask for help if I don’t understand something so that I can complete my assignments on time.  
* I come to school prepared and ready to work.  
* I make an effort to get quiet when the teacher gives the signal. |
| 3     | * I can make good choices if the teacher or someone else reminds me.  
* Sometimes I think about how my behavior affects the class.  
* I don’t get all my work done unless the teacher reminds or helps me.  
* I wait for the teacher to ask me if I need help with something I don’t understand. |
| 2     | * I can’t find books or materials at the beginning of the lesson so everyone has to wait for me.  
* I remember to bring in my homework, workbooks or library books from home on the day I need them.  
* I interrupt the lesson by calling out, humming out loud, or tapping the desk with a pencil.  
* I don’t push or cut in front of anyone when I have to go to my mailbox.  
* I’m easily distracted (look out the window, get lost in personal thoughts, watch what others are doing).  
* I raise my hand if I have a question.  
* I sharpen my pencil before the lesson begins so I’m ready to do the work.  
* I take a long time to transition from one subject or area of the room to another.  
* I don’t always remember to clean up after myself. |
| 1     | * I’m usually talking and not paying attention to the teacher.  
* I lay face down on top of my desk during a lesson.  
* I’m usually playing with things in my desk while the teacher is talking.  
* I often spill drinking containers on my desk or the floor and distract everyone while I clean up the mess.  
* I write on my desk top with pencils and markers or peel my nametag tape during a lesson.  
* I doodle on my paper during the lesson.  
* I holler out at the teacher or classmates during a lesson.  
* I call out silly jokes and disrupt the class.  
* I lean back so far in the chair that I almost fall backwards.  
* I fold paper into airplanes, fortune tellers, or cubes during a lesson.  
* I braid or play with my hair during a lesson.  
* I leave personal belongings on the floor where someone could trip over them.  
* I move my desk and it makes a lot of noise during a lesson.  
* I play with whiteboards, paper, or rulers instead of paying attention. |

**Figure 2. How Good a Student am I Right Now? Rubric. Developed by Berland in 2007.**

Joan typed up the scale (adding some of her own ideas for Levels 3-5) then made copies for each child (which she minimized and taped to their desks), and gave one to each of their parents. She immediately started pointing out the behaviors as they presented themselves in the daily life of their classroom.

In the beginning, she would point out the times she saw children shaving erasers in their desks, folding paper airplanes during a lesson, writing on their desks, etcetera. The first few days
were eye-opening for the children because they were truly not aware of the impact that their constant distractions had on the whole learning process.

It should be noted that Joan also pointed out the positive behaviors and role models as well. In less than a week, she was able to make eye contact with a child rather than stop speaking, hold up anywhere from one to five fingers and was instantly understood.

Now they were all ready to move on to something bigger and different. After one day of discussing positive and negative choices with the students, Nick and Joan sat down and wrote a new scale entitled “Where Are WE Right Now?” (see figure 3). It was at this point that the scale was renamed a “rubric” because that was the specific kind of developmental and grading scale that the students in Joan’s school were familiar with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Where Are WE Right Now? Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5     | **We care that the positive choices we make as individuals are strengthening the atmosphere in the class.**  
(At this level, a student is often thinking about what making positive choices means for not only themselves but the classroom atmosphere as well. As a result, energy emerges that attracts everyone at every level and has the ability to pull others up in their development. It is the place where role models and leaders begin to emerge.) |
| 4     | **I understand how my behavior affects others and nearly always choose to make positive choices.**  
(An individual is starting to take responsibility for the choices that they are making. There is a beginning awareness that they can have a positive effect on their ability to learn and participate in the classroom.) |
| 3     | **I can think about making positive choices if the teacher, a positive leader, or a peer role model reminds me.**  
(The individual child is still more strongly attached to their sense of self rather than something bigger, but is at least willing to consider making some changes if someone else takes responsibility for reminding them that they have choices.) |
| 2     | **I don’t really care about how my choices affect the whole class. I zigzag up and down between positive and negative choices throughout the day.**  
(The teacher constantly needs to redirect attention and behavior throughout the school day and the zigzagging reflects that learning is still not a priority. There is no meaning or purpose to their behavior other than they’ve always done it this way and are unaware of what they are doing and how it affects the class as a whole.) |
| 1     | **I make negative choices even though I know what positive choices are.**  
(The distractions outweigh the children’s ability to learn and the teacher’s ability to teach.) |

Figure 3. Where Are WE Right Now? Rubric. Developed by Berland and Drummond in 2008.
This new rubric was written in about 20 minutes and they knew instantly that the words, levels, and expectation for what they wanted it to be were absolutely true and authentic. To this day, it has remained the backbone of what has happened and can happen when we consciously direct our awareness and willingness to develop.

In our work we have noticed that the quality of the atmosphere in the classroom – the quality of the relationships between the students and ourselves and everyone’s willingness to develop – is not an accident. The atmosphere is the sum of everyone’s awareness and interest. Knowledge about where we direct our attention is more important than our state of mind, our feelings or other people’s behavior. As such we are always 100% responsible for how we are towards each other; we are always totally responsible for our behavior, and our choices. There is something radically simple and confronting about that as there is no room for excuses and there is no time off from being an integral part of what is already happening.

When children and teachers combine their ability to choose with the moral implications of their choices it directly affects the field of consciousness in a classroom. They can notice this instantaneously by looking at the effect their choices are having on the atmosphere in the classroom. The Where Are WE Right Now? Rubric reflects the continual development of values and ethical behavior within the classroom.

**Vertical Development**

When almost everyone in the class chooses to take responsibility for his or her own behavior and wants to express the best part of who they are, they can begin to express a care for vertical development. Vertical development occurs when the greater part of the class values caring about something that they previously did not care about and chooses to express that sense of caring. This creates an atmosphere of high expectations and developmental tension, where something higher – the best part in each of us that is continually reaching forward and wants to manifest – is pulling on something lower – the part of us that doesn’t want to develop. When this occurs the class creates a cultural value that cares more about development – no matter what level they are at – than it cares about other things. In this atmosphere, we experience the potential for constant and positive development for all of us as always being possible and without endpoint. But more significantly, the result is that we as the teacher and the students are free to choose to change the quality of our relationship and the atmosphere in the classroom immediately!

When children and adults become aware of their own possibility for continual development and ability to choose between two completely different sides of themselves, they will choose to express that side that cares about maturity, development and the future. There seems to be a natural attraction towards it. They go from a set of cultural values that just cares about their own personal concerns (“I/me” level 1), to another set of values of wanting to make positive choices so that everyone can be stronger (“we” level 5). By choosing the “we”, ones life can become an expression of meaning and purpose. When this happens, we see remarkable and immediate transformation - individually and collectively - in miraculous and forever astounding ways. We discovered that level 5 is not the goal but the foundation for higher levels of dynamic development and harmony. Helping a class experience and remain stable at level 5 can be very
challenging, however once children experience level 5 they invariably want to reach and create higher levels.

*Imagine finding a note on your desk that read: “Thank you for teaching me. I’m having a great year. I do apologize for any time I made the wrong choice. Thank you for introducing the rubric to me. Your trustworthy student, Tolla”*

Am I developing? What am I doing to further my development? Is my behavior aligned with my deepest intention? Am I facing and not avoiding what I need to face in order to develop? Our intention should be evidenced in terms of actions. The way to do this is to look back over the last day, week, month, term, semester, year, 5 years, and 10 years. This is not about our subjective experience of feeling we are developing, but rather objective observable evidence from the eyes of other people who can see objectively.

**Personal Rubrics**

In our work, we find that writing personal rubrics are a way for us – students and teachers alike – to become aware of our impulses, beliefs, sense of self and view on the world so that we can choose to respond in a more mature way. They’re a practical way for us to make visible an area of our personality that we are not necessarily aware of, or want to see, but which we want to develop because of the negative effect it is having. Rubrics help give us an objective perspective on our behavior and strongly held limiting beliefs. They offer a way to step outside of them by structuring what needs to change. For a child this may mean writing a rubric for how to make friends, how to line up, how to keep one’s desk clean, how to study for a test, how to do homework and how to listen. It’s unrealistic and even unnecessary to stop someone from thinking or saying “I won’t”, or “I’ll never be able to…” However by using a rubric we can make our limiting beliefs about something observable whenever such a response arises. It introduces another possibility in the form of a choice in every moment to not become one with our limiting beliefs even when these are present. It is a concrete way to help move from a position of “I can’t” to “I will”.

After we introduced the Where Are WE Right Now? Rubric something unexpected happened. Joan’s students started to take home the rubrics to share with their parents as well as spontaneously becoming interested in writing their own rubrics. The first student to do so wrote a rubric for the exercise Sitting Still (described below) and also began teaching her 5 year old brother how to do it! One student even told her mother, “You’re at a 1 and you need to sit still for awhile!”

The following year one of the students in Joan’s class who was very attracted to the work from day one sat down during snack time and wrote her own rubric about making friends (see figure 4). After she shared it with the class, other children were inspired to write their own rubrics. By the end of the week, the class had 20 rubrics that ranged from how to line up, to keeping one’s desk clean. There were rubrics for handwriting, pet care, getting ready to Sit Still, sportsmanship, being a good helper, and studying for a test.
Level Making Friends Rubric

5  I have a lot of friends and we play altogether.

4  I have a lot of friends and I take turns playing with them.

3  I will meet someone new if they ask me to play with them.

2  I am friendly with more than one person, but I never play with them.

1  I play with only one person, and I don’t like meeting new people.

Figure 4. An individual rubric for making friends. Developed by a student in 2009.

The students could write a rubric about something that they are having difficulty with and care about being better or they might write a rubric because they are attracted to a level 5 or higher. By writing the rubric they can figure out how to get there. It becomes a way for them to bring a structure to what is not seen and what is happening, open up for other choices and allow for a different form of discussion. The rubric becomes a way to clarify a goal and write the strategic steps necessary to reach it. It enables individuals to more objectively judge, measure, and compare the quality of their behavior and level of their care, strength, conviction and authenticity right now, and take appropriate action. For example, as in the above rubric, if you come in after each break saying that you played with only one person and didn’t meet any new people, it is clear that you are not aligning your behavior with your higher intention of wanting to make new friends. By aligning our choices with our highest level – right now – we express authenticity and become authentic individuals. We make very different choices and become very different people. You will hear it, see it and feel it.

Creating Space for Development by Sitting Still

Sitting Still is an exercise we use for helping students focus their attention on stillness. When we practice Sitting Still we are practicing our ability to choose a position towards life – a position that creates space for consciousness to grow. No matter what happens, we are choosing to remain still, not make a problem of anything, and remain fully awake to what happens without engaging in any of it.

We introduce and work with this exercise in various ways depending on the group, but we always keep the instructions simple: sit still, be relaxed and pay attention. This exercise goes beyond giving children theoretical knowledge about something; it gives them a positive experience of not knowing and the experience of continually wanting to know more. What does stillness mean? What does being relaxed mean? What does paying attention mean?

We often hear children telling us about how Sitting Still is benefiting them and the class in some profound way. A common experience is one of having difficulty concentrating and feeling distracted not only by other people, but by different voices in our mind. One eight year old said
that whenever you experience a monster in your head telling you what to do, “Just drop it! If you can do that when you’re sitting still, you’ll be able to do it at other times during the day as well.” One child even asked if he could be President of the United States one day if he got really good at sitting still!

When verbalizing their experience of sitting still over a prolonged period, many children have expressed that they feel like they are in a “zone”. From this place they give less and less attention to their thoughts, are often unaware of their body in real time, and feel like they are creating an energy of oneness in the classroom. This is described on the following rubric generated from the students themselves (see figure 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Sitting Still Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>We generate our own energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>You are holding a Level 5 or higher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>You get in the zone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>You are not aware of what you’re thinking about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Drop everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Complete Stillness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am able to sit still for most of the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can sit still if someone reminds me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I zigzag between fidgeting and being still.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I fidget and move around the whole time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5. Sitting Still Rubric. Levels 1-5 were developed by Sugden in 2008 and levels 6-10 by Berland in 2009.**

After Sitting Still, we often talk about our experience and the discussions are filled with an aliveness and newness. As one student said, “You create something from nothing!” When sitting still together and talking about it, it’s possible for children to collectively experience and cognize a deeper dimension of who they are in a way that connects everybody in the classroom almost instantaneously. As one nine year old said recently, “When we do it individually it’s powerful. When we do it together it’s unstoppable!”

**Talking Without Raising Hands**

*Imagine a colleague visiting your class and experiencing a conversation with a group of children where no one raises a hand and no one interrupts?: “How do you get them to do this? How do you get them to listen to each other and stop them from all talking at once? I’ve never seen so many kids behave this way before? How did you get everyone to participate?”*
Have you ever noticed that it’s very difficult for children, and even adults to deeply listen to each other in a way where they are more interested in what the other person is saying than in their own thoughts?

It’s important that children not only have direct experiences of what it’s like to be at level 5, but also the recognition of what it means to operate together from a 5 or higher. “Talking Without Raising Hands” is an exercise that is used in conjunction with the other three tools we described to catalyze and give them a taste of that experience, of being in and actively caring about creating a creative space where new possibilities are seen to emerge individually and collectively. The exercise involves seating the group so that everyone can see each other, being as still as possible, looking at the person who is speaking, following the thread of what is being talked about, and participating without raising your hand.

