

# INTEGRAL REVIEW

A Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Journal For New Thought, Research, and Praxis

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**Issue 1**



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*IReditors@integral-review.org*



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# Editorial

## Integral Foundations

### Introducing the First Issue of *Integral Review (IR)*

We are proud to offer the first issue of *Integral Review (IR)*, a new journal to publish works on qualitative change and development in different spheres of life, under an integral perspective. “Integral” stands for a worldview, paradigm, epistemology or general approach that encompasses multiple perspectives and dimensions, holism, and integration. Efforts to take integral approaches are finding their way into many avenues of academic and professional discussion as well as into practical application in a variety of fields. It is our intention to make a significant contribution to the discussion and research in this area through publication of articles which have been thoroughly discussed and reviewed by the editorial committee as well as by external reviewers. Articles will be either openly peer reviewed or will go through a blind review process, according to the authors' wishes.

“We” stands for a group of people who have joined together for this common endeavor after several years of internet exchange and discussion. Other than a few individual personal meetings, it has been a virtual community, focused on discussing the integral approach. We came together at the initiative of Sara Ross, who founded ARINA Inc., which is IR's publisher, and formed an editorial committee as a subgroup of ARINA for publishing *IR*.

This journal is offered as an open-access, free publication. We are using a Creative Commons copyright licensing approach that permits copying and distribution of IR's contents when attribution to publisher and author is included, but does not permit commercial use of contents without the publisher's permission.

The articles in *IR* are in English or other languages. In the case of non-English texts there is a summary in English in addition to a traditional abstract in English.

From beginning to end, the production and release of this internet journal has been, and will continue to be, an honor to participate in. Our reward is the motivation and satisfaction that can be drawn from cooperating across continents, cultures and disciplines in a meaningful project. As well, we will find reward in the feedback, active engagement and the contributions of readers, and we have designed mechanisms to facilitate this.

The Afterword for this inaugural issue will take an experimental, interactive form. When readers click the Afterword link in the Table of Contents, they will arrive at a public log-in portal to one of ARINA's forums. There, readers will find an Afterword discussion space ready for discourse about this issue, issues it raises, etc. In addition to the Afterword, there are Author Roundtable forums for discussion of specific articles, and various authors will participate to varying degrees or at least "drop in" and visit.

### On the Contents of Issue # 1

For this first issue of *IR* we decided to present (as much as possible) our own positions within the larger integral conversation by publishing texts representing our different approaches, personal backgrounds and professional fields. Additionally, we invited some other professionals to contribute to this issue. We aim to step back a little in succeeding issues to leave plenty of room



for more authors from around the world.

In this first issue, we start with a lead article by the editorial committee of *IR* itself. In it, we attempt to present the essence of our understandings of “integral” and “integral paradigm.” According to the integral principle of balancing unity and diversity, Sara Ross, president of ARINA, and Reinhard Fuhr, editor-in-chief of *IR*, describe what we might call our first attempt to define a common denominator for understanding “integral” in the course of introducing readers to *IR* and its mission. Its mission is conveyed by discussing the meanings we give to the terms used in the journal’s entire title. This is then complemented by contributions from individual members of the editorial committee. These committee members point out their personal emphases and viewpoints of “integral” in the context of their personal histories and respective professional fields, in agreement with or deviance from the main body of the article.

Jean Gebser may be considered as the intellectual father of integral thought and discussion. In a very concentrated form, Kai Hellbusch, a Gebser expert from Germany, presents the main assumptions of this extraordinary scholar by explaining “consciousness structures” as the very basis of all experience, perception and thinking. Hellbusch then summarizes the main characteristics of Gebser's spectrum of worldviews, from archaic to magic to mythic to rational to integral.

In the next article, Jan Inglis and Margaret Steele, from Canada, develop and explore a concept they call *complexity intelligence*. They draw on a broad range of literature to support putting forward the term complexity intelligence as a requirement for the work of *cultural coaches*. These cultural coaches represent a new kind of change agent, whose major task is to facilitate bridging the gap between different developmental paradigms within social contexts.

Michael Basseches, of the USA, complements approaches to the integral discourse by describing it as a psychological phenomenon of intellectual development that he calls dialectical thinking. Its dialectical dynamic, summarized here from his previous research, is distinguished from uses of the term *dialectic* found in philosophical traditions. He offers a genuine philosophical approach to the psychology of integrated thinking, and transforms the meaning of dialectic into an organizing principle of such thought. He emphasizes its importance for our world in different domains of life, how it could be supported in different professional fields, and the limits of these endeavors.

Sara Ross, also from the USA, has summarized the findings of her many years of intensive research on the general characteristics of human dynamics. She offers a set of fundamental premises, illustrated and supported by a process model. She grounds these principles theoretically and in human experience, and from this succeeds in conveying general fractal patterns on a very high level of generalizability. These universal patterns and principles can then be used to understand developmental processes and inform integral methodologies in all areas of practice.

Anne Starr and Bill Torbert, USA, devote themselves to describing what they call “triple-loop awareness,” a human capacity that is potentially crucial for radical changes in terms of the integral paradigm. This concept has a few predecessors that are referred to, such as Bateson's “Level III Learning” or the “witnessing” consciousness in Eastern philosophies. The authors aim to go beyond merely talking about triple loop awareness by engaging readers in a way that aims to elicit such awareness. They involve readers by means of case studies, real life experience, and offer exercises in the course of reading itself.

Although we want to cope with the challenge of not dividing theory from praxis, personal background from subject matter, or the concrete from the general, we do have to emphasize one or the other in the articles. The following articles then put the more concrete, practical and/or personal issues into the foreground.

Thus Russ Volckman, USA, a consultant and trainer for leadership development, interviewed Thomas Jordan, from Sweden. Jordan has a long history of experience in research and praxis on

workplace conflicts and as a consultant for conflict management and prevention. He has worked with personnel within the Swedish government, and reports in the interview on results from a recent research project: He wanted to identify integral qualities of mind and personality in people holding important positions in organizations. This investigation produced very interesting results for our understanding of the nature of integral consciousness.

Jonathan Reams, from Canada, approaches the challenging task of outlining the foundations for an integral leadership theory. His approach describes and then utilizes elements of integral theory to contextualize existing leadership theories, and makes distinctions about what sets an integral approach to leadership apart.

How can integral perspectives and approaches be applied in praxis? This is shown by Reinhard Fuhr and Martina Fuhr, from Germany, in their article on an “Integral Gestalt-Approach to Therapy and Counseling.” They merge the once revolutionary ideas and concepts of Gestalt therapy by F.S. and L. Perls and P. Goodman from the 1950’s with further developments of this approach, and with the most recent concepts on personal and social development. They then demonstrate on the basis of their long-term experience what integral therapy and counseling may look like in praxis.

When reflecting on what we have assembled for this first issue, it looks like a solid and challenging bulk of material which may not always be easy to digest, but which hopefully answers a few questions about the quality and scope of our intentions, and of what we call the “integral paradigm.” Many of the articles will simultaneously raise new questions, so that it looks as if we are confronted with a kind of hydra when dealing with integral thoughts and experience. But we are sure that this hydra will turn out to be a benevolent and exciting creature that will continuously challenge our efforts, creativity, and mutual support. Of course, we would love to involve as many readers as possible in this adventure.

*Reinhard Fuhr*  
(Editor-in-chief)

*Jonathan Reams*  
(Co-editor)

# *Integral Review* and its Editors

Sara Ross, Reinhard Fuhr, Michel Bauwens,  
Thomas Jordan, Jonathan Reams, and Russ Volckmann

**Abstract:** In this introduction to *Integral Review's* inaugural issue, we explain the meaning we give to the title of this electronic journal which is open-access, both refereed and peer-reviewed, and why that meaning is important for us in today's world. The draft of the basic article, which was intensely discussed among the members of the editorial committee, was written by Sara Ross and Reinhard Fuhr,<sup>1</sup> and following it, other members of the editorial committee added their personal emphases in reference to the integral paradigm as well as their (critical) evaluation of the premises made in the basic article. Thus Thomas Jordan offers a set of categories and criteria for integral qualities which turned out to be most important in practice and evaluation processes. Michel Bauwens makes distinctions about the multi-perspectival nature of the integral paradigm, points out ways to avoid four different kinds of reductionism, and highlights layers of awareness. Russ Volckman emphasizes the connection between the diversity of worldviews and methodologies, which allow us to also integrate recent developments in behavioral approaches in his professional field of organization and leadership development. Jonathan Reams emphasizes the new, transcendent quality of an integral approach that enables us to use different qualities of "reflection" flexibly and - as we have a meta-framework of human perceptions and values - to recognize everybody's truth and feel compassionate with it. We then close with a discussion of the relationship between *Integral Review* and the mission of its non-profit publisher, ARINA, Inc.

**Key words:** change agents, complexity, consciousness development, Gebser, integral, integration, paradigm, research, social change, transformation, Wilber.

## **An Approach to the Integral Paradigm and the Meaning of the Journal's Title**

Sara Ross and Reinhard Fuhr

We have a lot we want to share with our inaugural readers in this space as we have charged ourselves with the task of conveying, in the clearest possible manner, what *Integral Review* (IR) is all about. To shine a brighter light on that, here and there we may briefly mention what it is not about. In other places, we introduce differences in the way we as individual editors interpret the terms that describe IR. The value in doing this transparently, here, is to model how IR can be a spacious-enough vehicle for our diverse processes of interpretation, which continue to change as we do. For the most part, however, we use this space to define the concepts used in the Journal's title. We expect IR will have relevant appeal across a broad readership of change agents around the world.

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<sup>1</sup>Sara Ross is president of ARINA, Inc. and coordinator of IR, Reinhard Fuhr is editor-in-chief of IR.



## The Integral Paradigm

### The Meaning We Give *Paradigm*

*Integral Review* represents an approach to the Integral Paradigm. We inherit the word *paradigm* from the Greek language, and a standard American dictionary<sup>2</sup> definition captures its simplicity: an example, a pattern, especially an outstandingly clear or typical example or archetype.

This simplicity can easily be clouded by forgetting that patterns and archetypes are not the concrete, tangible things we see or words we hear. We can only infer them. They are like our physical skeletons that shape our human form, but are not themselves visible to the eye. This means we have to infer the “patterns, examples or archetypes” from what we observe, by looking for the deeper structures.

In addition to this, “paradigm” has also come to refer to a specific scientific school’s or a discipline’s philosophical and theoretical framework (ibid.). IR’s approach is, however, not restricted to one special discipline or scientific school, it attempts to encompass many different disciplines and formulate meta-theoretical positions.

All these words to define *paradigm* are as revealing or unrevealing as looking at a shadow on the cave wall: we see some contours of reality but not reality itself. We make this attempt in order to invite you, the reader, to develop alertness to the paradigmatic patterns—particular approaches to reality—detectable across the broad range of subjects IR covers. As a whole, articles in IR will be highly diverse clothing under which, and through which, the integral paradigm can become evident. This is because the integral approach represents a philosophy, meta-theory and a general pattern with particular qualities that can show up in every subject, and we have an editorial commitment of our best efforts to assure that it does. At the same time, we are in an experiential learning process: we will learn how to pioneer an approach to the integral paradigm in journal form by doing it.

### The Meanings We Give *Integral*

#### Jean Gebser

The reasons this effort is important to us lie in the meaning we have for *integral*. We inherit this concept from Jean Gebser, an unconventional philosopher, who was born in Germany and finally settled down in Switzerland after many years of travel. He spent about 20 years examining virtually every field of human endeavor to discern the qualities of integral perception (Gebser 1985), acknowledging the challenge representing it, because “... this worldview goes beyond our conceptualization.” In our attempts to define the integral worldview we are confined by the limitations of our language reflecting layers from earlier worldviews that do not apply to the integral view.<sup>3</sup>

It is a challenge to describe a new and relatively rare worldview: its “birth-pangs” first came into evidence only a century ago (Keckeis, 1985, xx). Gebser built his concept of an integral paradigm (as we would say nowadays) on *structures of consciousness*, which determine the “lenses” through which we perceive reality right from the beginning. These structures of con-

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<sup>2</sup>Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> Ed.

<sup>3</sup>See also Kai Hellbusch’s article in this issue.

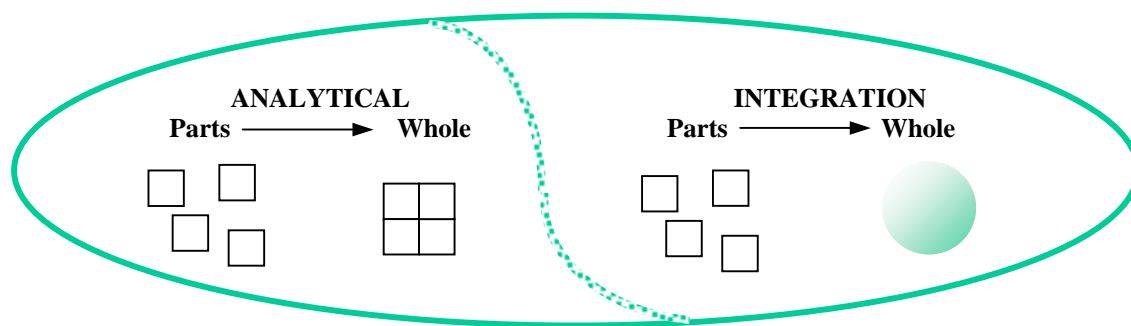


sciousness are related to and shape virtually every human experience including our ways of reasoning. According to Gebser, they emerge from the universal mind or primordial consciousness (*Ursprung*), and form patterned structures that we would now call holarchies (according to Arthur Koestler's term): one stage of patterns building on the other, and through each more developed stage all the previous stages shine through and are available. Thus Gebser identified the five stages: archaic, magic, mythic, mental and integral.

The integral paradigm itself is characterized by Gebser mainly in that it allows us to reconnect to the primordial origin again, but in a conscious and differentiated way. The world is no longer an object, we can now gain an intimate relationship to the world, in particular as an integral perception is no longer restricted by a particular concept of time, of either-or dichotomies or of one perspective of reality only: it is holistic, multiperspectival and multidimensional.

We can see through the individual phenomena we perceive and discover the greater *gestalt*. This gestalt principle, which is also an essential concept of the theory of Gestalt therapy as it was founded by Frederick S. Perls, Laura Perls and Paul Goodman (Perls et al. 1951), says that we can understand the individual phenomena of life in their deeper meaning by grasping the whole gestalt. A gestalt is more and something else than the sum of the individual components that we can connect in linear progressions (see figure 1).<sup>4</sup> It is *becoming* a whole that integrates the different parts by intuiting their very essence. In order to perceive in this integral way it is important that we *experience* the phenomena concretely. And we can only experience them in the *here and now*, in real-time. This holistic way of perceiving and gaining knowledge is not possible without seeking within ourselves, too, in relation to our environmental field (Gebser 1985, 99, 141, 268). Thus we are able to see through the surfaces and discover the basic patterns, and thus to relate the world's external processes and behaviors with the internal worlds'.