Intrinsic to this kind of discussion is a deepening exploration and recognition of the different values that influence our choices and patterns of behavior. Though there are many values at play in a classroom and this topic is open for much study, the ones that we often begin with are respect, listening, stillness, responsibility, interest, awareness and care. Discussing these values in the way we describe here has the effect of potentially heightening and strengthening everyone’s level of integral awareness, where the interior and the exterior dimension of the classroom environment, as well as the individual and the group all come together in one exercise. In order for this to occur, the children have to know what vertical development is about. This can happen if the teacher points out to the children when development is happening, or when we hear someone speaking in a more authentic way. Pointing out changes in how people are listening, showing care, following on from each other or creating space for others to participate is necessary in order to reach a level 5. However something significant happens when children themselves notice when development is occurring – the way they communicate with each other starts to change in a radical way and they are aware of not only their own actions in making this happen, but the significance of what it means.

*We were talking about different social groups in our class and that someone can be in several. Then Nick said that Adam brought up a really good point when Adam said that a social group can affect your choices in both good and bad ways. Nobody really got it and we started talking about other things. Then Emma said, “It’s not that what everyone else said is bad, but what Adam said lifted the discussion to a higher level.”*

What if there was just one conversation and everyone built on what was said before and where original thoughts were being expressed like fireworks? A conversation where everyone’s awareness was more on caring about what was happening in the group than on themselves, where everyone was participating and listening and following on from each other and no one wanted it to end, where you felt completely energized afterwards, and learnt something valuable and meaningful. Where the space we were creating that enabled these new possibilities was more significant than the topic of discussion. What if this wasn’t a one off discussion, but a regular feature in a weekly program?

We are finding that when children experience this kind of discussion there emerges a heightened awareness between them and a tangible sense of being part of and caring for what is
happening. This is in stark contrast to them feeling left out or even separate from everyone else in the class in some “special” way. The children can and do experience a tangible connection between where they are choosing to put their attention, what is happening in the room, and what is being created between them.

Sami noticed that the girl sitting next to her was crying. She waited for a chance to join the conversation and said, "Graycee is upset because she thinks she’s never been at a level 5 in her life. I said that if she’d never been at a 5 she wouldn’t be willing to do all of this work." Joan seized an opportunity not only to help Graycee feel better about where she was at as she developed, but to point out how Sami was being a role model and leader. The conversation continued for days which eventually allowed all the children to identify what qualities they possessed that reflected leadership potential and what qualities they wanted to grow into.

What emerges is a whole lot of care and respect, a space that is utterly positive, and as one twelve year old student expressed, “All my problems just went”. In this space they are paying attention to the person who is speaking and are caring about what is being said. You may begin to experience having people speak who normally never speak and everybody in the group listening and valuing what they are saying. Likewise, other people begin to drop their persona of being the “clown” or someone who talks and never gives room to others, or acknowledges the significance of what is happening. That which comes out of the discussions, and the potential for development that individuals express, often flows into and affects the rest of the day and week. In this way a bunch of children become a dynamic community who support everyone’s vertical development. The thrilling part is that even if a group is experiencing difficulty in having a discussion at this level, once the models are being discussed a vertical dimension has been introduced; there is a shared expectation that something better is possible.

While sitting together during morning meeting, a boy in Joan’s class asked what a level 8 would be on the Where Are WE Now? Rubric. She replied, “I don’t know, it doesn’t exist until you create it. What do you think it should be?” Joan looked around the room and noticed that the entire class was on the edge of their seats, leaning into what was about to happen. Because other moments like this had occurred when levels 6 and 7 emerged (see figure 6), there was a visceral response and expectation that something new and powerful was about to happen and that everyone in that room at that moment was a part of it.

The feeling in the classroom is often experienced as a dynamic atmosphere or field of energy between us that takes form as an excited desire to develop that everyone in the class is affected by. The quality of this vibrant atmosphere shared between us is not a chance accident, it is affected and brought into life every moment by what the teacher and students choose to focus on, say and do. In fact the more we as teachers start to see it this way then the more we realize that everything we do is always having an affect on the atmosphere in the class. Is it expressing this vibrancy or not? And even if the vibrancy is absent, where do we have our attention? There is something incredibly positive in realizing that there is no time off from consciousness and that everything we do is important. When we as teachers start to see life this way, then children can lift themselves to unforeseen heights through directed attention, clear guidelines and expectations about vertical development being possible. They have confidence in life, in being able to reach
higher, in clear developmental goals to strive after, because we do. When we reach higher so do they, and when they reach higher so do we. Our development and the development of the children become inseparable. Imagine what it means to be teaching and learning from this place?

When children share this absolutely positive vibrant experience to develop, they inevitably want to know what it would be like to be at a 10, 20, 50 or even higher. This vertical impulse results in continual development of the Where Are We Right Now? Rubric. How these levels will look over time will be exciting to find out. What’s certain is that levels 6 to 10 (see figure 6) have already emerged as a direct result of the children’s experience of consciousness and will continue to so as long as we continue to do this work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Where Are We Right Now? Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>More than anything else we want to create an optimistic energy that is so strong it can positively influence people in the world. We want to do it because we care about making the world a better place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If we want to make a positive contribution to the world, the important source of energy is TEAMWORK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>We choose to hold a level 5 or higher so that we can be role models and leaders in school, in our families with friends, and in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>You take the 5 atmosphere beyond the school and out into the community and share it with family and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Everybody cares about creating and holding the atmosphere because we want it to attract the whole school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Where Are WE Right Now? (Levels 6 to 10). Developed by Berland in 2009.

The Mystery Behind Human Transformation

After five weeks, a nine year old boy who had been one of the most disruptive in Nick’s class said, “If this staircase leads up, then where does it end?”

We have created a structure in the form of a program for describing how to create dynamic development and harmony in a classroom, but there is still something mysterious and unpredictable about human transformation. There’s a part of this process that is always completely unpredictable. You will meet children who will hang out on the negative side for what will seem like eternity and have you pulling your hair out, questioning your own trust in the entire developmental process. A boy in Joan’s class was unembarrassed to announce to the class, “I don’t need to make positive choices now. I can do that when I’m in heaven because there’s nothing else to do there and I’ll have lots of free time.” Then suddenly something happens – maybe a simple conversation – that brings about a 180 degree wind shift. On the way out to the buses one day, Joan mentioned to the above child that she was going to be talking with some teachers around the world about the rubrics in their class. “The world” he said, “I thought it was just in the United States.” “Does that make a difference?” Joan asked. “Oh yes,” he replied, “If
it’s the world, I’m in!” Then he disappeared into the bus. You could call it the x-factor. We wish we knew what it was; what is it that causes someone to suddenly choose to align themselves with a deeper realization? We don’t know. There is something about vertical development that is mysterious and unpredictable. That is what makes the experience of working with the development of consciousness very thrilling and very challenging. This is why it is invaluable to have a community that can support you and your own development.

**Reaching Towards a New Potential in Childhood Education**

We live at an incredible moment in the history of human development. Cultures with world centric values offer children an opportunity to become global citizens, with skills and knowledge to take full advantage of the benefits, opportunities and choices that a borderless world has to offer. While this is an unprecedented achievement, we also have to begin teaching children what it truly means to see and directly experience themselves as an integral part of an evolutionary perspective that is alive and unfolding in every moment. By valuing vertical development ourselves, we inevitably teach children that their lives can be lived with meaning and purpose as part of the process. It too deserves a place of importance alongside the opportunity to learn the three R’s: reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic. If the sum of a person is *more than* all of its parts, then developing consciousness is truly the missing integral link in our education system.

**Acknowledgements**

We want to thank Andrew Cohen for being a role model as a teacher and for continually inspiring us to push the limits of ourselves and what’s possible.
A Perspective on Kesler's Integral Polarity Practice

Tom Murray¹ with Terri O'Fallon²

On the journey of many places, many voices
A moment of recognition
Opposites experienced are not
Still point of breath
A flower opens
A cloud drifts to reveal the sun
A drop falls, merging with the pool
Witnessing that small opening of stillness
Then looking into, into, into------entering;
The place of all stillness
Then from all stillness something looks
Back upon and as the witness.

On a sunny spring day in 2010 in the upstairs studio of the Center for New Knowledge in Northampton, Massachusetts, twenty of us were taken on a journey to glimpse rarely experienced lands of paradox and polarity, fullness and freedom. The territory had been mapped out by John Kesler, who was guiding us through voice dialog activities as part of an introductory workshop for his Integral Polarity Practice (IPP). I later wrote the above poem reflecting on my experience. I am always moved to be in the presence of a group that comes together with an intention of going deeply within. IPP (like some Bohmian dialogs I have attended) set up a vibrant collective field on that day, at least to my experience, and the sense of the 'we" was thick, deep, wide, and buzzing.

John began by using the breath as an experiential metaphor for bodily connecting us to that place between the poles of expansion and contraction; a still-point of perfect relaxation that is available within every breath. Something wonderful occurs in the mind/body when the poles of a polarity are seen and experienced to inter-contain each other as manifestations of a single prior essence. From this foundation John lead the group through a sequence of contemplative reflections on polarities that broadened to include transcendent clarity and sublime confusion; transcendent sorrow and impersonal joy. The room was alive with these energies, which were not brought to or created for us, but discovered by us, thanks to John's gentle yet passionate guidance. A few tears of rapture were seen to run down cheeks and we parted with smiles and hugs, and carried home whatever stays with one from glimpses of the sublime.

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² Terri O'Fallon is a Principal at Pacific Integral (www.pacificintegral.com). Terri provided important feedback and suggestions for this article, and offered the poem at the end. Terri has been working with Kesler and IPP for five years. As, mentioned in the article, Tom is relatively new to IPP.
I met John Kesler less than a year ago when I had the opportunity to attend two of his Integral Polarity Practice workshops, one sponsored by the Seattle Integral community and one at Next Step Integral's Integral Education Seminar. John is one of the few people certified by Genpo Roshi to facilitate large groups in the Big Mind process, which is familiar to many in the integral community. His IPP broadens Big Mind voice dialog work to include aspects of Cook-Greuter's developmental sequence of action logics and polarity frameworks from Tantric and esoteric Mormon traditions.

I was struck by the elegance and depth of Kesler's IPP "awareness and meditation practice" and became an immediate fan. I've been fortunate to have had the opportunity to dialog and work with John in several individual and small group phone sessions over the last year, and I helped to organize John coming to Massachusetts (he lives in Utah) to lead a series of introductory workshops in April. Though I am very much a beginner in IPP, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce readers to it from my own perspective. As I feel rather insufficient to the task of explaining this profound body of work, I will say a bit about "why me?"

Like others attracted to the integral community, I have deep interests in contemplative awareness practices and theories of human development and the evolution of consciousness. In addition, through my interest in epistemology and the psychology of knowing, I am fascinated by polarities (and paradoxes). When I saw that John's work combined all these I was hooked. John impresses me as a deeply humble person whose life is filled with many types of service and community-based work (it seem as though in every conversation I have with him I find out about yet another branch of his volunteer service work or professional community work that astounds me). IPP, its teaching, development, and dissemination, is one of many projects that John juggles. Thus, due to time constraints and having a personality that is not oriented toward self-promotion, John's work remains more obscure than its quality and depth merit, in my opinion. I express my excitement for the work and my gratitude to John for the development of IPP by sharing what I know of it below. More information is on John's web site at www.johnkesler.com.

I will start by describing elements of Big Mind that are present in IPP. John is one of the very few people to have been certified by Genpo Roshi to lead the Big Mind process in groups outside of Zen monestary settings (Dianne Hamilton and John were the first to be so certified). Genpo Roshi developed Big Mind by combining elements of traditional Zen practice with insights from Jungian psychotherapy, in particular the Voice Dialog process developed by Hal and Sidra Stone. In voice dialog the facilitator helps the individual or group engage with inner archetypal voices or sub-personalities, such as the protector, fixer, rebel, nurturer, or vulnerable child. Genpo modified voice dialog methods to use them with large groups and to address aspects of the ego that typically resist deep contemplation, reflection, and ego transcendence. For example, the inner Controller or Skeptic can be addressed, appreciated for its role and value to the Self, and asked if it would be willing to relinquish some control and trust the (workshop) process.

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3 John's primary profession is as an attorney. Among other projects, he works with educational, civic, and health care institutions and systems locally in Salt Lake City, and also internationally. His is an ordained Mormon Bishop, and finds inspiration in the esoteric and contemplative aspects of Mormonism and other spiritual orientations, including Buddhism and Tantra.

4 For more about the Stone's Voice Dialog, see www.delos-inc.com. For more about Big Mind see www.bigmind.org.
In Big Mind and IPP workshops the facilitator moves through a sequence of such "voices," beginning each by saying that we will now speak to or invite the voice of, for example, The Skeptic, and then asking the group "Who am I speaking to?" Participants answer (more or less in unison) "The Skeptic" or "the voice of the Skeptic." The facilitator continues by prompting individuals in the group to publicly reflect on this aspect of the self with questions like: "What is the role [or function] of the Skeptic in your life?" "Does the Self listen to [or appreciate or honor] the Skeptic?" "How much do you [the voice of the Skeptic] communicate with [understand, relate to] the voice of Submission [or Trust, or some other archetype]?" In a session I might report that the Skeptic seems to be in the way of my (the Self's) goals. Another might notice that the Skeptic plays a crucial role in the Self avoiding errors of naivety. In that moment—aha!—my own understanding of the role of the Skeptic expands into new insights about it and myself. As each person adds their perspective on a Voice, the full breadth and depth and complexity of the role of that Voice comes alive in the room and its presence deepens palpably as if it was something invoked there in our midst and speaking collectively through us (I say "as if" to be post-metaphysically agnostic as to whether such is actually happening).