These few remarks on a most unusual and unconventional thinker may already indicate what fascinating and yet difficult task lies ahead of us when we attempt to realize, implement and further develop these ideas in different fields of knowledge and practice – and also which kinds of resistance in ourselves and in others may be provoked by the integral way of thinking and experiencing.



**Figure 1:** Analytical and holistic thinking

### Ken Wilber and other Authors

Another approach to the integral paradigm – which is actually connected to Jean Gebser's theory – goes back to Ken Wilber. In spite of the fact that Wilber's work, widely spread in the world as it is, has been discussed very controversially, and in spite of the fact that he has been

<sup>4</sup>See also the German Handbook on Gestalt therapy (Fuhr, Gremmler-Fuhr, Sreckovic [eds.] or an English textbook (Woldt, Toman 2005 [eds.] 2005)

reduced to the leader of a new transpersonal or spiritual movement by quite a few “Wilber groups,” many of us who are engaged in editing and/or writing for this journal owe a debt of gratitude, especially to his main work *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality* (1995) or *Integral Psychology* (2001). Even though we may disagree with, have to digest, and/or modify some of his propositions, he offers some rich and inspiring thoughts and ideas. Wilber attempted to synthesize many developmental theories from East and West in order to conceive of an encompassing meta-theory on evolution and development and the integral paradigm. Like Gebser, he considers development as an unfolding of Spirit and as a continuous spiral process within the individual, biological, cultural and social units, as well as organizations throughout their life cycles. And this developmental process may be seen and explored from at least four perspectives: an individual and a collective perspective, both in terms of an internal and an external view, resulting in the four major perspectives of one and the same reality.

As this multiperspectivity opens new horizons for studying questions of personal and social significance in nearly all fields of life, practically and scientifically, we are also challenged to design and apply new research approaches and methods (connecting e.g. phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches with empirical studies and systems theory). There is no doubt, however, that the external perspectives strongly dominate in research, study, and praxis across the disciplines in our days. It will be a great challenge for those who form and contribute to IR to rebalance this lopsided view and if possible to *integrate* different perspectives when approaching professional fields. Probably there will be quite some controversial discussions on the scientific dignity of these different approaches. We may notice this, in particular, when we attempt to give the internal perspective (which concern human impulses and feelings, imaginations and beliefs or the cultural value systems, role taking and expectations in our societies) the same importance as the external approaches oriented towards empirical criteria only (see also Wilber 1998).

The evolutionary and developmental processes themselves have been explored in great depth by Ken Wilber and many other authors. These developmental processes can be studied in view of many different dimensions like emotions, reasoning, ethics, behavioral patterns, social competencies and structures, organizational and political structures, ways of living - to name but a few. All these dimensions are considered to be aspects of the whole gestalt as explained before, and they are correlated with one another. It seems to be one of the greatest challenges in individual and cultural life, including of course those engaged in making this journal, to integrate all these different aspects of development.

According to Wilber and many other authors like Maslow, Selman, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, Kegan, Loevinger, Cook-Greuter, and of course also Gebser himself (including many developmental theories from the East), the developmental processes do not form a lock-step march in a linear continuum within every person or society, but rather show some variety in when, if, and how they manifest. Regardless of individual variety, these stage patterns in different domains of life can be distinguished. As a result, we can notice different paradigms operating in the double meaning of the word as explained before: distinct methods of gaining knowledge of reality on the one hand, and basic philosophical and meta-theoretical assumptions on the other hand. These dynamics develop as holarchies, (mentioned briefly, earlier), i.e. they transcend and integrate their previous basic structures as they become more complex. Thus we arrive at a spectrum of development which can be reconstructed and studied from different perspectives of reality.

The co-founder of the Club of Rome and founder of the Club of Budapest, Ervin Laszlo, adds another perspective to this on a well-founded scientific basis. After lifelong research he comes to the conclusion that the world's civilization quickly moves towards a bifurcation in the course of a “macroshift” we are actually in (Laszlo 2003). Whether a critical amount and quality of transformational shifts to new paradigms (and in particular to a new worldview he describes and

which we might call *integral*) in all fields of personal and public life can be initiated may, according to Laszlo, be an existential, though open question of survival in our global village.

One of the central topics in IR will at any rate be devoted to the further investigation of processes along the spectrum of development indicated above and to the possibility of supporting such transformational processes in research and praxis.

## The Meaning of the Journal's Title

In this section, we want to explain what we mean word by word by the title of the journal: "Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Journal for New Thought, Research, and Praxis." This affords us a nice opportunity to ease into the more concrete language that characterizes the rest of this article.

### "Integral"

Our perceptions of the world—our worldviews—are organic, whole-person dynamics that we operationalize in whatever ways we can to meet our purposes. As several of us editors discussed how to make the integral paradigm evident in the IR, and how to talk about it in this introduction, we surfaced multiple ways of *referring* to it.

One of us has particular appreciation for the simplicity of the dictionary definition of *integral*: essential to completeness; lacking nothing essential. This simple definition would refer to our hope that every IR article attempts to evidence the integral paradigm by covering its topic with the comprehensive depth, dimensional span, scales, and contexts necessary to convey its whole complex nature, to the extent possible in this medium. One of us would say the foregoing captures the meaning of "an integral approach," and another says we can avoid prescriptive problems if we use the notion of "integrally informed approaches."

We exchanged cautions that we need to beware of the natural human tendencies to make highly abstract concepts, such as "integral," into concrete "things." This can lead to confusing maps with the territories they point to. Yet it's helpful to model and experiment with new ideas in concrete ways: it is part of the process of integrating them as they make more and more sense to us through usage and peer review. Yet another editor wishes to avoid the perfectionism implied in the dictionary definition above, and prefers to stress the *intention* to be more complete, and the polarity of daring to take a clear perspective while also having the greater whole in view. He articulates a quality of *integral* that is implicit throughout this article, and deserves to be expressed. People find that integral approaches give them a completely new horizon of meaning making, defining a new existential sense of life by expanding the perceptions of connectedness; these approaches may make it much easier to make sense of our complex world.

Ultimately, all those words are meaningless if we don't get down to the practical matters of our real work in the world, and this is what we hope IR will be very much about. In that direction, IR has practical, integral criteria it applies to its work of journal production. Likewise, it has distilled from them the several general criteria we have agreed upon for works published in IR, as follows:

- They reflect or pay attention to the range of different worldviews and meaning-making processes that operate in people, and thus understand some of the processes and patterns that are evident in, and across, various phenomena.
- They demonstrate a sensibility for developmental dimensions and processes through-

out the human lifespan.

- They indicate some kind of orientation toward facilitating translative as well as transformative development in various domains of life. By translative, we mean enlarging the views, attitudes, and competencies of individuals, groups, communities, etc., within the level of their existing paradigms. By transformative, we mean catalyzing and supporting learning processes that facilitate the development of new paradigms and their qualitative capacities.

## “Review”

“Review” in IR’s title means the active verb form of *review* because this publication is not a passive instrument that produces reviews of what is going on in the world. We treat it as an active verb because IR as a whole must attempt to fulfill the third criteria above in its own presentation. It, too, has the intention of fostering translative and transformative experiences by the way it engages its readers in both content and dialogue.

Review as an action includes all the familiar meanings of the term: to view, examine again, to look back on something with a retrospective gaze, to examine critically or deliberately, to evaluate, etc. These actions help us make sense of our experience—the process of our meaning-making—so that we can adapt to and learn from it. They help us notice unique features that we want to make sense of. And they help us detect patterns and common processes that may appear across differently clothed human experiences. The diverse actions included in the process of review are fundamental for people engaged in change efforts of all kinds, from the self and other individuals, to the organizational and institutional, to the general social and political domains. This is because we are not just *acting upon* others and our world; we are *interacting with* everyone and everything.

To facilitate active review processes for readers, authors, and editors alike, IR may include a feature not typically found in journals: an Afterword. This will be a place where we can offer reflective observations and sometimes questions about the issue contents and how they inform each other. It will be an opportunity to point to patterns and archetypes at play within and across articles. It will be a creative space for emergence of whatever inspirations we might have to foster our individual and collective reflection on the reading experience. It will be one structural mechanism within the IR to encourage dialogue within ourselves and among all of us. Perhaps it will lead to a Letters to the Editors feature where such dialogue may take place publicly.

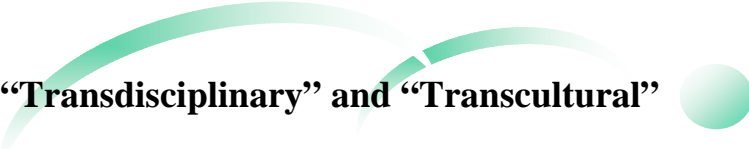
The Afterword for this inaugural issue will take an experimental, interactive form. When readers click the Afterword link in the Table of Contents, they will arrive at a public log-in portal to one of ARINA’s forums. There, readers will find an Afterword discussion space ready for discourse about this issue, issues it raises, etc. In addition to the Afterword, there are Author Roundtable forums for discussion of specific articles, and various authors will participate to varying degrees or at least “drop in” and visit.

There are more meanings we give IR’s use of the action verb, review. The familiar meanings we listed above tend to orient us to looking at things “outside” ourselves. In the spirit of fostering concrete experiences to feed our integration processes, we always encourage the attention directed outward to flow back around to ourselves. This can remind us to examine how processes going on inside of our own skin are similar to processes going on “out there.” Without the essentials of self-reflection and reflexion, we would miss the prerequisite of integrating: *experiencing* our experiences in their very essence. Just reading about things in the abstract does not contribute to integration; the subjects we read about need to be engaged reflectively and reflexively, at

minimum. Thus, *review* in this journal's title is an activity to engage.

We are aware that this wide-ranging discussion of our approach to the integral paradigm does not result in any crystal clear definitions, and may even invoke some frustration in a reader. Concrete experiences of frustration are natural responses to polarities we tend to experience when we want to understand something new and it does not fit neatly into familiar categories: they are natural catalysts for self-reflection, a way to re-view. The foregoing explication of the meanings we give the *Integral Review's* main title goes well beyond just our meanings and a title. We hope it gives you, as our reader, a concrete flavor of what the activity of an integral review can include.

## “Transdisciplinary” and “Transcultural”



We deliberated long and hard about how much of a mouthful we wanted to allow IR's subtitle to become, and why. In the end, we decided each of its individual bites was necessary to augment the main title and convey our intentions for the nature of the Journal in a meaningful way. Predictably, we begin by defining what we mean by *trans-*. The first dimension of its meaning is traditional: across, beyond, and/or through. It can evoke images of humans' first transcontinental trading routes centuries ago, or railroads, or air flights. They crossed through geopolitical boundaries and spanned great distances across land, and above and beyond both those social and natural boundaries. The second dimension of *trans-* is that by its boundary- and scale-spanning nature, it changes how we customarily think about and do things. Its essential nature is transformative. Thus, we mean *trans-* in the dictionary sense of across, beyond, and through, so as to change. The next question is, change what?

First, as we begin to address that question, it will be useful to refer to Figure 1, where we illustrated a whole as “seen through” by an integral perception. A sphere like the one in this section's heading symbolizes it. In this discussion, the sphere can represent the whole problem or issue that needs to be addressed, for example, by a change agent. What is *changed* by a transdisciplinary approach is how we see the problem or issue, and where we stand in relation to it. A transdisciplinary approach is pragmatic, making the real world problem or issue the anchor that grounds efforts to address it. The problem or issue will be defined in terms of what it needs, regardless of geopolitical and institutional boundaries, and discipline, expertise, or biases of change agents or agencies, who will use and draw upon whatever resources, disciplines and knowledge bases are available and appropriate.

IR's transdisciplinarity is suggested by the range of articles' subjects covered in this inaugural issue. With the possible exception of any given special issue we may publish, every issue of IR will span multiple traditional categories and boundaries, to foster in all of us an integral perception of the wholes we are all trying to address as change agents.

The IR is intentionally transcultural in two ways. The first is most readily apparent, by its international editorial staff, its multi-language inclusion of articles, and its world-wide availability as an open-access electronic journal. We hope this quality will improve all our capacities to notice and work with difference arising within and from our cultural milieu. This does not refer only to group, national, and regional differences. IR's transcultural orientation may also illustrate that we often exist in a variety of cultural milieus, one at home, another at work, another at a place of faith-meeting, and another in our civic life. Developing a conscious awareness of the transcultural qualities in our own lives can inform how we notice and work with other kinds of cultural differences, *so that* we can surface new ways to work with them.

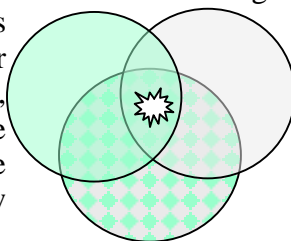
Sometimes this means we adopt more than one approach to accomplish an objective. That was our editorial decision as we considered the two different norms in use for producing peer-reviewed journals, as IR is. In Europe, a frequent custom is that the reviewers' and authors' identities are not anonymous to the other. In the U.S., the norm of academic journal publications is that the authors' identities are stripped from the manuscripts in a "blind" review process, in an effort to remove certain sources of bias on the part of reviewers, and the reviewers' identities are likewise anonymous to the authors. These two schemes are founded on very different assumptions, and IR has adopted the policy that it will accommodate both, based on author request.

At other times, there may be more challenging issues that require more creativity, adaptation, and a deliberate process to apply integral criteria. Such was another transcultural question we encountered as we prepared this issue of IR: What is an integral approach to the different cultural values placed on language that is variously called gender-neutral or inclusive? What is the integral approach when the very structures of some languages are inherently shaped around masculine- and feminine-gendered nouns (e.g., German and French). Several of us living in North America have lived through and been changed by the decades of inclusive language becoming the cultural norm, to the point of being broadly institutionalized in many contexts. In Western Europe, sensitivity about the use of inclusive language also exists, it has not been made a staunch cultural norm that pervades the spoken and written word everywhere and is therefore used more flexibly, especially given the constraints of some languages. How this question was resolved editorially will become evident to readers of IR in the course of reading it.

Secondly, IR is transcultural by its orientation to drawing attention to the individual and social patterns evident across cultures. Such attention is a resource for noticing and working with and within different cultures when it can discern the universal patterns that may be operating *beneath* apparent surface differences. This orientation echoes our earlier discussion of abstract patterns and paradigms. The ability to see and work with cultural difference is complemented by the ability to also see where there are additional human patterns operating in conjunction with them. This is a contribution often made by cross-cultural studies, and there are additional ways to study patterns that can significantly inform change agents' work. Both abilities are complemented by the pragmatic orientation discussed earlier, that of designing efforts that address the whole complex problem or issue as the anchor that grounds our work.

## “New Thought, Research, and Praxis”

Rather than discuss our meanings for these terms—thought, research, and praxis—we will take a different approach in this section, and explain why. Integral Review is a transdisciplinary resource where all articles attempt to reflect to some degree the main criteria mentioned earlier. Those criteria apply whether authors discuss extensions, critique, or kind of socially significant research, tackle a particular problem. To the criteria, we expect that every article thought, new research, and new approaches are yet rare in our world, solicit, and publish authors who take an integral approach to today's complex challenges.



share reflections on experience or applications of a theory, report any or describe practical methods to extent that articles can approach the will be a contribution to new praxis. This is because integral and IR's mission is to encourage,

We have inherited the three separate, abstract categories of thought, research, and praxis through the language of compartmentalized worldviews that developed them in times past. They are useful to employ in IR's subtitle for at least two reasons. First, they are familiar terms and in



wide use, and thus they easily communicate the scope of the Journal's coverage. Equally important, they keep in the front of our attention the ongoing invitation to increasingly perceive, practice, experience, and write and read about them as the whole they can be through an integral perception. Rather than explicate this notion with another abstract discussion that has no integrative benefit, we make two open invitations to our readers. The first invitation is to engage in your own active, self-reflective inquiry into the meanings you assign each of these terms. Beneath those first-layer meanings, what assumptions are supporting them? How do you describe to yourself the nature of each concrete activity—thought, research, practice—and where you find their intersections? We invite you to test with your own lived experience our hypothesis that these are—at the level of their most basic essence—parts of a whole that is awaiting integration.

The second, equally open invitation is to write a short or long reflective story about how you tested this hypothesis we offer, and what you found out from your own experience, whether or not it happens to support our hypothesis. Share with all of us what you learned from the process, and how you think it might be useful—or has since been useful—in your approach to life and work. Whether in an issue of this Journal or on its publisher's website, we want to publish your personal research testing this proposal, and be able to report on a collection of such stories. It is one of the foundational research questions for an integral approach, and part of IR's mission is to publish socially significant research for the sake of the common good. We invite you into the co-creation of new thought, research, and praxis.

## Defining "Integral"

Thomas Jordan

Four years ago I made a serious effort to define the meaning of "integral" in terms of a set of criteria that could be used to assess whether a perspective is integral or not. My point of departure was the field of integral politics and the need to describe the characteristics of an integral political perspective. I came up with nine items on a checklist. Some fellow "integralists," in particular Jim Turner and Sara Ross, offered constructive comments and alternative formulations of some of the items. The resulting product is ARINA's "integral evaluation process." I still feel it captures the essence of integral meaning-making, i.e. integral as a consciousness structure, rather than as the name of a particular kind of theoretical framework. So my contribution to a conversation on defining what we mean by the word "integral" is this checklist. I do hope the checklist will be a fruitful starting-point for an *integral* discussion about the meaning of "integral," rather than as a final statement.

## The Integral Evaluation Process

### 1. Motivations

Do goals and aspirations reflect a mindset that is committed to the well being of "the whole," where even appropriately-focused specific interests and allegiances are always situated and pursued within a consciously overarching world centric frame?

## **2. Visions and Strategy**

a. Is the strategy free from dualistic thinking in the sense of pitting an idealized vision of what ought to be, against a depreciating image of what is, in favor of a processual and integrative approach to learning, social change, etc.?

b. Does the perspective underlying the strategy view others as “objects” of the strategy's action, or does the strategy's design treat them consistently as the subjects of their own experience?

c. Does the strategy incorporate first-, second-, and third-person research and practice where possible?

## **3. Self-awareness**

a. Is there a well-developed awareness of the nature of the perspective used in the process or task being undertaken, with awareness of the characteristics of this perspective in relation to other perspectives?

b. Is there evidence of non-attachment to one's own identifications with standpoints, i.e., an absence of defensiveness in relation to other views?

## **4. Identifications (self-embeddedness)**

a. Is the meaning-making free from an adversarial stance, i.e., the tendency to regard other parties as the cause of significant problems who must therefore be defeated or brought under control?

b. Is there a fluid and open-ended relationship to identifications with collectives on the whole scale from one's own family, organization, faith community, professional practice or discipline, ethnicity, etc. to humanity as a whole, sentient beings in general, and the physical environment?

## **5. Interpretations of the world around us and in us**

a. Does the worldview (the narrative describing the situation(s) of concern and causal relationships in its environment) reflect a profound awareness of the existence of complex systems, contexts, and causal layers and webs that influence the behavior of individuals and groups and explain the specific forms of events and conditions in society?

b. Does the worldview draw on an understanding of the limitations and dynamics of prevailing levels of development in the social systems and leadership that are related to the focus of concern?

c. Are proposals adapted to existing levels of development or meaning-making, so that any social processes or structures that are recommended will have good chances to function as intended, given where the people and culture are?

d. Is the perspective sensitive to the dialectic between (1) the need to create stable and well-adapted holding environments for existing meaning-making systems, so that these can be expressed in benign forms; and, on the other hand, (2) the facilitation of transformation to levels of meaning-making that are more competent in solving problems?

## Beyond Perspectives, Reductionisms and Layers

Michael Bauwens

As indicated before, the concept of integral is an umbrella term that can encompass different interpretations, though I believe that they share a commonality: that they are multi-perspectival, i.e. aim to combine not just one worldview, but several, or is meta-paradigmatical, incorporating more than one just one paradigm. The term transdisciplinarity is also closely related: it is not only the juxtaposing of different disciplines in one research project, but an attempt to transcend the partial approaches into a unity, an attempt to go “beyond” the different disciplines.

As my own contribution, I would like to offer some more perspectives on the concept of integral.

### The Place of the Integral Approach

Let’s have a look at the first table:

	<b>Parts</b>	<b>Whole</b>	<b>Includes</b>
<b>Difference</b>	Postmodern approaches		Subjects and Objects
<b>Similarity</b>		Integral Approaches	Subjects and Objects
<b>Similarity</b>	Analytical Sciences	Systemic Sciences	Objects Only

This table is an attempt to show how the integral approach is related to other approaches. We can recognise two axes: one distinguishes attention for the ‘whole’ from attention to the ‘parts;’ the other distinguishes attention to similarities and ‘structural unity’ between different phenomena, from attention to difference.

All four approaches are valid in our attempt to understand ‘reality.’ The classic materialist approach is based on the reduction of any phenomena to its constituent parts, which are then studied separately.

The idea of course is that such analysis is eventually followed by a synthesis, but the synthesis is always secondary, and for all practical purposes is often abandoned, since scientists have become hyper-specialised in their disciplines, and have difficulty understanding other specialised domains. It is still the mainstream approach in the hard sciences, and very important in the social sciences as well. The result is a fragmentation of our knowledge and worldviews.

Current emphasis on the whole gives us the systemic sciences such as cybernetics, the system sciences proper, self-organization theory, chaos and complexity theories. In such an approach, a part is only considered through its function for the whole. Furthermore, it is always objective, there is no attention for its separate subjectivity, intention, will, etc...

From the world of philosophy have come the postmodern approaches. These approaches stress that any worldview is dependent on perspective, that no part of a system can understand the whole. Therefore, it rejects ‘grand narratives’ for their hubris of taking an imagined godlike position of a part claiming to be able to know the whole. Postmodern approaches, also called post-structuralist, reject structuralist approaches, which look at structural unity, and like the systemic sciences, forget the subject. Postmodern approaches stress ‘difference,’ no ‘thing,’ no ‘object,’ no ‘subject’ exists apart from the field or system it is part of, and in fact, is defined by its differ-

ence from the other things in the same field.

The Integral approach can be seen as a reaction against the limitations and unforeseen effects of the previous methods. Unlike analytical science, it focuses on the whole. Unlike systemic approaches, it always includes the subjective component. Unlike postmodern approaches, it does not shy away from integrative ‘grand narratives.’ But it has also learned from the other approaches: that no attention to the whole can violate the truth of its parts, from the systemic sciences, that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, from the postmodern, that the integral is just another limited perspective, albeit a useful one. Integralism should therefore never be seen as a totalising, ‘imperialistic’ approach, but as another, integrative, multiperspectival way to look at the world. In fact, it can be said that any individual is an integrator, is a different composite, of his/her understanding of reality. But the specific effort, methodology, of the integral forces its practitioner to a more conscious effort to integrate as large a portion of truth as possible. Moreover, because it also knows the limitations of any individual perspective, it stresses that dialogic methods, involving intersubjective meeting of minds, can yield greater relative truth still.

## Avoiding Reductionisms

Let us now look at the next table:

	<b>Individual Aspects</b>	<b>Collective Aspects</b>
<b>Interior Aspects</b>	Subjective field: The subject / the self	Intersubjective field: Spirituality / Worldviews
<b>Exterior Aspects</b>	Objective field: Technological artifacts as extensions of the body	Interobjective field: Natural Systems / Political, economic, organizational systems

As explained before, Ken Wilber has offered a synthesing way of looking at reality, by stressing the need to cover the following aspects of reality; subjective, intersubjective, objective, interobjective.

An advantage is its comprehensiveness. There are few other integrative approaches of such a large encompassing scope. Looking at any phenomena from those different angles is a very comprehensive way of looking at the world. It is also a tremendous way to avoid different kinds of reductionisms:

- The objective reductionism of the analytical sciences, reducing any whole to its material parts, in a permanent attempt to explain the more complex by the less complex, the immaterial by the material, the subjective by the objective. While such a reductionist and analytical approach yields tremendous value, it is also at the same time an impoverishment.
- The interobjective reductionism of the system sciences, which also do not integrate the subjective component, again reducing reality to its materiality, or rather to its ‘functionality.’
- The subjective reductionism of any ‘idealistic’ approach that takes the human will, or divine will, as paramount, without sufficient attention to its grounding in intersubjective and interobjective systems and in materiality. More recently this tendency emerges as cognitive reductionism, where reality is reduced to the cognitive apparatus of the human.
- The intersubjective reductionism of some postmodern approaches, where everything is reduced to its constituent fields, for example language. In such an approach, materiality is often forgotten, everything becomes a ‘discourse.’

## Recognizing Layers

This is an interpretation of the integrative that resonates particularly in the context of my personal evolution.

Humans are layered persons. We have an instinctual apparatus and corresponding reactions, we have an emotional apparatus, a mental apparatus, a transmental ‘witnessing’ apparatus, at the very least. But because of our civilisational evolution, these different layers are far from well integrated. There has been a lot of unconscious ‘repression’ of our earlier layers, especially by mental layer, resulting in many individual and collective pathologies. As I see it, every human being should at some point in life, undertake a ‘regression in the service of the ego,’ i.e. make a voyage of discovery into the repressed aspects, undertake a ‘dark night of the soul.’ An important aspect of the integral approach is its developmental aspect, a focus on the fact that humans, societies, systems, evolve from the simple to the complex, from one historical formation to another. By uncovering this development, making the unconscious conscious, we become more whole, more integrated. Thus an integral approach obtains a ‘transparency’ in terms of our functioning, an ability to recognize ‘where we are coming from,’ not only historically, but ‘here and now:’ which layer is active, and ‘is it appropriate.’ In our particular civilisation this means a growing capacity to grasp reality as ‘a whole,’ and understanding how our different layers operate simultaneously. We can go beyond the ‘cognicentrism’ that is our common cultural lot. This is how I interpret Thomas Jordan’s contribution as well: through our own comprehension of our perspective, we can better understand other perspectives, and thus achieve a growing meta-perspective.

## Conclusion: The Integral defined

To conclude, in my understanding, an integral approach is one that;

- respects the relative autonomy of the different fields, and looks for field specific laws,
- affirms that new levels of complexity cause the emergence of new properties and thus rejects reductionisms that try to explain the highly complex from the less complex,
- tries to formulate level-specific laws that relate the objective and subjective aspects, refusing to see any one aspect as a mere epiphenomena of the other,
- is subjective-objective in that it always relates the understanding of the objective, through the prism of a recognised individual perspective in general,
- and attempts to correlate explanations emanating from the various fields, in order to arrive at an integrative understanding; in this sense it is a hermeneutic discipline focusing on creating meaning.

## Diversity in Worldviews and Methodologies

Russ Volckman

I would like to elaborate a bit on the notion of paradigm and its implication for my own interest(s) in presenting within these pages, as well as working with others whose contributions will surely enrich our explorations. Paradigm may be identified as a worldview of a particular school of thought. It has also been suggested to imply a methodology associated with that worldview.

This link between worldview and methodology is key to linking thought, research and praxis.

The behavioral school that dominated academic psychology and other social sciences in the 1960s and 1970s held a particular worldview that we can only study what we can measure. This led to the use of methodologies that provided opportunities for measurement, including experimentation with animals, laboratory experiments with human subjects, and the use of tools such as games, electronic devices and self-assessment instruments.

In academia this gave way to postmodernism and the relativism of its extreme expression, a topic amply discussed by Ken Wilber. There can be little doubt that an integral perspective is one that intends to draw on the validity of postmodernism and other philosophies and perspectives while leaving behind those elements that can be transcended and not included. And, while the term integral can be interpreted in a variety of ways, I assume it to mean a theoretical approach that seeks to examine what can be observed and what cannot, what can be measured and what cannot. Further, it is an approach that is concerned with development. My familiarity with it is based on reading the work of Ken Wilber and those who have built on his contributions.

Personally, as a graduate student and, later, faculty member in universities I found myself resisting and even reacting against behavioral approaches. I focused my energy on personal awareness and change through various humanistic psychologies, including gestalt therapy, body therapies and various other workshops and training. I demeaned the behaviorists and ignored their work — until I began looking at and working with organizations, teams and leaders.

In learning to become a change agent in the field of organization development I found that there had been a robust use of behavioral approaches to understanding change in organizational systems. The leading journal in the field was even titled, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences*. This journal continues to be published in association with the National Training Laboratories, an historic leader in the development of organization development practitioners (in Arlington, Virginia, and Bethel, Maine, USA) and describes itself as follows:

With diverse audiences in mind, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* publishes a variety of material designed to help individuals and organizations promote positive, successful change. The specific goals of the journal are to

- Present a range of conceptual frameworks that explain, predict, and illuminate the implications of action
- Describe social inventions, intervention techniques, consultation activities, emergent innovations, and educational practices
- Employ the full range of social science
- Examine underlying values, assumptions, biases, and beliefs associated with various forms of change...