The process facilitates a deep exploration into both the impersonal and collective nature of human aspects such as Desire, Agency, Leadership, Peace, and Curiosity (these are taken from the IPP method), but also facilitates the inner exploration of one’s relationship to these elements, as they live as strengths, weaknesses, shadows, gifts, and unrealized potentials within. In addition it can efficiently create an expansive sense of "group mind/consciousness" that, in addition to accelerating the process, contradicts the isolated individualistic nature of many spiritual practices. The practice is an excellent example of a "liberating structure." Kesler offers guidance based in his own realization attainments, but primarily the practice sets up a structure that allows each individual to voice their own wisdom and insight, and expand into and through the group's collective wisdom and insight. It supports participants in identifying their unique gifts, challenges, and shadows (including what Kegan & Lahey would call "immunities to change"). It strikes a pitch-perfect integral harmony between the modernist innovations of democratic, autonomous, individualistic, and pluralistic forms of meaning-generation and growth, and the more traditional hierarchical forms of meaning-generation and growth (wisdom and guidance from sages, gurus, priests, and other honored teachers) that are seen in the wisdom traditions, offering benefits that post-modernity has made it difficult to integrate (this balance or harmony is as much from Kesler's deeply humble style as the IPP practice). (See the article in submission to JITP by Zachary Stein titled "On Spiritual Teachers and Teachings" for further

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5 Kesler frames voices in terms of impersonal or transcendent "functions and energies" as opposed to sub-identities of the self. For example, he will ask to speak to "The [voice of] Control" rather than "the Controller." This further helps the participant dis-identify with sub-personalities as inflexible and non-integrated (and immature) aspects of the Self.

6 The group process can seem a bit artificial to the—well, to the Skeptic—but if one can suspend judgment and open one's trust and imagination the process can be quite revealing and energizing.

7 My goal is to describe the surface features of these processes, and not to express claims about, or imply anything about how Kesler or Genpo Roshi describe, the deeper processes and realities that the practices work with. Also, the example of voices and activities given here are meant to give the reader a general feeling for the work, and are not meant to represent the exact sequencing, voices, or instructions given by any of the leaders mentioned. Leading a Big Mind or IPP session involves non-formulaic on-the-spot decision making that requires deep expertise.
explorations of the theme of the "dynamics of authority in educational contexts where teachers and students engage with religious or spiritual subject matter.")

Genpo discovered that through the Big Mind process, a skillfully facilitated sequencing of voices, participants can experience a taste of transcendent states such as Big Mind, Big Heart, True Self, and Great Joy, that took much longer to access with traditional contemplative practices (and in particular traditional Zen practices).\(^8\) Whereas voice dialog was typically used to access the sorts of early childhood and primitive archetypal aspects of the self that psychotherapists treat as shadow elements needing to be healed or integrated, Big Mind includes giving voice to transcendent and evolutionary potentials that we can grow and evolve into (as opposed to out of or beyond), and facilitating access to transcendent ("non-dual") states. Genpo's key insight was that, because of the more developed and prominent role of the ego in the Western vs. Eastern mind, in leading the Western mind down the spiritual path to awakening it is better to engage the ego and its core elements directly, to work with ego rather than ignoring, suppressing, or forcefully eliminating its presence. (For more on Big Mind see www.bigmind.org and the Wikipedia entry on it.)

John Kesler's Integral Polarity Practice adds innovations to the Big Mind process that make it more "integrally informed."\(^9\) First, he developed a sequence of voices (or energies/consciousnesses) that follow the ego developmental structures fleshed out by Lovinger and Cook-Greuter (it also has easy correlations with Beck and Cohen's Spiral Dynamics and other developmental models mentioned in Wilber's work). Whereas psychotherapeutic voice dialog aimed to integrate or heal shadow elements, and Big Mind uses a sequence of voices with the primary goal of opening up to transcendent states, each "rung" in the sequence of elements of IPP represents an aspect of human development that can be explored, deepened, and integrated, and yet also leads to higher states and stages of human development.

The second innovation of IPP concerns polarities. At each developmental level, one works not with a single essence but with a set of polarities, such as expansion/contraction, desire/aversion, leading/following, achieving/digressing, or meaning/paradox. These polarities, in order of increasing development, are five (not all adjacent) representatives of the 12 levels within John's "evolutionary" (or ascending) sequence. The evolutionary sequence includes two IPP levels for each of Cook-Greuter's six higher action logic stages. In working with polarities one explores the pole's two extremes, one's relationship to each pole, the interaction and energetic connection between the poles, the "still-point" that represents the resolution or integration of the poles, and the dynamic holistic system transcending and including all these elements. Due to the richness of the system, in an hour session one might only explore two or three of the 12 levels. Importantly, the experience of the still-point or integrated manifestation of each polarity can be a portal into non-dual or transcendent states or levels. Thus, though it may take many sessions to work with

\(^8\) Note that the practice is said to support getting a \textit{taste} of such experiences with unusual efficiency, but does not purport to lead directly to the more stable states and stages that prolonged contemplative practice can yield.

\(^9\) Kesler does not see his system as in any way competing with Genpo Roshi's Big Mind work. It is a related practice with overlapping but non-identical goals and methods. Kesler was one of the founding members of the Integral Spiritual Center.
and through all 12 of the evolutionary IPP levels, in each session Kesler leads participants through what he and Wilber's integral theory call gross, subtle, casual, and non-dual elements.

IPP also has an "involutionary" (or descending) sequence that starts with Big Mind and explores how the ground of being (Big Mind) works its way into causal, subtle, and gross levels of experience and reality. The theme of gross/subtle/causal/(witness)/non-dual repeats itself fractal-like at multiple levels and in multiple directions within IPP. For example, the entire system of levels is divided into gross (physical), subtle (relational), and causal/non-dual (involutionary) segments; within each of these three segments is a gross/subtle/causal progression of levels; and within each level one explores gross, subtle, causal, witness, and non-dual states that emerge from (or exist prior to) the polarity. I quote here from Kesler's web site:

…distinctive in this practice is the discovery of the same five themes which pervade every aspect and dimension of life experience. The five themes are physical / gross, relational / subtle, aware / causal, the ground out of which the three themes emerge, and their integrated expression. Through IPP life become an aesthetic experience of the integration, interpenetration and flow of the themes…IPP engages the person on multiple levels, triggering differentiation through more discriminating awareness and moving toward integration and transformation, with the impact over time of increasing awareness and capacity in multiple dimensions.

The entire system, though elegant and fascinating, is complex and intricate, especially as compared with the Big Mind system, which one can have a fairly full experience of in a single workshop (full in terms of seeing all of its components; while of course layer upon layer of depth awaits the sustained practitioner of any contemplative practice). In contrast, in a day-long workshop with Kesler one taste's just the tip of the iceberg. Each level contains not only a developmentally-anchored polarity and two still-points, but a "doing virtue," a "becoming (or being) virtue," and set of pathologies (like "hindrances"). For example, the Seeking level (level 2) has poles Desire (with its pathology Addiction) and Aversion (with its pathology Repulsion); a positive or fullness still-point of Satisfaction; a negative or emptiness still-point of No Seeking; a becoming virtue of Gratitude; a doing virtue of Generosity; and a "gift" of Sacred Motivation.

The terms subtle, causal, and non-dual have a range of meanings both within and outside the integral community. My own experience with IPP and other contemplative practices has given me a taste of what these terms could be pointing towards, but my understanding and experience of them is evolving and not stable. In this article I am simply reporting using the terms as used by Kesler (and, I would say, used too casually in the integral community) and will bypass questions of what the terms might actually point to.

The system seems to have some interesting similarities to traditional systems such as the Kabala, the Buddhist system of virtues and hindrances, the Vedic chakra system, etc. (which, as others have shown, in themselves have fascinating correspondences). This is no doubt due to John's integrating a familiarity of the mystical aspects of a number of traditions.

Kesler has been refining IPP for about 10 years, but considers the entire system still under development. He distributes copyrighted handouts at his workshop, but has not published the entire system in the public domain yet. This is one reason I have not given a chart of the entire system. One can imagine that, in addition to its evolving nature, Kesler has kept the material out of the public domain to minimize the likelihood that people would try to use or teach it without the requisite level of skill and legitimacy.
IPP is distinctive in the way that it integrates a systematic exploration of state experiences within a developmental/evolutionary model; and does so in a way that gives life to both interior and collective forms of wisdom; and with an awareness of the role of shadow in personal transformation. Contained within its many aspects (polarities, virtues, still-points, etc.; through many involutionary and evolutionary levels) it covers territory pointed to by many psychological, archetypal, and spiritual typologies. Its range extends from the earliest to the latest stages and the full range of gross subtle causal, non-dual states (upper left quadrant), energies (Wilber's upper right quadrant), collective responses and meaning making (lower left quadrant) with a voice dialog structure (lower right). Thus it is unique in how it fully embodies Wilber's AQAL meta-model, with its quadrants, states, stages, lines, and types, and works across the elements of the Wilber-Combs Lattice (a "cross product" of the states and stages of the AQAL model). It does so in a way that shows the interpenetration of all of these aspects, and is thus an ideal practice for the study and expansion of the AQAL model at it is and could be.¹³

This essay has focused on IPP as a lead process activity that can engender certain states and experiences that, over time, are intended to lead to horizontal and vertical growth along several developmental lines (including what might be called ego development, construct aware cognitive development, emotional/social development, and spiritual development). But, for Kesler and for many practitioners of IPP, these experiences are a support mechanism for a holistic life practice and action orientation. Kesler has written much about (and initiated numerous projects in) integral approaches to civic engagement and service work. IPP, as a sustained practice within an informal sangha of practitioners, orients ones values, visions, and actions, substantial and mundane, toward the highest Kosmic and ethical resonance that one can source within oneself; sensing into what Kesler calls "the ever present sacred ecstasy and ordinariness of life."

The steel web of mind’s hypnosis
Wears thin and Tears-from
Divine’s “I’s” dissolve into
One
Showering its essence
Into Forms--each paradox and
Soul, each finger and sound
Distinctions with no division
Frogs with no plops
by Terri O’Fallon

¹³ For example, there is still much to be figured out about the relationship of states to stages, and the relationship of types to states and stages in the context of lived experience; also articles by Bonnie Roy on her Process Theory draw on experiences that interpenetrate the quadrants, zones, and lines of AQAL. As clearly stated in Wilber's Three Strands argument and his integral post-metaphysics, these issues can not be worked out though intellectualization alone—we must dive into and dialog about experiences.
Bringing Integral to Management Consulting: An Interview with Rick Strycker

Jonathan Reams

I came in contact with Rick Strycker around 2001 through a list serve on integral organizational development and leadership. Rick had recently begun working at JMJ (www.jmj.com) and was also trying to finish his academic work. We had a number of interesting phone conversations that gave me an insight into the challenges of bring an integral perspective into organizational life. Recently we got together to discuss Rick’s background and work.

**JR:** Can you give me a little bit about your background?

**RS:** I have been at JMJ for the last 10 years. JMJ is a management consulting company and I am their Director of Development. That’s been my job since I arrived here and the role is basically to ensure that our consulting practice is current and market-oriented, that we are designing and delivering work that makes a difference for clients. That scope includes both practice development and consultant development. It also has a strong element of Marketing Communication to it. I have a team that helps me fulfill those various accountabilities.

**JR:** What was your background before JMJ?

**RS:** I often talk about having 2 careers before JMJ. Just before JMJ I was a graduate student and doing several part-time consulting jobs. I had gone back to school in my mid thirties to do a PhD program in philosophy. I got about half way through and switched over to organizational psychology and ended up doing a hybrid program, putting together organizational change with critical theory and postmodern thought. I was in Claremont, California going to school, doing research, and cobbling together work projects related to my academic pursuits. I did some work for McKinsey on a research program that they were doing on the perceived shortage of good management talent. I did some research for Csikszentmihályi, who had come to Claremont, that later became a book that he wrote on Good Work. I did some work for the Motorola University in the leadership college. I did that for about six or seven years, as well as working at the university for a think tank. I was doing this while supporting a family, so as you can imagine, I was pretty stretched.

Prior to that I was a small business owner in Portland, Oregon and I had a graphic design studio and I specialized mostly in high quality color printing and publishing, and was involved in the first wave of desktop publishing, and publishing to the internet. I did that for about ten years, from the time I was 23 until 33. Then I went back to school and did an academic track, thinking I was going to become a college professor. Before too long, I realized that academia moved way too slow for my appetite, then found my way into consulting which was my way to integrate my intellectual curiosity with my need to get stuff done.

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JR: When in that did you come across integral thinking and theory?

RS: In graduate school. It must have been around '96. I was in a transition period between my philosophy program and my organizational psychology program. In philosophy my interests were already very multidisciplinary. I was interested in ancient philosophy, especially Greek thought. That led to an exploration in depth psychology, eastern and western mysticism, and esotericism. Suddenly, I got very interested in post modern thought, critical theory, feminist, queer theory, and so on. I was just kind of hopping around but then did some focused study in Whitehead, Wittgenstein and Heidegger. I wasn’t exactly what they were looking for in a model student.

JR: So in a way you were already kind of integral/transdisciplinary.

RS: Yes, I was looking for that but I couldn’t find any support for that in academia so I kept hopping into a group or into a department and what they wanted me to do was go deep into one thing, like you could be a Wittgenstein scholar or you could be a Heidegger scholar or you could go down into the roots of depth psychology (mainly to critique it), but don’t mix them up. That was getting really frustrating to me because the departments really didn’t talk to each other. They only spoke within their own discipline so the Kant scholars talked to Kant scholars, they don’t talk to the Existentialists and they don’t talk to the psychologists and they especially don’t talk to the business people. It’s just the way academia is set up.