The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science's articles keep up with the evolution of the field, ensuring that you'll receive the best and latest analysis on the spectrum of social change. (<http://www.sagepub.com/journal.aspx?pid=217>)

This statement is a far cry from what I thought about narrowness of the behavioral sciences forty years ago. I am struck by the similarities in missions of that—and probably other—journals that are equally interested in the marriage of theory and methodology. What JABS and IR have in common is commitment to the discovery of approaches that both broaden and deepen our understanding of the dynamics of change in human systems. How they may differ is in the hypothesis that there is an approach, which can integrate diverse worldviews and methodologies.

Organization Development and related fields continue to hold as important that which can be



measured. The field (theory and practice) has focused on what can be directly observed. Nevertheless, organization development practitioners have had a long interest in that which cannot be measured. I am reminded of Bob Tannenbaum's presentation at the 1982 OD Network Conference in reference to consultants' reliance on tools: "The most important tool you bring is yourself." In this sense, organization development has been a leader in looking at multi-disciplinary approaches to organizational and individual development and change.

It is from this field that we find concepts and methods related to culture and spirit at work. Practitioners have long sought methodologies that promote awareness and learning, working with diversity, promoting ethics and the capacity of organizations to create cultures in which individuals could be whole, healthy, creative and capable human beings while being productive and engaging actively with change. As such, it has been a field of study and practice that has reached out to many fields for inspiration and guidance: psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, philosophy, ethics, biology, ecology, physics, mathematics, art, music and theater. Consequently, it is likely that an integral perspective will be embraced by this eclectic field of study and practice and that there is evidence that it already is by some.

I do not anticipate that Integral Review will become or be seen by others as just another journal about change. I believe we are challenged and committed to making the Integral Review relevant to theory and practice and to the world in the way described in this article. As such we will need to be able to address an audience and fellow explorers who have not only cultural diversity and diversity of world view, but diversity of capacity to engage with and learn from what we present. This is an extraordinary challenge of relevance and I suspect this will be a significant element of our own learning curve.

It is with this spirit of inquiry, openness and exploration in practice that the Integral Review offers a focus on change in human systems and for each of us as individuals. It is with this commitment to inquiry and discovery on every level of our endeavors that we provide opportunities to focus on development and change from an integrally informed perspective, as my friend and colleague Jonathan Reams likes to say. My own interests are on the application of this approach to the field of leadership studies. We have a wonderful opportunity to discover and demonstrate the relatedness of integrated, that is integral, approaches to change and development in how we understand what it is to be a leader and in how leadership emerges in human systems. To include ourselves as whole beings, with our own worldviews, behaviors that emerge in the context of how we hold cultural values and engage with systems provides us with an opportunity for a gestalt that will emerge no matter what our particular focus. That challenge is as much for me as it is to the readers and other writers of this journal. It is exciting to be part of this.

## Transcendence and Compassion

Jonathan Reams

In reading over the introductory text of this article, I was struck by one passage that captured the heart of my interest in the so-called "integral paradigm." In discussing Jean Gebser's opening of the field, he is quoted as characterizing the difficulties in representing integral by saying that "this worldview goes *beyond our conceptualization*." I wrote my dissertation on the *Consciousness of Transpersonal Leadership*, and in it I explored the limits of rational analytical thought. Being exposed to a hermeneutical view of understanding, which recognizes the inherently reflex like action of thought as it reflects on lived experience, I came to see rational analytical thinking as a secondary process rather than a generative one. Thus the process of conceptualizing as a

form of analytical thinking is inherently removed from, or less than the integral world view Gebser points to.

For me, this implies that the integral way of looking at things is generated from a level of consciousness, or paradigm beyond those elements which it aims to integrate. This is important, as trying to integrate conceptual frameworks with a meta-framework in the way integral theory does cannot be done with the same conceptual process. This notion comes from many sources basically stating that in order to change, comprehend fully, or make meaning out of something, one needs to engage this process from a level qualitatively beyond that of the object of attention.

So my understanding of the value of the integral paradigm emerges from this view of its central operating premise pointed to by Gebser. How that value is expressed or utilized by proponents of the integral paradigm varies, but from what I have read about it, I have found it to be the most comprehensive way of integrating all strands of inquiry. At the same time, I have also experienced that its complexity and sophistication lend to its being misunderstood, misrepresented, and reduced to that which the user can grasp. This is the proverbial not seeing the forest for the trees, and seems to me to stem from moving away from the core of integral beyond conceptualization into trying to ground integral in the concepts that arise from it.

It is in this sense that I resonate with the “trans” in the subtitle of the journal. I tend towards the connotation of trans that fits with “meta,” as in a meta-framework, or a meta-conceptualization. This is the transcendent aspect, that for me is the ground, the starting place of the unmediated immediacy of our lived experience. Out of this source we can generate conceptualizations, as we utilize rational analysis to reflect on this experience. The mindfulness an integral approach points to is to keep our attention from being trapped within the confines of the models or images these conceptualizations create, and then mistaking them for the thing they represent.

Thus the notion of being “integrally informed” appeals to me in this way. I recognize that my grasp of integral theory in all its glory is limited - both inherently in that it is beyond conceptualization, and in a more pragmatic way that it is not the sole focus of my life’s work. So I like to see that what I do and how I think is informed by this integral paradigm rather than that I have somehow grasped it and can design integral interventions and such. This is not to say that these things are not possible, and it is my hope that this journal will provide a vehicle for engaging in a common discourse to explore how people are applying this paradigm in their activities in the world. It is just for me to recognize that this view is still very much new and emerging, and in a state of open flux and experimentation to find out how to make use of it in practical ways.

One practical way this has shown up in my life was triggered by distinctions we can make between reflection, self-reflection, and reflexion. The layers of taking something experienced as implicit, tacit, or the self as subject, and using these methods to allow perception, assumptions and image/world view to be made explicit, or an object of awareness, has been an important and valuable process in my life. It has enabled me to move the ground of my actions in the world. I would say that I began (in my adult life) acting from a non-reflective place where my actions emerged primarily as an automatic reflex, conditioned by factors such as upbringing, culture, education and even genetics. Gradually, I was able to reflect on the external conditions of my life in a way that brought about a desire for change. This led to self-reflection and eventually having action and choice emerge from examining the links between attitudes and their effect on the way the world showed up for me. Later on, I began to be more grounded in reflexion, in an ongoing witnessing, experimenting, and inquiry about how I can make better choices about utilizing this dynamic.

What that has led me to is how I experience the integral paradigm. I experience it as a heart of compassion. This compassion shows up for me in the ability to see that everyone is living some

truth. Having a ground beyond the inherently limited conceptualizations of these truths enables me to see past my own projections about those truths. Having a meta-framework allows me to see the context within which that truth has validity, and its limitations or boundaries. These things enable my rational analytical processes to act in service of this heart of compassion. It is my aim to have this journal serve as a vehicle for the ongoing unfoldment of collective capacity to operate in the world from this heart of compassion.

## Conclusion

We have now reached the end of this present explication of our meanings, not only of the journal's title, but also this article's. Through each article herein, this inaugural issue, itself, is a further explication of meanings we have shared; we expect it may add depth and contrast as grist for the mills of your integral reviews. Over the course of time, we hope the abstract notion of the integral paradigm will gradually result in new concrete, essential experiences, and thus foster further integration. We hope new concrete meanings of *re-view* take root in all of us during our authoring, editing, and reading experiences of engaging each IR issue. And we're hopeful that as IR attracts a wide range of authors and readers, and additional competencies and diversity on an editorial board, that we co-create a substantive contribution to support translative and transformative change in our shared world. We anticipate that we all will gradually realize more and more of the transformative potentials of transdisciplinary and transcultural approaches, right down here on the ground where complex social change occurs and more of which is sorely needed.

## IR's Relation with its Publisher's Mission

Integral Review is the formal publishing arm of ARINA, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that was organized in 2004 in the U.S. to carry out its global mission. ARINA's mission is to model, teach, research, publish, promote, and institutionalize holistic, integral understandings and processes that are incorporated into efforts to address complex issues within individual, social, and global needs. Its service area is the planet, and its tax-exempt purposes are the public good (charitable), educational, and social scientific research. Integral Review will be the site of original publication of integral research and project evaluations carried out under ARINA's auspices. IR furthers ARINA's mission by publishing the just-mentioned work along with other works that meet its criteria, resonate with its philosophy, and fulfill its publication purposes.

The acronym ARINA stands for some core ideas that we have explicated in this introduction to IR: Acting / Researching / Integrating Associates Network. Please visit ARINA's website at [www.global-arina.org](http://www.global-arina.org) to learn about its range of resources and activities and to associate with us.

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*Biographical information about editorial committee members is located on Integral Review's website [www.integral-review.global-arina.org](http://www.integral-review.global-arina.org).*

# Jean Gebser: Das integrale Bewusstsein

Kai Hellbusch

**Zusammenfassung:** Um den Begriff des integralen Bewusstseins bei Jean Gebser deutlich werden zu lassen, werden die Bewusstseinsstrukturen in ihrem konzeptionellen Stellenwert erläutert, bevor jede einzelne vorgestellt wird. Die Kenntnis der bisherigen Bewusstseinsstrukturen ist Voraussetzung für die Kenntnis des integralen Bewusstseins, das sich aber nicht in der Integration des Früheren erschöpft, sondern seine eigene Aufgabe hat: die Realisierung der Zeit, also die Konkretion der den Bewusstseinsstrukturen zugehörigen Zeitformen. Dadurch entsteht eine neue Freiheit, die als bewusste Annäherung an das Göttliche, den „Ursprung“, zu verstehen ist.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Bewusstseinsstrukturen, Mutation, integrales Bewusstsein, Konstitutionstheorie, neue Wirklichkeit, Zeit.

**Abstract:** The Swiss-German philosopher Jean Gebser is introduced as the first to describe the integral worldview in detail. The author sketches Gebser's biography, explains his basic assumption of a universal consciousness from which basic structures of consciousness emerge, and describes the different stages of consciousness development from archaic to magic to mythic to mental to integral. The integral structure of consciousness is presented in its main characteristics as an attitude towards the world, to ourselves and in particular to time.

**Key words:** Structures of consciousness, mutation, integral consciousness, universal origin (*Ursprung*), new reality, time

## Warum Gebser?

Die Rede von einem neuen Bewußtsein, das häufig als *integrales Bewusstsein* bezeichnet wird, ist geläufig. Das Wort integral ist verführerisch, denn es erinnert an Ganzheit, Zusammenfassung, Komplettheit, und es wird auch in diesem Sinne verwendet, z.B. von Wilber, aber auch von etlichen weniger bedeutenden Autoren, die sich um Neues bemühen.

Gebser hingegen benutzt den Begriff in einem sehr speziellen Sinne. Diesen Sinn zu verstehen, ist aus zwei Gründen wichtig: zum einen hat Gebser den Begriff allererst eingeführt, seine Begriffsbestimmung ist also das „Original“; zum anderen birgt dieser Begriff einen besonderen Zugang zur Welt, der sonst verschlossen bliebe. Gebser's Bewusstseinsstrukturen sind etwas ganz Einzigartiges, das es sonst in der Kulturtheorie nicht gibt, und sich mit ihnen vertraut zu machen, kann einen echten Orientierungsgewinn in der heutigen Welt bedeuten. Zudem sind es so wenige, dass sie leicht zu überblicken sind, und sie sind gleichzeitig so schwierig zu verstehen, dass ihre Erkenntnis eine Herausforderung darstellt. Vor allem aber sind sie sehr wirklichkeitsgerecht. Dadurch bieten sie eine vorzügliche Voraussetzung, um unsere Welt besser zu verstehen und zugleich eine neuartige Grundlage, auf der fruchtbringende Forschung stattfinden kann.

## Wer war Jean Gebser?

Jean Gebser war ein deutscher Philosoph, der 1905 in Posen geboren wurde und 1973 als eingebürgerter Schweizer in Bern starb. Einige Stichworte zu seinem Lebensgang: 1929 Aufbruch nach Italien, dann Wanderungen in Südfrankreich, 1931-1936 in Spanien, persönliche Bekanntschaft mit Garcia Lorca, Picasso und der ganzen Clique der spanisch-französischen Avantgarde, übersetzt zeitgenössische spanische Lyrik und schreibt sein erstes Buch: *Rilke und Spanien*. 1937-1939 nach der Flucht aus Spanien in Paris. Ab August 1939 dauernder Aufenthalt in der Schweiz, zuerst in Ascona, Verbindung mit dem Eranoskreis C.G. Jungs, später in Burgdorf und Bern. Seine Hauptwerke entstehen: *Abendländische Wandlung* (1943), *Ursprung und Gegenwart* (1949-1952), *Asien lächelt anders* (1968), *Der unsichtbare Ursprung* (1970). Dozent am psychologischen Seminar des Institutes für angewandte Psychologie in Zürich. 1967 Honorar-Professor für vergleichende Kulturlehre an der Universität Salzburg.

Gebser lebte ein schillerndes, unstetes Leben mit vielen Wanderjahren, war geistig ungewöhnlich eigenständig, gehörte philosophisch keiner Richtung an und besaß nie eine dauerhafte Anstellung, die ihm ein sorgenfreies Leben gewährt hätte. Daher fehlte ihm auch die Möglichkeit, seine Konzeption der Bewusstseinsstrukturen so breit auszuführen, dass sie einen größeren Bekanntheitsgrad hätten erlangen können. Gebser hatte zu seinen Lebzeiten durchaus berühmte und einflussreiche Freunde, aber auch die konnten seinem Werk nicht das Gehör verschaffen, das es verdient. Die Gründe für die relative Unbekanntheit seines Werkes sind vermutlich vielfältig; sicherlich gehört dazu eine ganz spezifische Schwierigkeit, die dieses Werk demjenigen macht, der es kennenlernen möchte. Zu dieser Schwierigkeit, die mit der Möglichkeit des Nachvollziehens zusammenhängt, gehört der Begriff der Bewusstseinsstrukturen.

## Was sind die Bewusstseinsstrukturen?

Gebsters Begriff der Bewusstseinsstrukturen besagt anderes, als man es sonst vom Wort Bewusstsein kennt, und es ist von essentieller Wichtigkeit, dass man die Bedeutung der Bewusstseinsstrukturen und ihren Stellenwert versteht, wenn man die Rede vom Integralen Bewusstsein verstehen will.