So I was really getting frustrated and was walking through a book store and saw one of Wilber’s books. It was *A Brief History of Everything*. It had just been published and I opened it up to the middle and I read a page and I thought “oh, my God this is somebody who’s writing about the kind of things I am interested in,” and just bought the book on sight, digested it and got so excited about what Wilber was doing. I loved his sense of humor for one thing because that was something I just didn’t get any of in the world that I was in at the time. So I decided that I was going to change my thesis to something on integral, I didn’t care what it was. So I contacted the only person I knew that was in California that would be connected to integral which was Roger Walsh. So I wrote a letter to Roger and he emailed me back within a few days and he said you need to get connected with Ken. He sent my information over to Ken and we started an email relationship within a couple of days. He and Ken and Don Beck had just recently met and I got into a kind of a three way email dialogue with those 2 guys and within, this must have been 98’ 99’ something like that, near that time Wilber decided to form the Integral Institute. He had just recently gotten a big grant, or at least the promise of a big grant and at the time he thought he was going to get 50 million dollars, and he pulled together about forty people that he thought could help him form the Integral Institute and that was the business group. I got invited to that group, mainly because I was in conversation with him at the time. So by default I became a founding member of the Integral Institute.

JR: I know some other people that were a part of that it and I guess it has had a whole history of ups and downs.
RS: That was my entre into integral. I did get connected with several other people where I could continue to grow. I ended up reading pretty much all of Wilber’s books. The critical connection there for me was that at that initial meeting which at Wilber’s house I met Geoffrey Gioja who was the CEO of JMJ Associates, and he and I clicked and started to form a friendship. To make a long story short he hired me about 9 months later. His main purpose, because Geoffrey was really taken with Wilber’s work, was that he wanted to bring integral more into the business world and had already begun to introduce it at JMJ. So he hired me basically to help bring integral more fully into JMJ’s consulting practice.

JR: So no small task.

RS: (Laughter). Some might say an impossible task.

JR: Maybe say a little about the focus of clients that JMJ was and is working with.

RS: Let me say something first on the nature of the impossible task. It is one thing to find a group of people who are already interested in integral and have read the material and are looking for ways to apply it to work and then pull those people together and form an integral consulting company. It is another thing to come into a company that is already 15 years old and well established in what they do, who have had a taste of integral thinking, and then try to introduce integral to that group so that they really embrace it as their primary model for working with clients. That has been the nature of the challenge. JMJ was already established, had some successes, and had developed a strong culture around other models. Fortunately, those models could be correlated with integral, otherwise the task really would have been impossible versus just improbable.

So, a little about the work. Over the last 22 years at JMJ we have mostly worked in major capital projects all over the world. A major capital project typically runs from two hundred million dollars and up, but for us projects have gotten much bigger over the years. A small one for us now is a five hundred million dollar project. Many of them are a billion dollars or bigger and we are working on projects now that go from five to twenty billion dollars and so these projects can have budgets larger than several countries’ total GDP.

If you visualize around the world where there is major infrastructure being built, that is where we are. In the middle east, although we don’t work in Iraq, but we do work in the Persian gulf in Doha and in Qatar, around Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia.. We work off the west coast of Africa where there is a lot of oil and we work in southern Africa in mining, and we work in Australia in oil and gas and mining and also Asia in oil and gas and mining. In North America and Europe, our work is more mixed, and includes oil and gas, construction, mining and manufacturing. We work with pharmaceuticals and semiconductor manufacturers, but those are mostly on their capital expansion projects. We are beginning to get some interest from their operating sites as well. A lot of our work is in heavy industry, and a lot of that is in the extracting industries – gas and mining, taking
substances out of the earth—primary industry/resource extraction. Of course, that’s a bit of an overgeneralization, but it’s a big piece of the work we do.

The important thing to say about our work and the way it has evolved over the last 10 to 15 years especially, is that we have gravitated from project execution and leadership team alignment towards high-performance safety, which is really about making sure on these major capital projects that people don’t get hurt. Not only that they don’t get killed but that nobody gets hurt. This involves a fundamental transformation in the thinking, beliefs and ultimately actions of all the people involved in the project—to shift from a mindset of keeping your accidents within an “acceptable” range to a commitment to the elimination of all accidents and injuries. If you can imagine the size and complexity of the projects, you can see how that can be a major undertaking.

JR: That is where I remember us first getting in touch. I encountered you on a list serve and you were looking about having someone work with you while you were finishing your dissertation. You were doing primarily safety prevention work, not accident reduction, using an explicitly integral framework.

RS: Yes that’s right.

JR: What kind of foundation in the practice at JMJ existed that helped enable you to stretch it into a more integral approach?

RS: That is a great question. I think that there was a good foundation already in place to be able to build an integral framework onto. It was never about replacing what JMJ did with integral but about actually expanding and building a more integral approach to what was already occurring here, building on the successes. The roots of JMJs work were based in the transformational approach that had grown out of the human potential movement. That approach was explicitly designed to shift people’s relationship to work and to life in general from one in which results were generated from merely working harder to one in which results were understood as a function of how the world occurs for people. In other words, it had a strong constructionist element, and its strength was that the approach reoriented people from a mindset wired for extrinsic motivation, objectivity and prediction to one of intrinsic motivation, interiority, and unpredictable outcomes. It gave dignity to the subjectivity of human beings and focused on the process of human meaning making as the source of unimaginable creativity and breakthrough.

JR: So as you say the foundation was there. What kind of work did you do then to help take it to the next step?

RS: The work at JMJ was grounded in transformational work, and more explicitly Heidegger, phenomenology, constructionism, and a particular kind of linguistic orientation. Because of that, the language in the approach could get very bogged down with jargon, which from the client’s perspective could sound pretty bizarre; we at JMJ referred to it as a practical ontology, to keep it brief. That is accurate and it is an
interesting way to say it, but when you say that to a client then you have to say a whole lot more to explain what you mean by it.

JR:  *I am a bit familiar with that as Steve March applied that approach in his work.*

RS:  He did. He worked with Fernando Flores’ models a bit, who was somebody who also contributed to the transformational consulting school and also drew heavily from Heidegger. It is a very powerful methodology and there’s a lot you can accomplish with it but you really can get bogged down in the terminology if you’re not careful. So bringing in the integral approach in the beginning was really more about simplifying and making a more elegant presentation of the same basic ideas. So rather than talking about a “world occurring,” we can shorten that to a right hand, left hand conversation where the right hand is the world of facts and measurements and the left hand is the domain of values, interpretations, meanings, etc.

JR:  *I remember Steve March describing a kind of communication ontology that they were successfully using but it did sound like a lot of work and a lot of education to get people into the lingo and the jargon.*

RS:  It takes a lot of work. So for example in that school we would talk a lot about *being* versus *doing* and the *being of human being* as the source of new thinking or possibility. The conversation was a way of shifting a person out of the conventional mode of thinking and into the realm of possibility. The trick was to get beyond the mere concept of possibility and to experience possibility as the source of new action. Again, if you get into Heidegger’s work you can see how that can take you into genuine depth but it can also take you out of the world where everyday people live and work. It is just so much more elegant to talk about four quadrants, one half being the objective world and the other half being the subjective world. So it is so much easier to distinguish the importance of the relevance of the interiority using the four quadrants model. You could get more done with less work. We found both at JMJ among our consultants and with our clients that the four quadrant model itself is a very sticky idea, the stickiest among all of the integral and transformational models. This is because the primary way it gets used is right hand/left hand and when you do that most clients very easily get that their default orientation is so right handed and so objectivist, and if they really want to create new thinking and possibility or they want to cause something new to happen and it wasn’t going to happen otherwise, that it is through the subjective world, through interiority, that they are going to get to something new and extraordinary. Almost universally, people acknowledge that they are weak in their relationship to interiority, especially when it comes to work. They don’t want to be weak there and they acknowledge that they need help. That’s really our entre with the client. I think with our consultants the more facile they got with the conversation, the more they just started to jettison the old jargon intensive ways of talking about it. It was actually the way integral started to get some traction.

JR:  *And how long did it take before you got that more streamlined elegant presentation and you jettisoned the old approach?*
RS: I would say it is still happening. I mean there are still consultants who will flip over to the three circles way of talking – be/do/have – which is from the old school and some of them are able to mix and match both and some of them actually never learned the three circle version and they just go right to the four quadrants. But I think there are people who have picked it up really quick, within the first six months, and they just started adapting it. But I think it took probably good six or seven years for it to become the way we do it. So JMJ used to talk about ourselves as a transformational consultancy, then it was a transformational and integral company – integral was in the background. Now that has flipped and I think our self identity as a company is that we are an integral company and that we have a tool set that includes some transformational elements. I’m saying that as if it’s true for everybody and that’s clearly not the case, but I think it’s that way for most.

JR: Changing culture takes time.

RS: It does and if you look at our consultant population and if you were going to do a psychograph, we are like a lot of consultancies; we have people whose center of gravity is clearly postconventional, or “integral,” we have people who are a low integral or just on the threshold, we have got people who are clearly achievers, both on the high and low end of that scale. I don’t think there are many consultants who are in the low conventional range but there might be a handful. So it is an interesting thing that is going on where you have people who are coming from all different mindsets who are using the integral approach and using it in different ways.

JR: This reminds me of the distinction that you turned me on to, between people who were able to think in an integral way and other people who were integrally informed. The latter had adopted the model and it held them and allowed them to follow the “code book” so to speak of integral to enact those things.

RS: Yes, for them it’s a map. If you are integrally informed you get the map and you can pull it out and it can actually help guide you in significant ways. We have people who are clearly at achiever level who use the four quadrants very effectively, and they use it in an achiever way. We have now introduced developmental levels. I think this was another significant transformation in our company was to go from an orientation where transformation itself was considered bimodal, you are either transformed or you are not, you either got it or you didn’t get it. That was the way a lot of people related to it. So bringing in developmental levels introduced the idea of transformation as creating a journey rather than as a destination. That was very gradual, but it definitely has shifted not only the way we relate to integral itself but the way we address our clients. I think probably 10 or 15 years ago our work with clients was much more coercive. That is kind of a negative way to say it, but we would work with a client to have them commit to some goal and then we would have them get that in order to accomplish something you actually had to address who you are being as a leader in order to get there. So in other words you got to bring interiority to it. Then the consultant’s job as a coach was to make sure that that client didn’t give up on their commitment, that they were in full integrity with what they committed to doing. We held them over the fire so-to-speak.
to ensure they got the result that paid us for. That worked, but it could have a negative side effect sometimes, which was to burn people out. But as the developmental levels came in I think we softened and gradually realized that for our clients accomplishing something is more of a journey and there is less judgment in it. We saw that it’s not good to sacrifice yourself completely to get this goal and leave yourself without resources for tomorrow’s goal.

JR:  I think what you describe has been typical of the whole process of integrating the integral viewpoint. At first we are proselytizing and you are either in the club or you are not, and only eventually do we grow into a more mature approach that recognizes that we are all growing and we are all at various places and how can we use what we know to facilitate and assist that growth at any place.

RS:  (Laughter). That’s exactly right. This is one of the things I learned a few years ago about myself was that after I had been through a couple of significant transformational events and workshops, and I came out the other end and I felt like things were never going to be the same again. But then realized about 3 or 4 months later, this was my big revelation, that my ego survived my transformation. (More laughter) And that the same is true at integral. A lot of people who come in to it, myself included, have this revelation, sort of like amazing aha experience, that you are in the club now and you look around and you feel like you’ve reached this place where you have finally found the other swans. Then after a while you realize “oh God, you know the ego survived this as well”. And what happens is the ego starts to use integral to convince itself that it has improved.

JR:  It reminds me of what David Bohm notes in Thought as a System, that the defenses around the image of self and the world will find a way to incorporate any insights that may be genuine and transformative, but it will incorporate them and reduce our world down to its model of those insights rather than any genuine transformative ongoing process.

RS:  Exactly. I think it’s one of the interesting things about this work of consulting and using the integral approach for consulting. Because you know in order to be in business in this way the tools themselves have to be very instrumental, they have to produce results, the results have to be measurable, there has to be business impact. In some sense you realize that this is just another set of tools for doing business as usual, I mean it could be that. I have to remind myself from time to time that no matter what toolset you are using if there is a transformational element in them and I think that it really is in this case, it is a little like playing Johnny apple seed, where you have to make sure that the work makes a difference for clients and that the clients get that as real value. And at the same time there is this little subversive intention that once the seeds of transformation is planted in the client and in the client’s organization that it might just take root and that from time to time a person may wake themselves up and find deeper significances in what they are doing, and find that they are more than their job, that who they are is more than their ego, more than the results that they get. So there is a kind of two edged sword nature to this. But you just can’t start taking yourself too seriously or you will kill the seed and you won’t get the result the client is buying.
JR: I see that as well in the teaching I do. What we hope for is that at some point the seed will germinate and produce a crack in the person’s world and suddenly some light will leak in and or they will stick their head up and they will say, oh things aren’t quite what I thought they were.

RS: It can be a little bit disorienting for a while. Interestingly, after that happens, nine times out of ten that person wants to come to work for JMJ (laughter) because they realize “this is so cool, this is what I want to do.”

JR: So my understanding is that in addition to the focus on these large capital projects and the safety orientation of them, that you also begun to move into the area of leadership development.

RS: Yes.

JR: How did that come about and what are you able to do, or how do you approach doing that for clients.