Gebsters Bewusstseinsstrukturen sind so etwas wie Brillen oder vielmehr: virtuelle Ganzkörperkontaktlinsen, durch die wir die Welt immer schon und notwendigerweise sehen. Wir können also keinen Blick auf eine vermeintlich wirkliche Welt werfen, weil wir immer durch irgendwelche Bewusstseinsstrukturen die Welt wahrnehmen. Alle unsere gebräuchlichen Einteilungen des Menschlichen – wie Gefühl, Intellekt, Triebe, Wille, Empfindung usw. – sind für Gebser abhängig von der uns dominierenden Bewusstseinsstruktur. Und natürlich auch alle Formen des Geistigen, die wir im Laufe der Geschichte benannt haben, wie das Denken, die Vernunft, der Logos, der Verstand, die Ratio usw. Wenn die Bewusstseinsstrukturen allem zugrunde liegen, bedeutet dies, dass wir nicht von *einer* schlechthin menschlichen Geistesqualität sprechen können, z.B. von dem Menschen als „vernünftigem Wesen“ wie in der Aufklärung oder als „das den Logos besitzende Tier“ des Aristoteles oder dergleichen. Diese Bezeichnungen drücken nicht allein die Tatsache aus, dass der Mensch an einem Geistigen teilhat, sondern sie bezeichnen durchaus konkrete Attribute des Geistigen, die immer mit logischem und gerichtetem Denken zu tun haben, wie jeder weiß, der sich mit der Philosophie der Aufklärung oder mit der griechischen Philosophie beschäftigt hat.



Die These von genau einer wesentlich menschlichen Geistesfähigkeit, bzw. ihre Widerlegung, ist keineswegs trivial, wie man meinen könnte, wenn man sich vor Augen hält, dass es seit Kant doch etliche philosophische, psychologische und neurobiologische Konstitutionstheorien gibt, die alle davon ausgehen, dass der Mensch sich seine Welt macht und nicht eine fertige Welt zur Kenntnis nimmt. Aber der Gedanke der *verschiedenen* Grundlagen und Fähigkeiten zu solcher Konstitution, also dessen, was bei Gebser Bewusstseinsstrukturen heißt, ist immer noch neu. Damit bringt Gebser eine *Dynamik* in unser Menschenbild; er überschreitet so die *Statik* der Vorstellung eines Menschen an sich, wie sie sich durch unsere gesamte Kulturgeschichte zieht. Dieser dynamische, variable Konstitutionsgedanke Gebasers spielt vor allem in unserer *Lebenswelt* noch keine Rolle, im besonderen nicht in der Politik: dort beruft man sich gern auf die Menschenrechte und andere Aspekte des aufgeklärten Menschen, somit auf ein Produkt unserer abendländischen Kultur, das wegen seiner Beschränkung auf *ein* wesentliches Merkmal des Menschen – seine „Vernunft“ – von sehr eingeschränkter Allgemeinheit ist, auch wenn es gerade den gegenteiligen Anspruch stellt.

Gebser versteht also unter Bewusstsein in der Hauptsache diejenige Ausstattung des Menschen, die die Grundlage für alle Selbst- und Weltwahrnehmung bildet, und das eben auf verschiedenartige Weise, je nach geltender Bewusstseinsstruktur. Ohne dieses Bewusstsein gibt es kein Gefühl, keinen Gedanken, keine Sozialität, keinen Gegenstand, ja überhaupt keine Welt für den Menschen.

Gebser greift damit tiefer als viele andere. Seine einzigartige Konzeption der Bewusstseinsstrukturen geht nicht davon aus, dass es eine Welt gibt, die vom Menschen mehr oder weniger gut wahrgenommen wird, sondern dass die Welt erst vom wahrnehmenden Menschen hergestellt wird, und zwar in verschiedenen Zeiten und in verschiedenen Kulturen ganz unterschiedlich.

## Wie und wo wirken Bewusstseinsstrukturen?

Ganz entscheidend für das Verstehen der Gebaserschen Konzeption ist die Tatsache, dass die konstatierten Bewusstseinsstrukturen – die archaische, die magische, die mythische und die mentale – sich in der Geschichte nicht ablösen, sondern dass sie sich überdeterminieren – wie er es nennt. Das bedeutet, dass keine der Strukturen durch das Auftauchen der neuen verschwindet oder aufgehoben wird, sondern dass sie nur in ihrem Geltungsbereich eingeschränkt werden, dass alle Bewusstseinsstrukturen somit gleichzeitig wirken. Diese Charakteristik ist ein großer Unterschied der Gebaserschen Konzeption zu entfernt vergleichbaren Konzeptionen unserer Tradition, beispielsweise zu Hegel. Bei Gebser stehen alle separierbaren Sektoren des Kulturellen in einem Zusammenhang, und dieser Zusammenhang ist immer auch abhängig von allen entstandenen Bewusstseinsstrukturen.

Außerdem gibt es bei Gebser eine klare Parallelität von Phylo- und Ontogenese. Was sich also in der menschheitlichen Entwicklung vollzogen hat, vollzieht sich in jedem einzelnen Menschenleben wieder. Jede einzelne Bewusstseinsstruktur wird im Laufe eines Menschenlebens akut und beherrschend.

Bei der Entwicklung und Etablierung der Bewusstseinsstrukturen gibt es jeweils eine Periode der *Effizienz* und eine der *Defizienz*. Erstere dient der vollständigen Entwicklung aller Möglichkeiten der jeweiligen Bewusstseinsstruktur, während die Periode der Defizienz eine Verkrustung des Erreichten bedeutet, seine Übertreibung. Qualität und Quantität, also Maß und Masse charakterisieren die zwei Hauptphasen jeder Struktur. Die defiziente Periode, die immer an über-

mäßiger Quantifizierung und an Erschöpfung des jeweils wirksamen Qualitativen zu erkennen ist, bietet als Positivum die Gewähr der Entstehung einer neuen Bewusstseinsstruktur.

Woher kommen nun aber die Bewusstseinsstrukturen?

Der Quell aller Bewusstseinsstrukturen ist für Gebser das Geistige, das Göttliche, das er auch den Ursprung nennt (daher der Titel seines Hauptwerkes *Ursprung und Gegenwart*). Alles Wesentliche und Entscheidende – und somit auch das, aus dem Neues entsteht – ist für Gebser gekennzeichnet durch seine Ursprünglichkeit. Der Ursprung bedeutet für Gebser das Grundphänomen schlechthin, er ist das Geistige, das zeitlos, bzw. vor oder über aller Zeit und Zeitlosigkeit ist und das alle Bewusstseinsstrukturen aus sich entlässt.

Das Entstehen der Bewusstseinsstrukturen aus dem Ursprung geht für Gebser also mit einem Ur-Sprung vonstatten, plötzlich sind sie da. Um dies auszudrücken, spricht Gebser von Bewusstseinsmutationen; das Realisationsfeld dieser Mutationen ist das menschliche Bewusstsein, und ihr Resultat ist eine jeweils veränderte, verwandelte Wirklichkeit.

Der Mensch assimiliert sich also mit seinem Bewusstsein an die jeweils neuen Arten des Geistigen, die dem Ursprung entspringen. Er ist dabei *nachholend*, der *Träger* der Ereignisse und das Manifestationsobjekt des Geistigen. Gebser geht dementsprechend davon aus, dass es eine quasi subjektive Seite in diesem Geschehen gibt, dass also das Geistige die neue Bewusstseinsstruktur von sich aus freigibt oder sie aus sich herausstellt. Wenn also eine neue Bewusstseinsstruktur da ist, wirkt sie schon an sich und treibt den Menschen an, sie zu realisieren. Das ist zugleich eine Entlastung und eine Verpflichtung.

Wichtig ist dabei vor allem, dass eine gegenseitige Zueinander-Bewegung stattfindet, dass das Angebot und die Verpflichtung der Bewusstseinsmutation aufgenommen und beantwortet wird. So wird auch ein weiteres Kennzeichen der Mutationen verständlich, das besonders in Umbruchzeiten wie der unseren vernehmbar ist: ihr Aufgabencharakter. Die neue geistige Struktur zu entwickeln und zu fördern, ist den Menschen aufgegeben, sobald die vorherige vollständig realisiert worden ist. Die Notwendigkeit, die nicht mehr tragenden und lebensfördernden defizienten Bewusstseinsformen zu überwinden, gebiert so die Realisierung der neuen Bewusstseinsstruktur.

## Die einzelnen Bewusstseinsstrukturen

Die Kenntnis der einzelnen Bewusstseinsstrukturen ist für das integrale Bewusstsein, das in unserer Zeit realisiert werden soll, unabdingbar.

### Die archaische Bewusstseinsstruktur

Die archaische Struktur ist die am schwierigsten zu beschreibende und zu verstehende, denn sie hat am wenigsten Distanz zum Ursprung. Nur diese Distanz, diese Differenz, ermöglicht ja die Beschreibung irgendwelcher Spezifika.

Gebser hält die archaische Struktur für sehr ursprungsnah, ja er meint, dass sie anfänglich mit dem Ursprung selbst identisch war. Kennzeichnend für die archaische Struktur ist die Identität von Mensch und Welt.

## Die magische Bewusstseinsstruktur

Auch das magische Bewusstsein ist ein sehr frühes Stadium der Bewusstseinsentfaltung, aber es ist leichter zu evozieren als das archaische, weil die magischen Komponenten in unserer Welt leichter zu identifizieren und häufig anzutreffen sind, meistens in negativer Ausprägung. Vor allem aber *begann* mit der magischen Struktur die erste Etappe der Bewusstwerdung, nämlich die große Aufgabe des Menschen, durch Distanzierung die Unmittelbarkeit einer „natürlichen“ Lebenswelt zu durchbrechen und sich seine spezifisch kulturellen Welten allererst herzustellen und damit sich seiner selbst und seiner Welt bewusst zu werden. Diese Aufgabe zieht sich durch alle bisher überblickbaren Strukturen und sie erreicht ihren Höhepunkt in der Vollendung der Welt als Gegenüber in der Renaissance.

Aus der archaischen Welt geschieht also jener erste entscheidende Schritt des Menschen zu einem dämmernden Bewusstwerden, der die magische Struktur einleitet. Hier löst sich der Mensch zum ersten Male aus seiner vollständigen Naturverhaftetheit, und es setzt ein erstes Bewusstwerden ein, das noch durchaus schlafhaft ist: es beginnt ein erstes Gegenübersein von Welt und Mensch. Damit taucht auch die Notwendigkeit auf, „nicht mehr nur in der Welt zu *sein*, sondern die Welt *haben* zu müssen“, wie gesagt, der Beginn einer Entwicklung, die ihren Höhepunkt in der Renaissance fand. Der Mensch beginnt jetzt,

... ein Einzelner zu werden, eine Unität, die in der Welt vorerst noch nicht die Welt als Ganzes zu erkennen vermag, sondern jeweils nur die Einzelheiten oder Punkte, die sein noch schlafhaftes Bewusstsein treffen und die dann jeweils für das Ganze stehen. Die magische Welt ist somit auch die Welt des „pars pro toto“, in dem „der Teil für alles“ stehen kann und steht. Und die Wirklichkeit des magischen Menschen, sein Bezugsgeflecht, sind diese [...] voneinander geeinzelt Gegenstände, Geschehnisse oder Taten, die beliebig miteinander vertauscht werden können: eine Welt des [...] sinnreichen Zufalls, nämlich eine Welt, wo alles dem Menschen Zufallende von wirkender Gültigkeit ist, da zu allem und unter allen ein Bezug besteht. [...] Der Mensch antwortet auf die ihm entgegenströmenden Kräfte mit den ihnen entsprechenden eigenen: er stellt sich gegen die Natur, er versucht sie zu bannen, zu lenken, er versucht, unabhängig von ihr zu werden; *er beginnt zu wollen*. Bannen und Beschwörung, Totem und Tabu sind die [...] Mittel, mit denen er sich von der Übermacht der Natur zu befreien versucht. Trieb und Instinkt entfalten sich und bringen ein durch sie bedingtes und betontes Bewusstsein hervor, ein naturhaftes vitales Bewusstsein [...]. Hier, in diesen Befreiungsversuchen des magischen Menschen aus der Eingeflochtenheit und der Gebanntheit in der Natur, mit der er anfänglich noch eins ist, hier beginnt der seit jener Zeit nicht mehr endenwollende Kampf um die Macht; hier [schon] wird der Mensch zum Macher. (Gebser GA II, 88f.)

Das Eingeflochtensein des magischen Menschen in die Natur und das Leben in und mit Einzelheiten bewirkte auch die eigentümliche Raum- und Zeitlosigkeit des magischen Menschen, ebenso wie seine ganz andere Palette an Fähigkeiten, als sie dem heutigen Menschen als normal zugesprochen wird. Gebser nennt hier vor allem die Telepathie und verweist auf Abbildungen magischer Menschen, auf denen die Figuren eine Kopfaureole besitzen, sowie solche, auf denen mundlose Gesichter abgebildet sind.

In der heutigen Welt verdiene, so Gebser, das Magische in zweifacher Hinsicht besondere Aufmerksamkeit. Einerseits sei die Gefügtheit der Welt, die Wirksamkeit des magischen Vital-

Konnexes eine Realität, die anzuerkennen sei. In diesem Sinne versteht Gebser die sogenannten Zufälle, die im Leben geschehen: sie zeigten

... jene tiefste Gefügtheit des Lebens, die eben doch noch die Kraft hat, unsere Reaktionen zu richten oder zu lenken, so dass wir dieser Gefügtheit nicht entgehen können“. (Gebser GA VI, 364)

Dies ist die *magische* Gefügtheit des Lebens, die immer zur Geltung kommt, ob man sich ihrer bewusst ist oder nicht, und sie gilt natürlich genauso bei den unerfreulichen wie bei den freudigen und beglückenden Begebnissen. Wie mächtig diese Gefügtheit ist und wie unfraglich wir in solchen Gefügen stehen, lässt sich z.B. bei den Familienaufstellungen (und natürlich auch an den anderen Aufstellungen) nach Hellinger erleben.

Auf der anderen Seite gibt es in unserer Welt viele Verführungen zum Magischen, das ohnehin schon in den meisten heutigen Menschen vielfach überbetont ist. Daher ist es – bei aller Anerkennung der magischen Welt – ganz und gar unstatthaft für einen heute verantwortlichen Menschen, das Magische in sich so weit zu stärken, dass es bestimmenden Charakter annimmt. Gebser spricht besonders hinsichtlich der massenpsychologischen Phänomene des 20. Jahrhunderts von der „reaktivierten magischen Disponibilität des heutigen Menschen“. (Gebser GA II, 104) Stattdessen kommt es darauf an, sich des Magischen bewusst zu sein und *mit*, nicht aber *in* der magischen Welt zu leben. Das magische Geschehen spielt sich in der naturhaft-vitalen, ichlosen und raum- sowie zeitlosen Sphäre ab, und diese fordert eine Preisgabe unserer heutigen Bewusstseinsfähigkeit.