RS: Leadership development is a key part of any work we do, whether it is safety related or whether we are doing a large intervention that’s more traditional OD type work, or a major capital project, team building, execution or anything like that. There is a lot that we can say about leadership in general, but I would say the light went on for me about leadership when I was reading Robert Kegan’s work In Over Our Heads, because I was looking at really trying to understand the attributes of the different developmental levels or mindsets and I was really honing in on Kegan’s fifth order, which is his version of postconventional thinking, or integral level. I was trying to understand the attributes of that level and when he was describing leadership at that level he was pointing to Ron Heifetz, and said that Heifetz’s work was the only work that he knew of that explicitly dealt with the developmental requirements of leading at that level. Everyone else that talked about complexity and dealing with complex leadership took it for granted that if you were cognitively bright you could lead at that level, and that it could be taught. Heifetz was the only one, and of course Kegan as well, talking about adaptive leadership. Or, in other words, postconventional leadership had an explicitly developmental component.

JR: That your way of thinking has to evolve and adapt to the situation, so the leader’s job was to create that holding environment for people to do that developmental work.

RS: Right. So that distinction between technical problems and adaptive problems seemed to me incredibly relevant to the kind of work that our clients were facing daily. So you can use safety as an example, and the complexity of a multimillion dollar project is a specific case of an adaptive challenge. The project manager and the management team is faced with eliminating injuries on a major project where you’ve sometimes got 20,000 to 40,000 workers from all different nationalities, different religions coming in from all over the world, lots of pressure to deliver on schedule, on time, and on budget, but how do you do that without hurting a single person? Well we felt that the biggest problem or the
biggest failure was that they were trying to apply what they already knew. They were treating the situation like it is a technical problem. If they just got more safety glasses or enough hard hats that that somehow would do it. What they actually had to do was that the leaders themselves had to lead the learning at the organizational level – in other words they had to accept that it is an adaptive challenge and that they didn’t already have the answer. We saw that this idea resonated in case after case after case. So we started to explicitly bring that work into our safety practice and other parts of our work. So it’s a kind of underhanded integral approach to leadership that has become embedded in all of our engagements. For every major engagement we will form a leadership team and take them through a mini-leadership course with Heifetz’s distinctions underlying it.

**JR:** I had the pleasure of seeing Ron in Prague at the ILA conference do a couple of different events and I was also at a round table with him in Vancouver a couple years ago where he worked for a couple of hours for a group of about 8 of us, so I am certainly a fan of his work.

**RS:** Fabulous. I think there have been lots of variations and different ways of interpreting that work. He has been around for a while now, yet in industry we are still introducing him for the first time.

**JR:** When I was in the doctoral program at Gonzaga the conceptual framework was around his Leadership Without Easy Answers work.

**RS:** Yes, it is a kind of foundational text for our consultants. There are a couple of foundational texts really. We have them read Wilber, we have them read Kegan, we have them read Heifetz’s Leadership Without Easy Answers and there is some basic safety literature. I would say those people are really the foundations of the integral part of our work and those things supplement the courses and papers we’ve created that articulate our transformational toolkit.

**JR:** Another question occurs to me as you say that. I have this experience of have graduate students and or masters of organizational leadership students reading these things and what I see is that simply reading it is kind of like scattering seeds like a shotgun effect and hoping some of them will take root. So given that these consultants are the people you are using internally to deliver the results to the client, what kind of things have you done internally to help those seeds take root? How do you help both those who naturally pick it up and can run with it to really go, but also to those who maybe need to be held by those frameworks? How do you help them to use it in an appropriate way with clients?

**RS:** One thing we did was we designed a course called the Power of Being and the Practice of Transformation, which incorporates the Kegan four column exercise and some of the transformational elements of our work and a little bit of Heifetz. It is about a three day course and we run in all of our business units around the world. We did it last year three times, but we just keep running the course and put people in it experientially. Because what you are alluding to is that reading the material doesn’t put you in the hot seat of personal development or of transformational consulting. We really want people to have
the experience of being able to see their own frames of reference or their own mindsets and get beyond them. You can’t really help somebody else experience shifting from subject to object of awareness without going through that in your own experience. So we run these courses over and over and we try to embed those kinds of exercises into all kinds of development activities. You can’t lead transformation until you understand the mechanics of it in yourself. Most people get there. We have had consultants who go thru that exercise, resist it and eventually leave the company, and that is not always a bad thing.

JR: It helps them understand if this is a good fit do for them or if it is better for them to be somewhere else. I’ll send you a short chapter that my doctoral student and I submitted to a Jossey-Bass book that ILA is doing that summarizes a similar kind of work we are doing here. We use the TLC 360 to create a little midlife crisis then run them thru the immunity to change work.

RS: Fabulous, I’d love to see that. One other thing I’d like to mention is on this thread of integrating integral more readily into our consulting and how we use it with our clients. About three years ago we chose as a strategy to develop a set of integral assessment tools and we have now probably about ten different variations of an integral assessment. Including ones for projects and organizations, safety, leadership team, and individual leadership versions. We were able to sell this idea of measuring performance integrally, or at least through quadrants, levels and developmental lines. Our largest client decided they wanted this in all of their work, and what that forced is that all of our consultants who deliver for that client now have to become facile enough with quadrants levels and lines and the analysis of it to adequately deliver that tool with this client and any other clients that want it. This again was a subversive way selling something that our clients want then having our consultants develop in order to meet the delivery.

JR: The clients say they want it so you had better be able to deliver!

RS: Exactly right! We are about three years into it and we are starting to get a lot of traction with it. It is doing what I hoped it would, which is that a consultant which may not have been that interested in the more advanced integral tool kit up until now has gotten more interested. There is work in front of them that requires them to learn it. So it is pulling for a lot of additional development in that way.

JR: So it is a kind of natural evolution, which is great.

RS: I don’t know if it’s natural!

JR: Well, as you describe it one thing leads to another.

RS: (Laughter). It feels a little bit forced at times.

JR: So you say that having developed this set of integral assessment tools you are getting traction in terms of client interest and motivating your consultants to develop themselves
in these tools and the integral framework. Have these assessment tools also enabled you to quantify the benefits of your work for clients? In other words, can you point to bottom line benefits clearly enough that clients’ get interested?

RS: First, it enables us to quantify perceptions and that gives us a baseline to work with in measuring value shifts. It also enables our clients to see the places where they need to go to work to shift their culture and practices. We have not yet correlated our integral assessments bottom line business results in but that will come.

JR: Ok. Do you have an idea of what it will take to get that correlation made?

RS: We have to have enough data across several projects to give us a broad picture. We almost have that now and the number of assessments we’re doing is increasing rapidly, so it won’t take much longer. Then we need to hire a crack psychometrician to run the statistics. It’s not that hard for someone that like. I’ve pretty much forgotten what I learned in my applied statistics classes, so I won’t be doing that work. Besides, I’m drawn to the qualitative side of things.

JR: I look forward to hearing about that at some point. For now, thank you for taking the time to share your insights and experiences.

RS: You’re welcome, it has been fun.
The relationship between Worldviews and Politics in the USA today. Barack Obama and the "new cultural battle" for political supremacy in the US

English Summary: This article provides an analysis of the current relationship between Politics, Culture and Worldviews in the USA under Barack Obama. The present "great Obama divide" of US domestic politics consists in the division between institutional and contextual (cultural and worldview) politics. Obama has induced their current opposition when he ran for the US Presidency by profiling himself as a "cultural" candidate "against the system". One result is that by becoming part of the system after being elected, Obama has lost some of his initial "revolutionary" appeal; a second effect is that the opposition is now trying to turn the tables by mobilizing the contextual political sphere against Obama’s control of the institutional power. In fact, the Republicans, rather than concentrating on traditional ways of regaining power focus on launching a new "worldview" battle against Obama in the hope to use the pre-political sphere to eventually regain the institutional political majority. The overall result is a general climate of "worldview mobilization" in the USA, and an increased influence of cultural and worldview philosophies onto the institutionalized mechanisms of politics. Pre-political movements like the conservative "inverting the myth - inverting the paradigm" movement or the "tea party" movement are the expression of attempts towards a new "cultural battle" for "the soul of the USA," which has to be understood in its basic mechanisms, if the "Obama constellation" shall be understood. This article sketches some core elements of Obama’s worldview that are in play in this game, and it argues that many actions of Obama on the field of foreign politics are (and will be) to a noticeable extent co-oriented toward influencing the domestic "worldview battle."


Das Damoklesschwert der Begeisterung


Sie zeigen, dass Obama inzwischen tatsächlich mit einem Scheitern nach bereits einer Amtszeit rechnet. Die Gründe dafür sind vielfältig, liegen aber bei genauerer Analyse weit eher im vorpolitischen und kontextuellen: das heisst im in erweitertem Sinn „weltanschaulichen“ Politikfeld denn in der institutionalisierten, normativen Politikebene. Inwiefern?

Berücksichtigt man Obamas überproportionale Abhängigkeit von öffentlichem Zuspruch, Kulturpsychologie und weltanschaulicher Zeitgenossenschaft, dann wird deren allmähliches Versiegen - also der Virus in der „Software“ seiner Präsidenschaft - zu einer realen Gefahr für seine weitere Amtszeit.

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Die Stadt New York lehnte aber Anfang Februar 2010 die Durchführung der Prozesse aus Sicherheits- und Kostengründen ab, weshalb diese, was erhebliche Verspätungen und Kosten bedeutete, erneut an ein Sondergericht auf einer US-Militärbasis beziehungsweise in einem Gefängnisverwaltungsverfahren verlegt werden musste, was Obama zähneknirschend akzeptieren musste. 3 Man muss dies in einer Präsidialdemokratie wie den USA als deutliche Demütigung des amtierenden Präsidenten ansehen.

Insbesondere bei derartig symbolisch-„kontextuell“ stark rezipierten - und von den Republikanern mit allen medialen Mitteln 24 Stunden pro Tag ausgenutzten - Niederlagen wie dieser riskiert Obama zusehends sein Gesicht. Was er sich zweifellos einige Male erlauben kann, was sich aber in der ersten Hälfte des zweiten Amtsjahres derart überproportional häuft, das es bei weiteren Fällen zu einem ernsthaften Problem für seine weitere Amtszeit werden kann. Zu einem Problem nämlich, das ihm aus seiner eigenen Bastion heraus: aus der vorpolitisch-kontextuellen Ebene heraus derart schadet, dass er politisch instabil wird.


**Interessensgruppen hinter den Kulissen**

Es scheint zusammenfassend ein Paradoxon zu sein: Gerade der am meisten bejubelte und mit den größten Hoffnungen und Vorschusslorbeeren versehene Präsident seit John F. Kennedy, Barack Obama, erlebt seit einigen Monaten die größten Verluste und die schmerzhaftesten innenpolitischen Niederlagen aller US-Präsidenten der vergangenen fünf Jahrzehnte. Wie konnte es nach der unvergleichlich Anfangs-Euphorie um ihn zu dieser Situation kommen?


Doch wenn vorpolitischer oder „kontextuelle“ Politikfaktoren - das heisst: eine Idee, eine Ideologie, eine Weltanschauungsbeschwörung, ein Ideal, ein richtungspolitischer Kulturansatz, eine Kulturpsychologie des Aufbruchs und der Begeisterung - einen vergleichsweise großen Einfluss auf die normativ geordnete Politik und ihre Institutionen haben wie unter Obama, so hat das Vor- und Nachteile.

Der **Vorteil** ist, dass das gesamte System ideenoffener wird, dass es einen höheren Anteil an Idealisierung aufweist und dass es Flexibilität zu relativ raschem Wandel erlangt.

Der **Nachteil** ist, dass es dadurch überproportional anfällig für den Wandel der öffentlichen Meinung wird. Vor allem aber, dass es tendenziell den professionellen weltanschaulichen „Meinungsmachern“ im vorpolitischen Bereich der Medien erlaubt, einen viel wirkungsvolleren „ideologischen“ Druck auf die Politik zu entfalten.
Genau letzteres ist heute der Fall. Es ist der entscheidende Grund für Obamas Krise. Obamas Krise kommt letztlich nicht aus der im engeren Sinn politischen Sphäre, sondern aus der Veränderung in der öffentlichen Vernunft Amerikas.

Wie kann man das verstehen?

**Der neue Weltanschauungskampf in den USA: Die Mobilmachung des vorpolitischen und kontextuellen (einschliesslich des kulturellen) Politikfeldes gegen Obama**


Warum?


Führende Republikaner wie etwa Mike Huckabee oder Newt Gingrich haben sich nach der Präsidentschafts-Wahlkampfniederlage im November 2008 in die Bild- und Internetmedien, vor allem das Fernsehen zurückgezogen. Sie haben dort eigene Talk- und Meinungsshows, die fast

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**Das Schlüsselmotiv der gegenwärtigen US-Innenpolitik: Die Wendung von Obamas Siegesstrategie gegen ihn selbst**

Doch war das nicht gerade Obamas eigene Strategie: vorpolitische und kontextuelle Politikfaktoren wie Psychologie, Kultur, Ideen, Ideale usw. gegen die herrschenden, „normativ“ erstarrten Politikverhältnisse zu wenden - also Weltanschauungsfaktoren gegen das institutionalisierte Politiksystem? War das nicht gerade seine eigene Strategie, mit der er erfolgreich war?

Das war in der Tat der Fall. Eben genau dies ist der entscheidende Punkt, um die heutige Konstellation in den USA zu verstehen. Das verhältnismässige Übergewicht kultureller und kontextueller Politikfaktoren über normative Politikfaktoren, das die Republikaner heute bewusst medial fördern und gegen Obama ausnutzen, um gegen ihn mobil zu machen, ist massgeblich auch Obamas eigenes Werk, das sich nun gegen ihn wendet.