Heute kann man vor allem *defizient* Magisches reichlich beobachten: das Zurücksinken in ichlose und raum- und zeitlose Situationen findet sowohl in den zahlreichen Massenveranstaltungen statt, wie auch in vielen tranceorientierten esoterischen Übungsformen, welcher Tradition auch immer, sogar in der Techno-Musik. Auch das fanatische Vertreten bestimmter Ideen ist defizient magisch, genauso wie das Streben nach Macht über die Natur durch Technik und auch die Besessenheit von der Sexualität, denn das Magische ist wesentlich auf der Ebene des Vitalen und Triebhaften angesiedelt.

Dies bedeutet, dass eine besondere Aufmerksamkeit dem Magischen gegenüber angemessen ist, es bedeutet aber auch, dass die magischen Aspekte in das Ensemble der Bewusstseinsstrukturen zu integrieren sind.

Nur wo die magische Struktur heute im einzelnen noch trieb- und instinktgesichert sich auswirkt, erfüllt sie ihren eminenten und lebenspendenden Wert.“ (Gebser GA II, 105)

Deutlich wird ein gelungenes Integrieren des Magischen an einem entspannten Verhalten zur Sexualität, an der Nichtanfälligkeit für Schlagwörter und -ismen aller Art und auch an der Fähigkeit zum guten Horchen, auf äußere und innere Stimmen. Das Akustische ist stark magisch gefärbt. Entsprechend ist Hörigkeit defizient magisch.

Gehören, Gehorchen, Hörigsein sind immer Unterstellungen unter die Macht, die wir den Dingen, Geschehnissen oder Menschen sei es besitzlüstern, sei es autoritätsgläubig, sei es sexuell [...] zubilligen“. (Gebser GA II, 105f.)

Um hier das rechte Maß zu finden, ist es nötig, um das Magische und seine Macht zu wissen.

Die Realisationsform, die Gebser dem Magischen zuschreibt, ist das *Erleben*. Dieser heute wieder so hochgeschätzte Begriff impliziert oftmals einen „Ganzheitsbezug“, der aber vielmehr ein Einheitsbezug sein dürfte. Ganzheit kann in Gebser's Sinn nur durch die Integration von Verschiedenem entstehen, während dem Magischen die Einheitlichkeit schon an sich zu eigen ist, ohne dass ihr eine Differenzierung vorausginge.

## Die mythische Bewusstseinsstruktur

Die Aufgabe des mythischen Bewusstseins besteht in der Entwicklung der Psyche, der Bewusstwerdung der Seele. Seele meint hier ein inneres Bild-Bewusstsein, nicht aber das personale Zentrum – die Seele in *diesem* Sinne wird erst mit dem mentalen Bewusstsein Wirklichkeit.

Die mythische Welt ist nicht sehr leicht von der magischen zu unterscheiden, besonders wenn vor allem geschichtlich entfernte Völker oder konkrete Ethnien im Zentrum des Interesses stehen. Das liegt vor allem daran, dass mit der magischen Bewusstseinsstruktur die große Aufgabe der Bewusstwerdung begann, die immer noch besteht und der also auch das Mythische und das Mentale unterstehen. Zudem ist die Außenorientierung des Magischen dafür verantwortlich, dass grundlegende Formen der Weltbewältigung entwickelt wurden, die auch in der mythisch dominierten Zeit weitergeführt wurden. Der Bereich der Macht ist daher im Mythischen keineswegs beschnitten oder verlassen; Macht ist auch für dieses Bewusstsein ein Kennwort. Die mythische Struktur führt also das fort, was in der magischen zum Programm geworden war: das Herauslösen des Menschen aus seiner Natürlichkeit. Die spezifische Leistung des mythischen Bewusstseins in diesem Programm ist das Bewusstmachen der Zeit als der nicht-örtlichen und nicht-räumlichen Dimension der Natur, und das bedeutet gleichzeitig die Schaffung der menschlichen Voraussetzung für ein Zeit-Bewusstsein: die Schaffung, also die Bewusstwerdung der Seele.

Das Mythische ist daher auf keinen Fall zu verwechseln mit Magischem plus Mythos. Es stellt vielmehr eine eigene Qualität dar, die durch die Entdeckung der Innenwelt, der Seele geprägt ist. Auch wenn das Magische zu Zeiten der entwickelten mythischen Struktur noch sehr stark präsent ist und sich in vielen kulturellen Erscheinungen des Mythischen als sehr lebendig aufweisen lässt, ist es dennoch „überdeterminiert“ durch den neuen Sinn des Mythischen.

Die *Polarität* ist das wesentliche Kennzeichen des Mythischen, und sie drückt auch den Dimensionengewinn aus und damit das Neue, den Fortschritt gegenüber dem Magischen.

War die archaische Struktur der Ausdruck der nulldimensionalen Identität und der ursprünglichen Ganzheit, war die magische der Ausdruck der eindimensionalen Unität und naturverwobenen Einheit – so ist die mythische Struktur Ausdruck der zweidimensionalen Polarität. (Gebser GA II, 113.)

Die Signatur, die Gebser dem Mythischen zuordnet, ist daher – und weil die mythische Struktur zu einer Bewusstwerdung der Seele, also der Innenwelt führt – der

... *Kreis*, der stets auch Symbol der Seele war. Der geeinzelt Punkt der magischen Struktur erweitert sich zu dem zweidimensionalen, die Fläche einschließenden Ring. Er umfasst alles Polare und bindet es ausgleichend ineinander“. (Gebser GA II, 113)

Das perfekte Symbol des Mythischen ist daher das chinesische Tai-Chi: die Polarität im Kreis.

Einen deutlichen bildlichen Ausdruck für das mythische Bewusstsein findet man immer dann, wenn dargestellte Figuren nicht mehr mit einer Aura, sondern mit einem Mund versehen sind. Um dem Mythos seine sprachliche Gestalt zu verleihen, ist der Mund nötig.

Das Mythische ist überhaupt eminent sprachlich. Alle sprachliche Kunst ist daher stark daran gebunden. Dichtung kann zwar andere Bewusstseinsstrukturen ausdrücken, aber sie kann sich nicht vom Mythischen lossagen, ebenso wie die Philosophie sich nicht vom Mythischen ablösen kann, solange sie sprachlich bleibt.

Die Realisationsform des Mythischen ist das *Erfahren*. Das Entdecken der Seele ist ein Erfahren, und so sind Erkundungs-, besonders Meeresfahrten häufige Mythologeme. Diese können erst entstehen, wenn die Seele sich bildet, und die Seele braucht sie zu ihrer Bildung. Erfahrung ist immer

... polhaft, weil das Erfahren nicht nur ein Erleiden ist, also etwas, das uns geschieht, sondern gleichzeitig stets auch halbbewusste zwielichtige Handlung. (Gebser GA II, 344)

So ist durch das Erfahren der erste Schimmer eines Ich-Bewusstseins gegeben. Durch Erfahrung kommt man zur Einsicht; dies

... unterscheidet jede Erfahrung von dem bloß punkthaften Erleben und auch vom nur kausalen Verstehen, und es ermöglicht das bewusstseinsbildende Erinnern, das immer ein innerer Vorgang ist. (Gebser GA II, 344.)

Die außerordentlich große Macht der Erinnerung für das mythische Bewusstsein findet seinen Ausdruck auch im Ahnenkult, der in von diesem Bewusstsein bestimmten Kulturen immer anzutreffen ist. Und auch das Erinnern verknüpft das Mythische mit dem Dichterischen, denn die Erinnerung, Mnemosyne, ist die Urmuse. Die Polarität von Wachheit und Traum ist ebenfalls Zeichen des Mythischen.

Auch das Mythische ist heute überall zu finden: der Sinn für Geschichten und das Sichverlieren in Geschichten und im Imaginären sind häufige Erscheinungen, wenn auch oft auf das Verfolgen von Fernsehfilmen und -serien reduziert. Bei den Kindern findet man es noch in seiner wahren, lebensförderlichen Ausprägung. Die Mythenforschung durch und nach C. G. Jung hat gezeigt, wie sehr allgemeine Symbole wirksam sind. Sie hat aber auch in bestimmten Kreisen zu einer Inflation des Symbolischen und des Psychischen geführt, die genauso defizient ist wie die Sucht nach Geschichten. Das Handeln aus dem Herzen, das hingeebene Glauben sind mythisch.

## Die mentale Bewusstseinsstruktur

Bei Gebser bezeichnet das Mentale diejenige Bewusstseinsstruktur, die unsere Welt nach wie vor bestimmt, wenn auch vor allem in ihren defizienten Ausformungen. Er benutzt das Wort mental, weil es durch seine Abkunft vom griechischen Wort *menos*, das „Vorsatz, Zorn, Mut, Kraft“ bedeutet, und vom lateinischen *mens*, das „Absicht, Zorn, Mut, Denken, Gedanke, Verstand, Besinnung, Sinnesart, Denkart, Vorstellung“ bedeutet, das Wesentliche dieser Struktur ausdrückt.

Mit diesen Inhalten sieht Gebser bereits das Entscheidende gegeben: die grundlegende Novität ist das In-Erscheinung-Treten des *gerichteten Denkens*. Das gerichtete Denken ist nicht mehr polbezogen, sondern es ist

... objektbezogen und damit auf die Dualität, diese herstellend, gerichtet, und erhält seine Kraft aus dem einzelnen Ich. (Gebser GA II, 128.)

Das Moment des Sinngebens und Richtens ist also von außerordentlicher Bedeutung für die mentale Welt, wie Gebser auf vielfältige Art nachweist: Das Richten, etwas richtig und recht machen, bedeutet immer auch, einem Phänomen Sinn zu geben. Viele Sprachen haben ein gemeinsames Wort für Richtung und Sinn. Seit alters her und vielleicht durch die unterschiedlichen Hemisphären des Gehirns begründet, ist

... die linke Seite die Seite des Unbewussten, des Ungekannten; die rechte Seite dagegen die Seite der Bewusstheit, der Wachheit. In welchem Maße sich diese Wertung verstärkte, geht daraus hervor, dass in den heutigen europäischen Sprachen »rechts« eben nicht nur einfach rechts, sondern auch „richtig [und] gerade“, im Sinne des Zum-Ziel-Führens, bedeutet.

Das Griechische hat als die erste Sprache, die die Entstehung des mentalen Bewusstseins ausdrückt, auch als erste die Schriftrichtung von links nach rechts genommen. Ältere Sprachen wurden von oben nach unten oder von rechts nach links geschrieben. Auch das Einsetzen eines festen Rechts, einer Gesetzgebung, ist ein „Akt, der nur durch ein erwachtes Bewusstsein vollzogen werden kann“. Insofern sind die großen Gesetzgeber wie Moses, Lykurg und Solon zugleich Wegbereiter und Ausdruck des entstehenden mentalen Bewusstseins. Hiermit einhergehend sind sie aber auch Begründer oder Verstärker des Patriarchats, denn die rechte Seite steht auch für das männliche, das Recht für das väterliche Prinzip. (Gebser GA II, 134f.)

Mit dem neuen mentalen Bewusstsein entsteht auch eine neue Stellung des Menschen zur Welt, und sein Selbstverständnis gegenüber dieser Welt verändert sich: die Welt des mentalen Bewusstseins ist erstmals ausdrücklich

... *eine Welt des Menschen*; das will sagen, es ist eine [...] Welt, in welcher „der Mensch das Maß aller Dinge“ ist (Protagoras); in welcher der Mensch selber denkt und dieses Denken richtet; und es ist eine Welt, die er misst, nach der er trachtet, eine materielle Welt, eine Objektwelt, die ihm gegenübersteht. (Gebser GA II, 132.)

Die Welt des Menschen ist also auch die Welt als Gegenüber. Was mit dem Magischen begonnen hatte: Abstand zur Welt zu bekommen, vollendet sich im Mentalen, indem die Welt als das Andere, und das heißt: als Gegenüber angesehen wird. Die räumliche Orientierung und die Betonung des Materiellen und des Messenden und damit des Messbaren sind typisch für die mentale Perfektionierung dieser Außenorientierung. Auch der Aspekt der Quantifizierung gehört zu dieser Betonung des Messenden; er ist durchaus nicht erst mit dem Defizienten der Neuzeit verknüpft, das in Galileis Maxime, alles messbar zu machen, zum Ausdruck kommt, sondern er gehört zum Mentalen und erscheint dementsprechend schon in dessen Anfang. So stand über Platons Akademie der Satz: „Nur wer der Geometrie kundig ist, möge eintreten“. Gaia, die Mutter Erde, ist für den mentalen Menschen ein messbares Objekt geworden.

Die Vollendung der Aufgabe des mentalen Bewusstseins, die vollständige Eroberung und Meisterung des Raumes, wurde in der Renaissance geleistet, als die Perspektive voll entwickelt und handhabbar wurde. Das ist bei Leonardo geschehen, nach all den Vorversuchen, die nicht nur die bildende Kunst seit dem Mittelalter bestimmten, sondern die auch zur Entdeckung der *Landschaft* geführt haben. Dieser uns so selbstverständliche Begriff setzt ein perspektivisches Bewusstsein voraus, das keineswegs eine Selbstverständlichkeit ist. Gebser benutzt das später immer wieder gern zitierte Beispiel von Petrarca, der bei der Ersteigung des Mont Ventoux eine große Erschütterung erlebte, die er 1336 in einem Brief mitteilte. „

Diese Darstellung ist für die damalige Zeit ein geradezu epochales Ereignis, denn sie bedeutet nichts Geringeres als *die Entdeckung der Landschaft*, und in ihr kommt ein erstes Aufleuchten jenes Raum-Bewusstseins zum Durchbruch, das in der Folge grundlegend die Stellung des europäischen Menschen in und zu der Welt verändert. (Gebser GA II, 40.)

Aber nicht nur die Realisierung des Raumes war ein Kennzeichen der mentalen Bewusstseinsstruktur, sondern auch die Schaffung eines der Verantwortung fähigen Ichs. Alle Verantwortung setzt ein gefestigtes Ich voraus, und diese Errungenschaft ist heute in unserer Gesellschaft, die der individuellen Person so wenig Wert einräumt zugunsten ihrer Gebrauchbarkeit für wirtschaftliche Prozesse, in Gefahr, verloren zu gehen. Mit dem mentalen Bewusstsein entstehen also neue Weltwirklichkeiten: so auch die Fragen und Konstellationen, die uns heute noch als selbstverständlich erscheinen, wie die Frage nach der Wahrheit, nach Realität, nach „Welt“. Eine weitere Neuigkeit ist das Empfinden für Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit an sich. Es entstanden nicht nur die logischen und die ethischen Grundsätze, sondern auch die entsprechenden psychischen Konstellationen, die uns heute ganz normal erscheinen; daran erkennt man auch die immer noch währende Dominanz des mentalen Bewusstseins. So wurde z. B. immer gelogen, aber das Schamvolle am Lügen ist ganz und gar mental. Für eine „gute Geschichte“ wird aber noch immer ohne Scham gelogen, und Kinder eines gewissen Alters lügen auch ganz ohne Scham, wie es für ein magisches oder mythisches Bewußtsein völlig in Ordnung ist.