Was bedeutet das, wenn wir es auf die eingangs angeführte „Klientel“-Problematik des US-Systems rückbeziehen?

Als aber diese Kreise gegenüber seiner Durchsetzungskraft relativ früh skeptisch wurden, weil sie viel zu vieles in viel zu kurzer Zeit erwarteten, brach ein wichtiger Aspekt von Obamas politischem Rückhalt weg: der innere Ideenaspekt und seine natürlichen progressiven Träger als Motor der Veränderung.

**Der Einfluss von Ideengruppen auf das heutige politische System der USA**

Bedeutet dies also, daß Obama letztlich abhängiger von - im weitesten Sinne - Klientel-Interessen ist als seine Vorgänger?


Das tat den USA nicht gut. Denn daraus entstand ein neuer gesellschaftlicher „Unitarismus“, in dem Geltungsgrenzen zwischen Diskursen und Systemlogiken verwischt wurden und wirtschaftliche, religiore und politische Interessen sich zu einem undifferenzierten Filz verbanden, wodurch die innere und äußere Freiheit abnahm. Das politische System wurde entdifferenziert, und eine allgemeine Regression war die Folge. Das zeigten die Ergebnisse der Bush-Ära sowohl nach innen wie nach aussen.


Warum?
Obamas Weltanschauung und ihr Einfluss auf seine Politiken


„Gott, gib mir die Gelassenheit, Dinge hinzunehmen, die ich nicht ändern kann, den Mut, Dinge zu ändern, die ich ändern kann, und die Weisheit, das eine vom anderen zu unterscheiden.“


Ist Obama in Summe also tatsächlich ein „rational spiritueller“ Mensch, wie er bei öffentlichen Auftritten, in Interviews und in seinen Schriften immer wieder aktiv unterstreicht? Und wenn ja, wie macht sich das bemerkbar?


Die dreifache Entwicklung in den zeitgenössischen USA und die Anforderung an die zentraleuropäischen Politikwissenschaften

Es macht meines Erachtens wenig Sinn, derartig konstitutive Zusammenhänge zwischen Politik, „realistischem“ Idealismus und „Geistrealismus“ länger zu ignorieren, kleinzureden oder als „private Überzeugungen“ abzutun, wie es Teile der akademischen Politik- und Sozialwissenschaften insbesondere des deutschsprachigen Kontinentaleuropas im Hinblick auf

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Obamas politischer Manichäismus


Viele Beobachter stellten sich angesichts dieser in Teilen fast reaktionär anmutenden Rede die Frage: „Packt“ Obama seine diesbezüglichen Ansichten nur rhetorisch „besser ein“ als George W. Bush, denkt aber letztlich zumindest in gewissen Schichten seiner Vorprägung und Anschauungsbildung in ähnlichen Kategorien?

In dieser Rede war in der Tat mehrfach von „dem Bösen“ die Rede, das im Zeichen des wahren Menschentums und der Freiheit bekämpft werden müsse. Dieses „Böse“ erscheint bei Obama, genau so wie bei seinem Vorgänger George W. Bush, als eine gewissermassen
eigenständige Kraft in der Welt. Nicht weniger als 36 Mal verwendete Obama das Wort „Krieg“, immer in Verteidigung des „gerechten Krieges“. Das war gewiss eine der aussergewöhnlichsten und paradoxalsten Preisreden eines Friedensnobelpreisträgers, die je gehalten wurden, kulminierend in der Aussage: „Krieg wird es immer geben.“

Wenn das ein Friedensnobelpreisträger ausgerechnet bei der Ehrungszeremonie sagt, die der Herbeiführung des Endes der Kriege dienen soll, dann gibt es eigentlich nur drei Möglichkeiten:

1. er ist extrem realistisch;
2. er ist ein Manichäer (als der sich, mit dem Zusatz „säkularer“ Manichäer, im übrigen mittlerweile auch der heutige Jürgen Habermas bezeichnet);
3. er will mittels eines aussenpolitischen Auftritts bei einer „fremdländischen“ Veranstaltung, die im Grunde dem Geist der USA nicht entspricht, ein innenpolitisches Signal der Stärke, des Realismus und des überzeugten Festhaltens an den US-Idealen an seine eigene Bevölkerung senden.

Ich glaube an eine Mischung aller drei Motive, mit starkem Akzent auf dem letzteren, dem innenpolitischen Anliegen. Warum?

Man darf einerseits nicht vergessen, dass die Verleihung des Friedensnobelpreises nach bereits wenigen Monaten im Amt Obama innenpolitisch mehr geschadet hat als vieles andere: Er erhielt - eben auf der vorpolitischen, kontextuellen Ebene der Weltanschauungsdiskussion - den Ruf des „abgehobenen Weltstars“, der von der Welt grundlos vergöttert werde, ohne etwas geleistet zu haben, und der daher irgendwie eher für die Welt als für die USA arbeite. Und das mögen die Amerikaner ganz und gar nicht. Daher war ein starkes innenpolitisches Signal der Zugehörigkeit nötig.


Im Vergleich wird sichtbar: Beide waren und sind Geistrealisten, und beide hatten und haben eine starke manichäische Färbung, sobald sie ihre - an sich sehr unterschiedlichen - Auffassungen und Praktiken von „Spiritualität“ in die politische Praxis tragen. Das hat weniger mit den Personen, sondern vielmehr mit dem Amt zu tun: mit der Geschichte der USA als Heilsträger der Freiheit, auch mit den rosenkreuzerisch-freimaurerischen Grundlagen und mit der


Mischung von Protestantismus mit calvinistischer Arbeitsethik in den idealistischen Grundlagen des Landes. Das Amt färbt die Spiritualität der Person ein. Es ist in gewisser Weise größer als die Person, gleichzeitig aber auch wiederum von ihrer Freiheit abhängig.

Es ist dies im Grunde derselbe Gesamtzusammenhang zwischen „subjektiv“ und „objektiv“ wie in der oben erwähnten „Philosophie der Freiheit“ Rudolf Steiners: Der Amtsinhaber muss sich dem Amt erlebend gegenüberstellen, sonst gerät er unter seine Knechtschaft. Das haben auch „kantianische“ europäische Politiker wie zum Beispiel Helmut Schmidt erfahren müssen; nur war bei ihnen der Bezug zwischen Weltanschauung, Geisteshaltung und politischer Funktion weit weniger explizit und direkt als in den heutigen USA.


Ich würde diese Fragen nicht beantworten wollen, sondern hier als Anregung offenlassen.


Ich denke, dass es sie zumindest in ideengeschichtlicher Sichtweise, vergleichender Perspektive und heuristischer Absicht wiederzugeben gilt, um die Motivationen, Denkweisen und Ambivalenzen führender Staatsvertreter der USA der Gegenwart besser zu verstehen.

**Die Perspektiven: Die heutige „große Neuausrichtung“ der USA unter Barack Obama – und ihre Folgen für Europa**

Wo liegen die Perspektiven der beschriebenen Konstellation im Inneren der heutigen USA? Und: Was will Obama wirklich? Wofür kämpft er nach eigener Aussage so energisch, dass er dafür sogar eine mögliche Nichtwiederwahl in Kauf nimmt, die seiner „kulturellen“ Ablehnung durch Mehrheitsteile der US-Bevölkerung geschuldet sein könnte?


Am wichtigsten aber ist die allgemeine, grundlegende Einsicht in den großen Wandel, der sich heute global vollzieht – und in den Obama die programmatisch versprochene „glaubwürdige Veränderung“ (change we can believe in) ausdrücklich einbetten will. Diesen globalen Wandel nehmen alle Kreise der USA - Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur und Wissenschaft, aber auch der religiöse Bereich - durchgängig viel ernster als die Europäer. Die Diskussion darüber beherrscht hier jeden Tag das kollektive Nachdenken, sie ist allpräsent in der öffentlichen Vernunft, während sie in Europa bislang nur eine untergeordnete Rolle spielt.

Der Analytiker Zareed Fakaria fasste die alles entscheidende, zentrale Einsicht, die sich im Rahmen dieser Diskussion heute in den USA durchsetzt, kürzlich prägnant so zusammen: „Die Entwicklungsgeschichte von Großmächten zeigt, dass sie, um ihre Position zu wahren, die Quellen ihrer Macht, nämlich ökonomisches Wachstum und technologische Innovation, erhalten und stärken müssen. Sie zeigt aber auch, dass sie sich auf die Zentren globaler Macht, nicht auf deren Randgebiete konzentrieren müssen. Es ist in dieser Hinsicht wichtig, sich daran zu erinnern, dass in den folgenden hundert Jahren die dominante Position Amerikas in Asien – ihre Rolle als ausgleichende Macht in der Pazifikregion - ausschlaggebend sein wird für den Erhalt der Rolle der USA als Weltmacht.“10

Was bedeutet das?

Es bedeutet, dass Europas Bedeutung schnell und nachhaltig sinkt. In den USA wendet man sich heute massiv von Europa ab – weil man die Zukunft der eigenen Stellung in der Welt in der Rolle erkennt, welche die USA im Pazifik spielen werden. Obama ist der erste Präsident, der mit diesen langfristigen strategischen Einsichten Ernst macht: Er bricht mit Bushs „Anhänglichkeit an Europa“. Paradoxerweise wird Obama währenddessen gerade in Europa am meisten verehrt und mystifiziert. Im Januar 2010 fand in Frankfurt am Main sogar die Uraufführung eines ihm gewidmeten Musicals statt – nicht zufällig in Deutschland.

Baer zurück zu den Dingen die zählen: Worin genau besteht die „große“ Neuausrichtung Obamas?

Obama bereitet die USA auf die „globale Systemverschiebung“ vor, die in vier großen Dimensionen stattfinden wird:

1. Das Ende der „neuen Weltordnung“, das heißt der Ära seit den 1990er Jahren, in der die USA die Welt als einzige Supermacht dominierten, und die Entstehung einer multipolaren Welt, in der die pazifische Region immer mehr an Bedeutung gewinnt, während Europas Bedeutung abnimmt;
2. die Ablösung der „Postmoderne“ als säkulares, „dekonstruktives“ Kulturmodell des Westens durch andere, komplexere Kulturmodelle, die Nominalismus und Geistrealismus verbinden;
3. das Ende des „Neoliberalismus“ und die Notwendigkeit von nachhaltigeren und gerechteren Wirtschafts- und Technologieformen;
4. die „Renaissance der Religionen“ und damit die Herausforderung der Verbindung von Rationalität und Spiritualität.

Es entsteht insgesamt eine Welt von „miteinander im Wettstreit liegenden Modernitäten“ („competing modernities“). In dieser werden Gesellschaften wie China technologisch und wirtschaftlich ähnlich entwickelt sein wie der „Westen“, aber ganz andere Auffassungen davon haben, was ein „gutes Leben“ und eine „gute Gesellschaft“ ist – Auffassungen, die zum Beispiel im Fall Chinas nicht an Demokratie, Rechtsstaat und Menschenrechte gebunden sind, sondern eher an Harmonie, Stabilität und Einheit.11 In diesem Feld werden sich die westlichen Ideen von Moderne bewegen müssen.

Darauf bereitet Obama die USA vor. Es ist wie ein riesiges Schiff, das langsam den Kurs ändert – langsam, weil das Schiff eben so groß ist, aber unweigerlich. Der Kurs wurde bereits geändert. In Richtung Pazifik, in Richtung Asien.

**Schlussfolgerung und Ausblick**

Welche Bilanz der bisherigen Amtszeit Obamas lässt sich zusammenfassend ziehen? Hat sich die Welt seit Obamas Amtsantritt durch sein Wirken verändert? Und, wenn ja, in welche Richtung?


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Und wo liegt Obamas eigene Perspektive - für die zweite Hälfte von 2010, und darüber hinaus?


Was bedeutet das für uns Europäer?

Es gilt nun meiner Meinung nach gerade in dieser schwierigen Lage, Obamas idealistischen Impetus entschieden zu unterstützen und zu stärken. Ich war stets für vernunftgemäße Entzauberung und Kritik, als Obama irrational in den Himmel gejubelt wurde; nun bin ich für vernünftige Solidarität und gerechte Anerkennung. Obama ist der einzige, den ich derzeit in den USA, vielleicht sogar in der „westlichen“ Welt insgesamt sehe, der das Ideal mit der Wirklichkeit ernsthaft, als Persönlichkeit und Mensch, verbinden will, und der auch den Instinkt und das Talent dazu hat. Obama ist eine Persönlichkeit, die mit aller individuellen Kraft eine balanciertere und gerechtere Welt will. Er verdient deshalb Vertrauen nicht nur kurzfristig, sondern auch durch Schwierigkeiten und Abgründe hindurch – und gerade dann am meisten. Im klärenden, blendenden Licht des Problems beweist es sich nämlich, was wir wirklich glauben, woran wir uns halten, was wir wirklich wollen – nicht in Zeiten des Erfolges, wo alle Katzen grau sind vor blinder Euphorie.

Wir Europäer sollten Obama meiner Meinung nach deshalb nun vergleichsweise grosszügig unterstützen - zumindest so lange, bis die Verhältnisse für ihn wieder so gut sind, dass wir ihn wieder kritisieren müssen. Dies nicht zuletzt auch, um Europa wieder stärker in sein Sichtfeld zu bringen. Ich halte Obamas Abwendung von Europa für eine besorgnisserregende Entwicklung, die letztlich nur wir Europäer selbst korrigieren können.
The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation


Review by Steven E. Wallis

This book is structured in three parts. The first part (about 100 pages) recounts the growing threat of global ecological collapse. The second part (about 200 pages) investigates cosmology; including discussions around Gaia, the pregnant void, and holographic cosmos. The final part (about 100 pages) is focused on spirituality, with particular effort applied to finding a common thread among the world’s major religions. Those threads support the authors’ cosmology and conclusion that we should all follow a specific path towards self-liberation. With the liberation of self, the authors quite reasonably claim, we will become more effective in practice and so better able to save the human race and our planet.

For this review, I began by reading with an appreciative eye. And, from that view, some are likely to find this an interesting book. The authors present a wealth of information on many topics including physics, religion, biology, systems theory, and creativity. They also engage in an extensive conversation around globalization, domination, deep ecology, and spirituality.

Next, in reading this book with a critical eye, the book appears to be well written. Indeed, the authors have crafted a work that readers will find quite accessible. They have purposefully structured the book in something of a spiral by revisiting key topics from different perspectives as they proceed through the cycle. Examples are found in modern science, ethics, economics, politics, transnational corporations, and more. Their main effort is to present a link between the critical state of the global ecology and the spiritual practices that we might draw upon to empower ourselves.

In a nutshell, they describe the domination and destruction of the ecosystem by those who are blinded by a systemic pathology. Goals of wealth and power, limitless growth, and desire for a global monoculture have blinded many to the precarious state of our ecosystem. They also reasonably note how most humans are (in one way or another) complicit in that pathology (and are likewise blinded). The authors suggest that we fear to give up our way of life – even if is

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necessary to save the planet. In order to see clearly, make wise choices, and enact critical changes, we must first liberate ourselves from our fears.

To escape those fears, we must move away from oppression (of ourselves and others) and toward a sense of liberation. To achieve this shift, we should first understand that all people are sensitive and compassionate. Second, they suggest that we should expand our sense of self to include the whole of our planet. This, they say, will lead to a better sense of community, artistry, and appreciation for the beauty of nature. From a cosmological perspective, that shift would be supported by a new view of the universe. The authors discuss how the universe is fundamentally open to many possibilities. For example, most of our universe (including seemingly solid objects) is actually empty space – thus allowing for emergence, surprise, and innovation.

Adopting that view, they suggest, will allow us to liberate ourselves and so enact the future needed to save our planet. While none of these ideas are particularly novel, that message may be of interest to appreciative readers. As with many books of this type, however, their analyses are neither rigorous nor complete. Critical readers will be very aware that the authors present contradictory perspectives, engage in questionable leaps of logic, and present curious styles of reasoning.

One such contradiction begins with the Tao and its suggestion that we are all one and closely interconnected. Instead of following the Tao, the authors press forward with ideas that separate rather than integrate. They separate modern ideas from the postmodern, separate the global elite from the masses, separate the responsible from the innocent, and so on. For another example, the authors decry the “wealth gap,” while they also claim “money is an illusion.” Another related contradiction is seen between the authors’ perspective that the universe is continually evolving (on one hand) and the perception that the powerful individuals and corporations are standing in the way of that evolution (on the other hand). This view seems to suggest that those corporations are somehow outside that cycle of evolution. And, while transnational corporations are indeed powerful, it is hard for me to accept that they are so powerful that they can somehow escape the natural laws of the universe.

While these contradictions do not appear to be purposeful, we need not see them as problematic. Indeed, by reading with an integrative eye, those contradictions may represent the best reason to read The Tao of Liberation. Such contradictions may be more usefully viewed as chunks of raw material from which thinkers might build more profound insights. In short, I would suggest that the “space” between those contradictory views is open for the emerging ideas of deeply reflexive readers.

For example, instead of adopting the “us versus them” view of the world, I would suggest that readers who are bold enough to engage this book with an integrative eye might consider how we are all part of the same system. And, by developing a better understanding of that system, investigate how we might optimize our individual, organizational, and global conditions.

In addition to the excessive differentiation, this book also challenged my sensibilities in its discussion of cosmology. First, the authors recount multiple claims for the existence of an “alternative” universe. That other universe is variously represented as a primal universe,
holographic universe, implicate order, and morphic field. The existence of this primal universe is certainly intriguing. It is reported to be a place of great interconnectedness and a conduit for insight, creativity, communication and memory. The alternative universe transcends (and renders irrelevant) the dimensions of time and space that we find in our own universe. Through meditation, they suggest, one may connect with that universe to become more creative and gain new insights.

After many pages, I found myself wondering about the need for a cosmological justification for meditative practices. Practically and functionally, if one meditates and successfully achieves insight, does it really matter “where” that insight comes from? In short, it seems to this reviewer that the authors created an unnecessarily complex picture of a destination in order to justify the relatively simple path of meditation.

Overall, reading this book is like strolling through a bustling farmer’s market. In looking at that many options, one is inspired to consider how they may be combined for a tasty dinner. There does not seem to be much that is new in this market, but there is a multitude of possibilities for combining those ingredients. This suggests many levels of possible engagement for this book. On one level, the appreciative reader may adopt any of the many concepts presented here. In contrast, the critical reader will likely be frustrated by the curious cosmology and unnecessary complexity. The more contemplative reader, with a more integrative eye, may engage this book on a deeper level. Those scholars may go beyond the loose weave of ideas presented in this book to create a more effective integration of ideas. And, in that process, develop much needed, and much more innovative ideas.
Response to Wallis

Mark Hathaway

I greatly appreciate the reflections Steven Wallis has presented in his review of The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation. In particular, I enjoyed the succinct summary he has provided of many of the key themes of the book along with his astute observations about its contents.

The book is meant to be an integrative text drawing on many different disciplines. Leonardo Boff and I describe it as a “search for wisdom in a time of crisis.” I think one of its strengths is drawing together insights from a wide diversity of perspectives. This may well make it resemble a stroll “through a bustling farmer’s market.” Yet, perhaps a better image would be that of walking the labyrinth – a spiralling journey that is certainly non-linear in its logic, but which serves to help reveal more subtle dynamics at play. To some, the perspectives presented may at first seem to be contradictory, but over time the coincidences of these insights becomes more apparent.

In using the image of the Tao, we speak of a reality that cannot be fully described, but must rather be tasted. The book is meant to engage the reader at a more intuitive level, providing a sense of feel for a “way” that cannot ever be fully described in words.

I would suggest that some of the apparent contradictions that Dr. Wallis perceives may not, in fact, be contradictions at all. Certainly, the book speaks of a cosmology of deep interconnection. While, overall, cosmic evolution seems to be characterized by a movement toward ever greater communion, diversity, and interiority, this does not mean that this process cannot, at least for a time, be thwarted or delayed:

…In harmony with the Tao,
the sky is clear and pure,
the Earth is serene and whole,
the spirit is renewed with power,
streams are replenished,
the myriad creatures of the world flourish, living joyfully,
leaders are at peace and their countries are governed with justice.

When humanity interferes with the Tao,
the sky turns filthy,
the Earth is depleted,
the spirit becomes exhausted,
streams run dry,

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the equilibrium crumbles,
creatures become extinct…

(Tao Te Ching, §39)

For us, then, there is no contradiction in affirming that the universe is evolving but that some human actions and institutions may at times impede that process. We can try to harmonize our actions with the Tao or we can (often unconsciously) interfere with it.

The example of large corporations is a case in point. Perhaps they cannot “escape the natural laws of the universe” – if in fact any such “laws” really exist (a point that the book disputes since the process of evolution is best characterized by habits and tendencies rather than hard and fast laws). Corporations are essentially artificial (legally constructed) “persons” that tend to be pathological because of the rules and objectives that govern them. That does not mean that those who work for these corporations, nor even those leading them, are somehow evil. Some corporations, to a greater or lesser extent, have even managed to redefine their objectives and practices in ways that may enhance our evolution toward a more just and sustainable society. Overall, though, the rules that force corporations to prioritize the generation of short-term profit (measured with distorted indicators) over all else pushes them to become machines of exploitation. Fortunately, what we have created we can also change – even though doing so presents very real challenges.

The book does not attempt to separate the “responsible from the innocent,” nor does it cast the world in terms of “us versus them;” rather, it calls all of us to recognize our own complicity in a pathological system that is destroying our planet. At the same time, though, it is fair to point out that the level of complicity of a poor peasant farmer in India, for example, is very different than that of most of us living in the overdeveloped North. Such a realization need not create divisions. As the book demonstrates, the current pathological system undermines the future of all of humanity, both rich and poor, as well as the entire Earth community. Indeed, to the extent that we awaken to this reality, our current crisis can serve to unite us all in a common purpose, and perhaps even impel us to a qualitative jump in our own evolution.

The book spends a great deal of time exploring cosmologies, not – as Wallis suggests – to justify meditative practices, but rather to understand how change happens. It does not postulate any kind of “alternative universe,” but rather a deep unifying reality that is the wellspring of the entire cosmos. We can think of this reality in different ways – as the pregnant void, the implicate order, or as the Tao. The key point, though, is that this is simply a deeper, more subtle, level of reality – not something separate from the universe we live in, but the substrate of its entire fabric.

By exploring the cosmological vision that is emerging from science and seeing its parallels in ancient wisdom traditions, it is our hope that we can come to understand transformative action in a new way that integrates both what have traditionally been considered “spiritual” practices and collective social action. In particular, the emerging new cosmology helps us to understand that our visions, our intentions, our intuitions, and our state of mind have a direct impact on the transformative potential of what we do. We need to unite analysis and deep intuitive insight to discern the right action for a given place and a given time. This is essentially an art that cannot be taught, but must be discovered through both experience and deep insight.
To work for liberation, we are called to open ourselves to the wisdom of the cosmos itself – the Tao – and allow it to act through us so we can come to consciously participate in a process leading us to greater communion, differentiation, and creativity. In this, I would agree wholeheartedly with Wallis in affirming that this book should be engaged with a contemplative, integrative eye so that we may apprehend the threads uniting superficially distinct ideas and disciplines into a holistic tapestry on a deeper level. In so doing, I hope we can help readers to truly taste the Tao and to stimulate new reflections on ways of moving us toward right relationship with each other and the entire Earth community.
Locking Down the South Bronx

Susan Belford

Abstract: In this brief analysis is the intended beginning of a systemic integral analysis of the social systems and structures in use in the South Bronx, New York City. Informed by the writing of Jonathan Kozol as well as current articles in the New York Times, this analysis uses the systems theories of Talcott Parsons and Donella Meadows and the human identity work of Vern Redekop to understand the exterior and interior dimensions of systemic oppression as experienced by residents of the South Bronx.

Introduction

“Where we live, it’s locked down... we can’t go out and play” says 12 year old Jeremiah. (Kozol, 1995, p. 32) The theme of being “locked down” recurs throughout Amazing Grace. Kozol describes children being taken on day trips out of the borough only to burst into tears on their return; a Bronx school teacher notes that the aspirations of the young are “locked in” to a menial level “that suburban kids would scorn” (p. 125); freedom of movement and enjoyment of public spaces is “locked down” in the interests of security with barred gates and windows, checkpoints and “safety corridors” (p. 136); and in any twelve month period, in a Borough with a population of 1,203,789, approximately 130,000 men and women, 92 percent of them black or Hispanic, are “locked up” in the local 415-acre Ryker’s Island prison or other city jails (p. 144). Kozol paints a compelling portrait of an oppressive urban social mechanism that appears to be dedicated to the “locking down” of a specific portion of the population, with horrendous results in terms of lives lost, blighted, and maimed. The horror of this is underscored when one realizes it is not ancient history; the current relevance of Kozol’s narrative can be seen in a May 11th, 2010 New York Times headline that reads Large stretch of Bronx highest hunger rate in the nation: survey.

The social mechanism described by Kozol is best understood as a complex dynamic system in which “a set of things,” such as the housing, health, education, and security bureaucracies, are “interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behaviour over time,” (Meadows, 2008, p. 2) such as the “locking down” referenced above. Complex systems are rooted in social paradigms, “the shared social agreements about the nature of reality” (Meadows, 2008, p. 163). Systems that oppress, such as that operating in the South Bronx, breed conflict between individuals caught within the oppressive social system as well as between those within the system and those outside it.

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In order to generate a complete analysis of this complex system, it would be useful to adopt an integral perspective. For reasons of my context in writing it including time and space, I do not carry out a full AQAL analysis, but confine my analysis to the two sides of the four quadrant model. Although developmental levels cannot be ignored in analyses, I do not address them here because they are beyond the scope and purpose of this paper.

I will focus first on the “interior” of the integral model—the subjective and intersubjective cultural issues of myth, identity and belief that combine to generate the paradigms from which the “Bronx system” flows. Following this, I will examine the objective behaviours of the “exterior,” first exploring some Bronx system dynamics at the meta level, and then examining particular aspects of the system, such as housing, to explore dysfunctions within and between structural sub-systems.

The discussion ahead requires the use of some particular terminology; on the interior subjective side, the terminology relates primarily to psychological theories of identity and belief; exterior objective terminology is largely that of the “systems” field.

**Interior Subjective Definitions**

**Belief.** Many authors (Cranston, 2000; Inglis, 2005; Kegan, 2009; Mezirow, 2000; Redekop, 2002; Taylor, 2000) include “beliefs” as one of several categories of experience that contribute to the development of identity, along with “values, culture, spirituality, meaning systems, relationships, history, imagination, and capacity to act that form the core of an individual or group” (Redekop, 2002, p. 23). These authors suggest that the purpose achieved by the belief system is the creation of a worldview by which individuals and groups make sense of their world; it is through the understanding created by this worldview that people come to make judgments and decisions about their own and others’ behaviour. When certain beliefs are held by many, they become shared ideas, or paradigms, from which flow decision making and the development of policy.