## Die integrale Bewusstseinsstruktur

Das integrale Bewusstsein, das also die Neuigkeit ist, die in unserer Zeit zur Realisierung drängt, ist nicht leicht zu fassen. Gebser benutzt zur Kennzeichnung *aller* Bewusstseinsstrukturen Charakteristika, die das mentale Bewusstsein kennzeichnen, und er versieht sie mit Präfixen, die verschiedene Stufen des Noch-nicht – oder des Nicht-mehr – ausdrücken, wie prä-rational für die magische Struktur, irrational für die mythische, rational für die mentale und arational für die integrale Struktur, die immer die Vorsilbe a bekommt (aperspektivisch usw.). Bezüglich des Integralen entsteht dadurch der Eindruck, es sei wie Gott in der negativen Theologie nur über Negationen annäherbar, auch wenn Gebser deutlich darauf hinweist, dass „die Vorsilbe 'a' nicht im Sinne des *Alpha negativum*, sondern in dem des *Alpha privativum*“ zu verstehen sei, also nicht verneinenden sondern befreienden Charakter habe. (Gebser GA II, 25.) Dieser Eindruck der Negation ist nur aus mentaler Perspektive richtig; aus dieser Perspektive ist er auch gerechtfertigt, weil das Mentale eine Art Vollendung des Menschen, nämlich seine Vollendung unter Fortschritts- und Herrschaftsaspekten, darstellt. Aber Gebser belässt es nicht bei den Kennzeichnungen, die auf den Eigenschaften des Mentalen beruhen, sondern er entwickelt zum Zwecke der erwünschten Antizipation des integralen Bewusstseins auch eine eigene Begrifflich-



keit. Diese Begriffe können hier nicht erläutert werden; nur einen dieser Begriffe möchte ich nennen, weil er das Wesentliche – wie ich finde – sehr schön ausdrückt.

Vorher aber noch eine Bemerkung zu der generellen Schwierigkeit, etwas so fundamental Neues wie eine neue Bewusstseinsstruktur wahrzunehmen: Dem Menschen ist also aufgegeben, das in seltenen Momenten seiner Geschichte – seiner individuellen wie seiner Gattungsgeschichte – erscheinende Neue in seinem Bewusstsein zu realisieren. Diese Aufgabe ist außerordentlich schwierig, denn das wirklich Neue sieht, wenn es erstmals wahrgenommen wird, überwirklich und übernatürlich aus, weil es von der alten Bewusstseinsstruktur wahrgenommen wird. Und vor allem sieht es nicht nur so aus,

... sondern von jener alten Bewusstseinsstruktur aus betrachtet *ist es über* ihrer Wirklichkeit, *ist es tatsächlich über* ihre Natur hinaus.

Deshalb sträuben sich die Menschen, es wahrzunehmen, und sie machen den Versuch, es dem Alten anzugleichen. Dadurch aber verliert es

... seinen Echtheits- und Wahrheits-Charakter. Bei diesen Versuchen, das Neue vom Alten her mit den alten Begriffen erklären zu wollen,

ist man natürlich ständig der Gefahr von Missverständnissen und Missdeutungen ausgesetzt. Um diese Misslichkeiten zu vermeiden und um der Ursprünglichkeit des Neuen gerecht zu werden, hält Gebser es für unumgänglich, sich über das bisher Entwickelte klar zu werden. Auch diesem Zweck gilt seine Untersuchung der älteren Bewusstseinsstrukturen. (Gebser GA II, 71.)

Dennoch reicht eine bloße Kenntnis der älteren Bewusstseinsstrukturen nicht aus: Der besondere Anspruch Gebasers besteht gerade darin, dass jeder die Bewusstseinsstrukturen bei sich selbst wiederfindet und so ihre Existenz bestätigt. Gebser nennt dies *Konkretion*. Das ist natürlich ein besonders hoher Anspruch: der ganze Mensch ist hier gefragt, mit all seinen Erlebnis- und Erfahrungsmöglichkeiten, mit seiner ganzen Fähigkeit, sich selbst zu durchschauen, indem er sich klar und durchsichtig wird. Dieser Anspruch lässt den intellektuellen und wissenschaftlichen Umgang mit der gesamten Konzeption als ungenügend erscheinen und trägt daher wesentlich dazu bei, sie nicht in die Wissenschaft, also auch nicht in die akademische Philosophie, hineinzulassen.

Die Integration der älteren Bewusstseinsstrukturen ist derjenige Aspekt des integralen Bewusstseins, der relativ leicht zugänglich ist. Sie, die Bewusstseinsstrukturen, sollen jedem, der am integralen Bewusstsein teilhaben will, durchsichtig werden, ihr Wirken soll gesehen werden, unsere Teilhabe an ihnen soll bewusst werden, und wenn das gelingt, ist ein gewisser Schritt zum integralen Bewusstsein getan. Dass dies aber gelingen kann, ist von bestimmten Fähigkeiten abhängig, und hier kommt der angekündigte Begriff ins Spiel.

Dieser Begriff und eine dieser Fähigkeiten ist nämlich das *Wahren*, das nicht nur wahrnehmen heißt, auch nicht nur gewahr werden, was ja schon eine gewisse Anerkennung des Wahrgenommenen impliziert, sondern zu dem auch ein Wahrgeben gehört, also ein zugewandter, bejahender, wenn man so will: liebender, auf jeden Fall aber ein aktiver Aspekt des Menschen, der da wahrnimmt und wahrgibt. Das Wahren gilt Gebser als die Realisationsart des integralen Bewusstseins, es entspricht also dem Erleben des magischen, dem Schauen und Erfahren des mythischen und dem Folgern und Vorstellen des mentalen Bewusstseins.

Das Wahren als Realisationsform des integralen Bewusstseins bedeutet auch die große Neuigkeit, die der so gewahrten Welt zu eigen ist: sie ist nicht mehr die Welt als Gegenüber, wie

sie mit dem magischen Bewusstsein zuerst entstand und wie sie vom mentalen Bewusstsein perfektioniert worden ist. Mensch und Welt nehmen jetzt eine andere Beziehung auf, die von einem innigeren Bezug und neuartiger Transparenz geprägt ist.

Die Welt als Gegenüber und der ihr entsprechende Mensch sind also zu überwinden, bei Gebser und übrigens auch bei einem weiteren großen Philosophen, der in seiner wahren Leistung noch immer nicht dargestellt worden ist, obwohl eine Unmenge an Literatur über ihn existiert: bei Nietzsche. Die große Klammer, die bei Gebser die drei Bewusstseinsstrukturen des Magischen, Mythischen und Mentalen zusammenhält, zeigt, dass die Realisierung der Welt des Integralen einen besonders großen und deutlichen Schritt darstellt, dass sie eine echte Veränderung des Humanum bedeutet.

Wodurch zeichnet sich das integrale Bewusstsein nun hauptsächlich aus? Es hat wie jede Bewusstseinsstruktur seine Aufgabe, und diese Aufgabe besteht in der Realisierung der *Zeit*, des Zugleich, wie Gebser sagt.

Um diese Realisierung zu bewerkstelligen, müssen alle den Menschen mitkonstituierenden Zeitformen anerkannt werden; man muss also den Mut aufbringen, die prärationale magische Zeitlosigkeit ebenso wie die irrationale mythische Zeithaftigkeit und den mentalen Zeitbegriff als wirkend anzuerkennen und sie entsprechend zu leben. Mut ist dazu nötig, denn es verlangt eine erhebliche Selbstdistanzierung und damit Selbstüberwindung, die dazu zwingen, das vertraute Selbstgefühl, das man sich im Laufe der Jahre erworben hat, zu verlassen. Das Ergebnis dieser Anerkennung bezeichnet Gebser als *Zeitfreiheit*, was nicht etwa bedeutet, dass man sich dieser früheren Zeitformen entledigt, die ja jeden Menschen mitkonstituieren, sondern *Zeitfreiheit* heißt zuerst einmal ein *Freisein* zu den früheren Zeitformen. Diese Art Freisein, die Gebser hier meint, geht aus der Konkretion – wie eben erwähnt auch ein Begriff, der zum integralen Bewusstsein gehört – und der Integration aller Zeitformen hervor; es kann daher nur von einem Bewusstsein geleistet werden, das sich „über“ die bisherigen Zeitformen zu stellen vermag. Auf diese Art erfolgt – so Gebser – eine bewusste Annäherung an den Ursprung. (Gebser GA III, 388) Er bezeichnet daher die *Zeitfreiheit* sogar als „die bewusste Form des ursprünglichen Vorzeithaften“ (Gebser GA III, 482), und stellt damit einen sehr weiten Horizont für das integrale Bewusstsein her, der mit den hohen Formen spiritueller Erleuchtung vergleichbar ist.

Durch diese Realisierung eines wesentlichen Aspekts jeder Bewusstseinsstruktur, nämlich der ihr entsprechenden Zeitform, sind die Bewusstseinsstrukturen im Ganzen realisiert und transparent. Daher ermöglicht die *Zeitfreiheit*, die durch das Integrieren der verschiedenen Zeitformen erreicht wird, den Zugang zu dem, was Gebser „das Geistige“ nennt: „das Befreitsein von der Zeit“ bedeutet „das Freisein zum Geistigen“ (Gebser GA III, 402f.) Dieser Begriff des Geistigen bezeichnet bei Gebser die Region, die alle Bewusstseinsstrukturen aus sich entlässt; in anderer Terminologie ist dies das Göttliche oder auch Gott, welche Bezeichnung Gebser allerdings nur im Kontext des mentalen Bewusstseins verwendet, wohl wegen der väterlichen Konnotationen.

Selbstverständlich hat das integrale Bewusstsein sehr viele andere Aspekte, die fasslicher sind als der Zeitaspekt, auch solche, die man mit Bezug auf das mentale Bewusstsein benennen kann. So überschreitet das integrale Bewusstsein die rationale Eindeutigkeit und das dualistische Entweder-Oder des mentalen Bewusstseins, es lässt die Welt als vielfältig strukturiert und komplex erscheinen, es öffnet die Augen für die vielen verschiedenen Wahrheiten, die da sind und gesehen werden wollen. Jedes einzelne Ding, jedes Material, jede Tonart und natürlich jeder Mensch ist eine solche Wahrheit.

Daher mutet der starke Bezug des integralen Bewusstseins zur Zeit, den ich hier betone, zunächst ungewöhnlich an. Gebser stellt das integrale Bewusstsein auch in unmittelbare Nähe zum Satori und zum universalen Bewusstsein Aurobindos, die ja beide ohne einen solchen aus-

drücklichen Zeitbezug beschrieben werden. Ich halte es aber gerade in bezug auf die lebensweltliche Ausrichtung der Gebsterschen Bewusstseinsstrukturen für sehr hilfreich, diesen Aspekt zu betonen, weil man durch ihn die gesamte Lebenswirklichkeit auf einmal anspricht. Die verschiedenen Zeitbezüge, an denen wir teilhaben und in denen wir stehen, machen unser gesamtes Leben aus; sie finden nicht im Kopf statt, sondern sie sind wir selbst im Ganzen.

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*Kai Hellbusch, PhD, was born in 1962 at Oldenburg, Germany. He studied philosophy, musical science and literature at the Universities of Tuebingen and Muenster. In 1998 he received his doctorate at the Technical University of Dresden. Since 2000, he works in the „Learning Project for Philosophy and Ethics“ at Pommritz near Bautzen, Germany.*

*Albert-Richter-Str. 10*

*01465 Langebrück*

*Germany*

*Email: [Kai.Hellbusch@web.de](mailto:Kai.Hellbusch@web.de)*

# Jean Gebser: Das Integrale Bewusstsein

## Jean Gebser: The Integral Consciousness

Original article in German by Kai Hellbusch  
English Summary by Reinhard Fuhr

### Summary

The Swiss-German philosopher Jean Gebser was probably the first to describe an approaching paradigmatic transformation in the general development of consciousness to an integral world view. The foundation of this phylogenetic and ontogenetic development, from archaic to magic, mythic, mental and integral, is Gebser's concept of consciousness structures. These are given to us as the overall view of ourselves and the world around us in relation to all dimensions of human experience and thinking. These basic structures of consciousness emerge through an evolutionary process, building one upon the other in personal and human history. Whenever one basic structure has become incapable of solving the challenges of life, a new structure is generated. All of these structures have their roots in the timeless, divine origin of everything (*Ursprung*).

Very close to the universal consciousness is the *archaic* structure which is difficult to describe as there is barely any distance between them: humans and the world are identical.

The *magic* structure marks the first step toward a waking human consciousness, introducing a difference from its origin. This is still an ego-less obedience characterized almost exclusively by unreflected *vital experience*. In its deficient form, magic consciousness results in serfdom and in collective trance as in military and many esoteric movements.

The *mythic* structure is characterized by *conscious experiencing*: the soul experiences something. Time becomes conscious and we live in a two-dimensional polarity of the surface expanse. Its deficient form is the inflation of symbolism and an addictive use of tales.

In the *mental* phase of consciousness development thinking is goal oriented and the world is conceived as an object. As the capacity to construct a meaning is developed we start thinking in legal categories, explore space, all of which requires *logical reasoning*. The deficient form of this structure is a dissociation from the unity of experiencing and thinking by overemphasizing mental logic.

The *integral* structure that is newly appearing on the horizon of consciousness development only looks transcendent from the commonly held mental view. At the integral stage all structures are integrated - not only in perceiving the exterior world but also in oneself, which is the reason why this structure is not accepted in science. The world is no longer merely an object. Instead, we establish an intimate relationship between ourselves and the world, which by our perception confirms its very existence. The main challenge of this structure is that consciousness transcends the different tenses by *realizing time* and the fact that we live in continuous timely relations. The integral consciousness is multiperspectival and transcends either-or dichotomies: we become aware of the universal whole which is shining through everything.

# Complexity Intelligence and Cultural Coaching: Navigating the Gap Between Our Societal Challenges and Our Capacities

Jan Inglis and Margaret Steele

**Abstract:** In this article, we present the term *complexity intelligence* as a useful moniker to describe the reasoning ability, emotional capacity and social cognition necessary to meet the challenges of our prevailing life conditions. We suggest that, as a society and as individuals, we develop *complexity intelligence* as we navigate the gap between our current capacities and the capacities needed to respond to the next stage of complex challenges in our lives. We further suggest that it is possible to stimulate and support the emergence of *complexity intelligence* in a society, but we need a new form of social change agent - a *cultural coach*, to midwife its emergence.