**Identity.** The purpose of the identity system is to develop awareness of the meaning-maker—the one or ones with a belief system and worldview. “Riceour argues that “dialectic between Self and Other is essential for identity.” This means that we work out who we are in relation to others” (Redekop, 2002, p. 154) in a process of comparison and differentiation. We know ourselves in relation to what we know of others, and “it is through participation in community life that identity, meaning and self-worth are developed” (Dukes, 1999, p. 162).

**Exterior Objective Definitions**

**System:** A system is “an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something” (Meadows, 2008, p.11). Typically systems nest within other systems.

**Structure:** A structure is the way in which the elements of a system are interconnected to create an effect. Thus, structure can be seen as the source of system behaviour. In this instance, structure relates not only to the interlocking services provided to poor Bronx residents, but to the
structural relationship between those services and larger social, economic, and political policies in play in New York City and the nation.

Structural subsystem: Because each of the different social service bureaucracies or institutions which Kozol examines—health, housing, education, security, and economic structures—functions as part of the overall system structure and as its own discrete system, I have labeled these as “structural subsystems.” Structural subsystems as I have described them are very different from the “Parsonsian” subsystems defined below.

Parsonsian subsystems: In his efforts to describe human society as a dynamic system, Talcott Parsons (1971) posited the existence of four overlapping subsystems relating to aspects of society. One of these, the “pattern-maintenence” subsystem, is concerned with the interior-subjective relations of the society to its cultural system. The other three subsystems are concerned with the exterior-objective. The “goal-attainment subsystem” or polity is concerned with the relations of the society to individual members. The “adaptive subsystem” or economy is concerned with the relations of the society to the physical world. The “integrative subsystem” or societal community, is concerned with achieving internal integration.

Interior Subjective: Identity and Systems of Belief

Kozol's work can be seen as a serious endeavour to “look for the ways the system creates its own behaviour” (Meadows, 2002, p. 4) Because the nature of the situation facing residents of the South Bronx appears to be a single, intractable and monolithic system, it is tempting to seek a single reason for it. Kozol draws a straight line between racism, racial segregation and conditions in the South Bronx, making a strong case that the primary reason for the continuing pervasive injustice he observes is the result of a belief system which consists of marginalization and racist attitudes toward non-white poor that allows people to “devalue other people’s lives... and see as natural the shunning of the vulnerable” (Kozol, 1995, p. 186). Examples of this belief system—expressed by libertarian author Charles Murray as “some people are better than others and deserve more of society’s rewards” (Kozol, 1995, p. 154)—can be found throughout Amazing Grace, for example, in the words of an ABC radio talk show host that “black people... multiply...like maggots on a hot afternoon” (p. 21) and in the fact that scarce funds have been made available to research “genetic links between IQ deficits of ... children and their racial origins” but not to “remove lead poison (a known toxin that reduces IQ) from the homes and schools of children in the Bronx” (p. 156).

“The great luxury of segregation” is that it has become so “long-existing and accepted” that it appears invisible to all but those who suffer it. Those unaffected by it in their day to day lives can maintain a guilt-free stance and “insist that they are personally “imposing nothing on the people” of the South Bronx (p. 164). This capacity simultaneously to deny personal racism while benefiting from systemic racism is indicative of a fault line in the American identity, a “chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races” (Obama, 2008) that, rooted in history, is perpetuated by cultural myth.

The roots of America lie in a British colonial empire that took the land of subjugated native populations and transported people as slaves around the globe. Slavery was an established fact of
American culture before the United States became a country, and continued until the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. This long history of enforced racial difference is the ground from which the systems in the South Bronx grew and which nurtures them today. In writing about the black experience of colonialism, Franz Fanon eloquently expresses his despair of ever being understood, or being able to understand himself, within a cultural context that designates him as “the missing link in the slow evolution from ape to man” (Fanon, 1953, p. 1). Describing the bifurcated way that a black person understands his or her own identity—in relation to other blacks and, separately, in relation to whites—Fanon suggests that whites do not have a similarly fractured way seeing the Self; from their position of “superiority,” they are able to define all others (Fanon, 1953). Gail Low, exploring white myth making in Victorian literature, notes that to ignore racist writing is to leave “untouched the psychic investments which determine the formation of the fictions that sustain the world we live and act within” (Low, 1996, p. 2). The cultural legacy is one in which whites are entitled and blacks victimized by a fractured, negative, internalized self image and modern American mythmaking has done nothing to alter these dynamics. In spite of the civil rights movement, the advent of Black Power, the increased television presence of blacks and the many genuine racial “firsts” of recent years, the paradigm of “indolent, warlike Africans” best enslaved for their own good (Low, 1996, chapter 3) prevails.

But race is not the only divide within the American identity; prosperity is another. The propensity to blame the poor for their poverty was also inherited from the British Colonial Empire and embedded into the revolutionary new country. Belief in a “just world” in which an individual’s actions are solely responsible for his or her economic fate gave rise to the economic ideas of Adam Smith’s “invisible hand of the market” by which an individual “pursuing his own interest … promotes that of society” (Meadows, 2008, p. 106). Today, “while 13% of Americans live in poverty, many studies show that Americans typically believe that a person’s … economic status is due to something the person did or failed to do, therefore they deserved it or had it coming” (Coryn, 2002, p. 2). Instances of this paradigm are found in political scientist Lawrence Mead’s suggestion that the poor are in their condition of poverty because of their own “irrational” behaviour (Kozol, 1995, p. 21). They are found in media discussions about the “apathy,” “listlessness,” and lack of good “decision-making skills” among the mothers of poor children. And these discussions are “divorced from any realistic context that includes the actual conditions of their lives” (Kozol, 1995, p. 180).

In addition to the above two belief systems, there is a third set of beliefs stemming from the revolutionary years, supporting democratic principles and equality. Coming in part from those oppressed by racism and disdain for the poor, this set of beliefs is buttressed by a sizable percentage of the rest of Americans and provides additional tension within the American identity.

Intractable conflicts around the globe have their roots in paradigms that blame poor conditions on their victims, who are the object of racial or ethnic hatred and disdain. “The hegemonic systems and structures perpetuated by these paradigms objectify the subjugated, cause them to internalize a negative self image” and deprive them of “the ability to move, perceive or act freely” (Redekop, 2002, p. 275). Violence has been for the most part forestalled in the Bronx by the actions of those who hold the “third set” of beliefs indicated above. However, the possibility for violence will remain unless action is taken to redress the balance between the dominant and
the subjugated. Part of that action includes seeing clearly the systems these identity conflicts generate.

**Exterior Objective: Systems that Perpetuate Suffering**

According to Parsons, institutions or structural subsystems of poverty, like those that generate wealth, embody and are legitimized by the values and paradigms of the society that maintains them, as “generalized” by the societal community’s “pattern maintenance sub-system” (Parsons, 1971/2011, p. 195). The other sub-systems create institutions in response to these generalizations, which, at the meta level, operate nested within the larger national societal system of generalized values.

Meadows maintains that the behaviour of a system is generated by its own structures, and points to several basic “system traps” that cause systems to work in ways counter to what we expect. This logic can be applied at any systems level. At the meta level, I will limit my comments to two of Meadow’s traps: “policy resistance” and “competitive exclusion.”

**Policy Resistance**

In terms of the overarching national value system within which the Bronx system exists, the goals of the “Parsonsian sub-systems” of the societal community are at odds with one another. The goal attainment subsystem, or polity, fed by “third set” values relating to principles of democracy and equal opportunity has for decades taken action against racism through the desegregation of schools, affirmative action, the striking down of exclusionary zoning, and the passing of such mechanisms as the Community Reinvestment Act. However, the goal of the adaptive system or economy seeks to maximize benefit for those already operating effectively within the free market. Parsons notes that “money and markets operate...where spheres of action are sufficiently differentiated from ... moral imperatives.” (Parsons, 1971/2011, p. 200). In other words, the “good policies” created by the polity are not necessarily “good business” as defined by the economy. This tension between competing subsystem goals gives rise to what Meadows calls “policy resistance” (Meadows, 2008, p. 113).

An excellent South Bronx example of policy resistance can be found in the housing structural subsystem. Measures enacted by the “polity” to support housing affordability for low and middle income residents saw the creation of public housing, in 1955, through vehicles such as the Mitchell-Lama housing program, by which local jurisdictions sold land at reduced cost to developers who received subsidized low interest mortgages and tax abatements in exchange for building affordable housing. The program allowed building owners, after twenty years, to leave the program and either raise rents or sell to other business interests. While this initiative may have been predicated on the notion that incentives stimulate the making of private decisions that contribute to the public good—a kind of subsidizing of the market’s invisible hand—the actual result was the perpetual cycle of building and decay so clearly described by Kozol. On reaching the 20-year mark, owners regularly withdrew from the program and sold to parties who either increased rents or reduced their costs by cutting routine maintenance. When the buildings became completely derelict, they were razed and replaced with great fanfare with a new set of buildings. The latest of these is 1520 Sedgewick, which, after providing for 30 years 102 units of
“much desired, affordable housing for working-class families” has seen, under new owners, the number of housing code violations increase by more than 600 percent (Medina, 2010). The goal of the polity to provide affordable housing didn’t take into account the dictates of the market economy by which business seeks to optimize advantage. This same dynamic occurred within city owned housing: the goal of providing affordable housing for the poor was undermined by the need for “efficient use of resources” or reassignment of resources to other purposes. Policy resistance is also reflected in health and education, whereby the polity goals to increase well-being are undermined by “management of resources” that continually cuts budgets for staff and building maintenance or diverts funding to other needs.

**Competitive Exclusion**

Simply put, competitive exclusion allows the “rich to get richer.” Meadows explains that this system trap is “found whenever the winners of a competition receive, as part of the reward, the means to compete even more effectively in the future” (Meadows, 2008, p. 127). In *Amazing Grace*, this dynamic in most eloquently illustrated through the 1994 budget cuts for residential services such as sanitation, building inspection and pest control throughout New York. These cuts, which bankrolled tax cuts for the wealthy, hastened urban decay in poor areas and threatened public health with piles of garbage, uninspected buildings and a major increase in the rat population. (Kozol, 1995, pp.100, 107, 109). Inhabitants in wealthy areas were lauded for their ability to purchase sanitation services privately through “improvement districts.” Inhabitants of poor areas, unable to create “improvement districts,” were blamed for spiraling neighbourhood decay.

Competitive exclusion is also evident in New York City’s public school system. Between 1989 and 1992 “a billion dollars was cut from the city’s school budget” with the result that the children from one Bronx school had no building to attend and were “housed in an abandoned skating rink that had no windows” (p. 153). During this same period, $150,000,000 was spent to build the “dazzling new structure” of Stuyvesant High school, an elite public school that overwhelmingly serves “the children of Manhattan’s Upper East Side.” Competitive exclusion in the school system continues today, with Stuyvesant parents (who are able to contribute $300,000 annually to the school) having been recently awarded the right to qualify for federal financing reserved for the poorest schools (New York Times, 11/05/2010). By mechanisms such as this, “inequitable distribution of income, assets, education, and opportunity” is perpetuated and the poor receive a disproportionately small part of government expenditure... Ideas and technologies come to them last. Disease and pollution come to them first. They are the people who have no choice but to take dangerous, low-paying jobs, whose children are not vaccinated, who live in crowded, crime-prone, disaster-prone areas. (Meadows, 2008, p. 129)

**The Mechanics of Structural Subsystems in the South Bronx**

Thus far, I have addressed system dynamics at a meta level. In this section, I will examine the functioning of three structural sub-systems that Kozol describes—housing, health and education—and the ways that these interact to contribute to the growth of hopelessness, illness,
Figure 1. South Bronx Grinder Detail
illiteracy and poverty. Each of these subsystems has the creaky feel of Gotham city-style
bureaucracies: paperwork is lost, errors are made, functionaries cut corners and clients are given
confusing, contradictory or simply wrong information. Each displays what Meadows would
consider serious systems traps; chief of these is the phenomenon of “race to the bottom”
(Meadows 2008, p. 122). Briefly put, this happens when a negative evaluation of a system is
met, not with corrective action, but with lowered expectations which further reduce action, and
the system drifts gradually downward in a vicious cycle. This system trap can be seen in the
progressive cutting of funds to maintenance budgets in the public housing and the education
systems and in staffing budgets of education and health systems. Some of these dynamics are
captured in Figure 1.

It is in the interactions among the systems that the harm is really done, however. The
downward spiraling housing system situates children in mouldy, lead contaminated apartments,
causing them to suffer serious physical and mental health conditions, which contribute to
cognitive impairments and absenteeism from school, which ultimately results in withdrawal from
school. Likewise, lack of medical facilities exacerbates health problems from the home and
school environments and further damages educational prospects, and, ultimately, employability.

Each of the subsystems are nested within meta systems flawed by policy resistance and
competitive exclusion, which yields an overall planning system that perpetuates the creation of
substandard housing and locates harmful industrial installations within residential communities,
increasing harms to health. The action of these systems together is not unlike a meat grinder,
except that the output of the South Bronx grinder (Figure 2) is recycled as future generations of
people.
Conclusion

The transformation of complex systemic dysfunction such as that in the South Bronx can only be achieved with lengthy, careful, integral attention to the whole system that reconciles the interior-subjective paradigms of race, prosperity and democracy within the American identity and restores coherence among the society’s subsystems. With dialogue and discourse gaining popularity across the country, it may yet be possible to eradicate the notion that the horrendous “Bronx system” is simply illustrative of a system doing effectively what it was designed to do.

References

Medina, New York Times, May 11, 2010 At Stuyvesant, a successful push for federal money