**Key words:** complexity, reasoning ability, emotional capacity, social cognition, adult development, social change, cultural coach.

## Introduction

We are living in complex times and are part of complex systems that our past experiences and training may not have prepared us to understand. In fact, as Kegan (1994/2000) suggests, we may well be “cognitively and emotionally mismatched” to respond to the mental demands of modern life. As we move more fully into a global society, it seems that all our systems are in chaos: our local economies, our health system, the environment, our community life, and often, at times, our own personal lives. We are living in a rapidly changing society. Indeed, as Vaill (1989) suggests, we seem to be living in a state of “permanent white water” and as Toffler (1970) observed nearly 35 years ago, these times are not just like a second Industrial Revolution, but are more like a second great divide in human history – parallel to the movement from barbarism to civilization!

This “great divide in human history,” this monumental shift in life conditions has placed increasing stress on local and global leadership. It is clear that habitual linear thinking is not helping leaders deal with pressing issues such as stimulating the local economy, protecting the aquifer, providing housing choices for our elderly populations or responding to global violence, famine or inequities. Even well-intentioned approaches to governance that include public participation in decision making often fail to grapple with the complexity of issues and end up creating polarized debate and divisiveness. People keep looking for simple approaches to things that are complex.

In using the word *complex*, we are referring to the interconnected and unpredictable nature of issues in a world technologically and thus socially connected across time and space in a way much different than we experienced even 20 years ago. To respond to this complexity, Commons, Danaher-Gilpin, Miller, and Goodheart (2002) suggest that many modern issues require reasoning ability at the metasystematic stage. This stage is broadly similar to Torbert’s (2004) Strategist stage – a stage presently attained by only a small percentage of citizens or

leaders.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, there is a wide gap between the societal challenges facing us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and our collective capacities to effectively respond to them. This gap is severely threatening our survival as a species.

As part of the evolutionary process, humans routinely find themselves faced with challenges that exceed their capacities. This is a natural part of growth and evolution and occurs in all realms of the human experience, whether that is physical, mental, emotional, spiritual or interpersonal. But, what happens when the challenges in our life threaten our very deep-seated perception of “how the world works?”<sup>2</sup> In other words, what happens when there is a gap between our operating beliefs of how the world works and the contradictory evidence presented by what we observe in the world around us? What happens to societies when this manifests as large gaps between existing capacities and the capacities needed to respond to societal challenges? In this paper, we suggest that *complexity intelligence* emerges as we make the transition through these gaps. We also suggest that it is possible to actively stimulate and support the emergence of *complexity intelligence* in our society, but we need a new form of social change agent - a *cultural coach*, to midwife its emergence.

Our intent in defining the term *complexity intelligence* is to offer a simple phrase or moniker for practitioners working in the area of social change. We acknowledge the many inspiring individuals and programs in the field of social change and feel that an accessible concept based on rigorous research and contemporary theory is needed to capture the essence of this work. Our concept of complexity intelligence draws on the interrelated fields of adult development, integral theory, transformational learning, complexity theory, dialogue, deliberation and action research. We suggest that social change agents should be familiar with this body of work in designing public processes to support the emergence of complexity intelligence. These theories do not need to be taught conceptually for complexity intelligence to be developed. In fact, in many cases they should not be taught, but rather should be embedded in experiential learning and application. Complexity intelligence is a natural human capacity that will emerge, given the appropriate balance of challenge and support.

## The Concept of Complexity Intelligence

### Definition of the Term

We consider *complexity intelligence* to be both a capacity and a process. In general terms, it is the capacity to respond to the demands of current life challenges and it is also the process of developing this capacity. To capture its inherent dynamic evolutionary process, we should be using the verb *intelligencing*, but for ease of reference, we are considering both the capacity and the process to be described by the term *complexity intelligence* or, simply, CI.

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<sup>1</sup> In two samples, Cook-Greuter (2002) reports less than 7% of the adult population in the U.S. and less than 3% of U.S. managers and supervisors operate at this level or higher. In a third sample she reports that 20% of managers and consultants in the U.K. are operating at this level or higher but qualifies this finding by suggesting the higher number is “likely due to self-selection bias” (p. 34).

<sup>2</sup> We are using the phrase “how the world works” to name the habitual lens used to construct, perceive and explain experiences. It has a similar intent to other terms such as: “stage of development” (Wilber, 2001, Beck & Cowan, 1996), “meaning-perspective” (Mezirow, 1991), “meaning-making” (Kegan, 1982/1996), “levels or waves of human existence” (Graves, 1974) etc.

As a capacity, CI is defined to be the integration of the reasoning ability, emotional capacity and social cognition required to function at the level of complexity demanded by current life challenges.

As a process of negotiating transitions, CI includes: (1) recognition that a gap exists between the life conditions currently facing us and our current operating beliefs and assumptions of how the world works (e.g. our practice of enforcing Christmas and Easter as public holidays in areas where large percentages of the population are not Christian); (2) perseverance to stay engaged in the gap with the resulting confusion, contradiction and frustration as we disembody from our familiar operating beliefs; and (3) exposure and openness to a new conceptual framework that helps validate the recognition of this gap.

## Complexity Intelligence and Adult Development

In the literature on positive adult development, there are many references and cross-referenced charts describing the various lines, quadrants and domains of human development.<sup>3</sup> In defining CI, we focus on three of these: reasoning ability, emotional capacity and social cognition, or, in other words, reasoning ability in a social context. By describing CI as “reasoning ability in a social context,” we want to make clear that it is not reasoning ability alone (or reasoning ability of the isolated individual alone) that is the crux of complexity intelligence but it is the combination of this ability along with the emotional maturity to access and apply that ability in an interpersonal context. This definition of CI is consistent with Rosenberg’s (2004) reference to the three domains of cognition, emotional orientation and social context and corresponds to Kegan’s (1994/2000) use of the term *knowing*.<sup>4</sup>

A key notion behind the concept of CI is integration. Individuals may have a very high level of reasoning capacity, e.g. operating at the metasystematic or paradigmatic level identified by Commons et al (2002), but if they have not also developed the necessary emotional capacity and social cognition, they will not have the CI needed to operate at the level demanded by prevailing life conditions. This may then show up as a gap between the ability to talk *about* a belief conceptually and the ability to embody it. This can be confusing to others, unless they are willing to look under the content of *what* someone is saying to the structure of *how* they think and accomplish tasks in the world. People are walking around all the time with this type of “integrity gap” and not quite able to see it enough to name it or remediate it. This is a gap of integration - something we can all experience at our growing edge. An integrity gap is often falsely assumed to be an indication of moral corruption, a static judgment that is not helpful, as it does not inquire into the transitional nature of change. Having an integrity gap creates a tendency to feel off

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<sup>3</sup> Wilber (2000) identifies a minimum of two dozen lines of development in *Integral Psychology*. Kegan (1994/2000) uses three (logical-cognitive, social-cognitive and intrapersonal-affective) and in an interview with Russ Volkmann (<http://www.leadcoach.com/newsletter.html#fresh>), James Flaherty identifies six streams he uses in his work (cognitive, emotional, relational, somatic, spiritual and integrating).

<sup>4</sup> “This kind of “knowing,” this work of the mind, is not about “cognition” alone, if what we mean by cognition is thinking divorced from feeling and social relating. It is about the organizing principle we bring to our thinking and our feelings and our relating to others and our relating to parts of ourselves.” (Kegan, 1994/2000, p.29)



centre and a need to hide, avoid, or pretend, making it difficult to be fully present,<sup>5</sup> creative and responsive.

The transition from one understanding of “how the world works” to another is not a smooth linear process, as we know from observing children in their development. We watch them struggle to make meaning of new challenges that exceed their current capacities. For instance, a child is unable to differentiate the letter “d” from the letter “b” in his printing until he has internalized the meaning of the spatial concepts of midline, right and left. As a culture we have anticipated the developmental transitions of childhood and accepted the need for supporting them. This acceptance has allowed us to design learning environments that respect children’s different learning capacities.<sup>6</sup> However, we have not yet offered the same consideration to adults in transition. This is probably because, as a culture, we are still embedded in the belief that human development ends with the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

If we assume that once we reach adulthood, development stops, then we are likely to also assume that all adults have the same capacities to integrate their cognitive, emotional and social domains in order to be able to respond to complex situations in a similar and capable manner. This universal “one brush stroke does all” lens could be the root of much of our personal, social and political frustration. It does not let us see the gaps in our own and others’ capacities and thus we judge the behaviors as purposeful sabotaging, or permanent incompetencies, instead of respecting them as natural developmental challenges common to us all. That which is invisible to us is not available for conscious intervention. As the literature on positive adult development becomes more widespread in the culture and as we begin to understand the nature of what occurs during transitions, we can hope to see an increase in awareness of the need to support us all in our transitions.

While it is our belief that complexity intelligence is a natural human capacity that appears to have no upward limits, in this paper, we confine our focus to the complexity intelligence required to respond to the dilemmas and transitions currently facing us in the Western World. We see the bulk of the population basically in the transition from Piaget’s formal operations to post-formal operations.<sup>7</sup> Of course, the actual transition facing individuals will vary, depending on their life context. Using Torbert’s (2004) action-logic terminology, some will be making the transition from Expert to Achiever, some from Achiever to Individualist and others from Individualist to Strategist and beyond. Each transition requires a different set of capacities and anyone working with social change needs to be aware of this difference.

## **Complexity Intelligence and Societal Development**

So far, we have described complexity intelligence as it relates to individuals, but the term can be readily applied to societies as well. It is important to recognize that it is the interaction between the culture and the individual, not just the individual alone that is the locus of social change. Globally we are sitting in the midst of interconnected societies with unresolved problems

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<sup>5</sup> The authors consider “being present” a core element of complexity intelligence. It means being able to track the interconnected shifts in emotions, meaning-making and physiological reactions in the moment.

<sup>6</sup> This need has become visible to us although it was not as overtly recognized in childhood education 100 years ago.

<sup>7</sup> Piaget’s description of stage change is similar to that described in the transitions from order 3 to order 4 (Kegan, 1982/1996), and the two-step transition from Achiever to Individualist to Strategist (Torbert, 2004), orange to green to yellow (Beck & Cowan, 1996) or abstract to systematic to metacognitive (Commons et al, 2002).



such as homelessness, AIDs, famine, global warming etc. and the complexity intelligence has not yet emerged to meet these challenges. There is a large gap between these types of societal challenges and our collective capacities to respond to them.

We define a society with complexity intelligence as one that has institutionalized structures in place that support the collective reasoning ability, emotional maturity and “inter-societal”<sup>8</sup> capacity to respond to current societal challenges. If enough of the population of a given society could develop complexity intelligence, they would have the capacity to reason and reflect together and commit to a process of public deliberation or generative dialogue out of which adaptive responses to problems could emerge. Such a society would have the emotional maturity to face the enormity of the global challenges facing it without “numbing out” or splitting into reactive camps. And, it would have the “inter-societal” capacity to truly operate from a worldcentric perspective.

## Navigating the Gap

In much of the popular literature on human development, there is a lot of attention given to identifying the stages of development. We want to focus on the space in between these stages. In defining complexity intelligence as a process of negotiating transitions from one stage to the next, we have identified three characteristics of this process: (1) there is a recognition that a gap exists between our operating beliefs and the current conditions facing us; (2) there is the perseverance to stay engaged in the resulting confusion, contradiction and frustration as we disembed from familiar operating beliefs and navigate the gap; and (3) there is exposure and openness to a new conceptual framework that validates our recognition of the gap.

The navigation itself is a natural process. Pushed and pulled by an evolutionary imperative, what Freire (1993) refers to as “the ontological vocation to be more fully human,” humans naturally navigate the gap that arises when current operating beliefs no longer make sense of contradictory life conditions. This happens routinely throughout the human lifespan, as illustrated by the following examples. A child initially believes all her attempts at speaking are encouraged, but then realizes that some speaking is considered “swears” and she is punished. An adolescent has to negotiate the transition from a belief that parental routines create comfort and stability to a belief that some parents’ routines are also suffocating them. Adults grapple with shifts of meaning from believing their investments in retirement savings plans will support them in their old age through watching investment funds collapse as some of these companies are exposed as fraudulent. They begin to question if security can come from financial investments alone or if the human bonds of a strong community may offer greater protection in old age or debility.

In all these examples, the transition from the old way of understanding “how the world works” to a more complex way of understanding begins with the recognition of a gap. This recognition is supported by the awareness that there is another way of looking at things – i.e. a new conceptual framework. One cannot ignore the contradictions but it takes great perseverance to stay in this place of confusion and frustration until a new way of understanding emerges. Even though the new view eventually “transcends and includes” the earlier view, to use Wilber’s (2000) phrase, the transition process is not an easy or simple one.

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<sup>8</sup> “Inter-societal” is a term used to expand on the interpersonal domain for individuals. Societies also must develop the capacity to deliberate together at a global level to respond to complex global issues.

Often, we may not even recognize that a gap exists. For example, a person who operates from an assumption that social problems are due to those with power oppressing those without power may blame the “system” as it must be perpetuating this imbalance. With this operating belief firmly in place, such a person does not see the history of interconnected social structures that underlie complex issues such as homelessness. Instead, she seeks solutions to problems of human suffering by righting the wrong through “aid to victims.” What happens then to a person who holds this belief when, after years of fighting for more shelters for the homeless, she sees those shelters going unused while homeless people still remain sleeping under bridges and on park benches? Perhaps she will continue to hold onto the belief, continuing to blame the system for not providing enough in the form of aid to victims. If the gap between what she believes and what she sees happening is not too great, she may simply ignore it, defend it or make slight adjustments without challenging the assumptions of the familiar lens of “how the world works.” She may infer that it is not the view that is limited but she just needs to advocate harder or in a different way to ensure aid to victims. On the other hand, if the gap is large enough that it becomes visible and difficult to live with, the recognition of the gap will ignite the evolutionary imperative and the individual will be forced to deal with the dialectical challenge of resolving contradictory awarenesses. This could lead to a shift in worldview to allow an awareness that effective action requires more from government policy than simply providing “aid to victims.” It may also require working with a wide variety of approaches related to housing and health as well as other interconnected systems such as economic development and employment.

In our modern society, we often find ourselves face to face with those who hold different beliefs and values. When we add to this, the confusion and contradictions brought on by rapid changes in technology, we truly do find ourselves in a state of “permanent white water.” In such fast moving waters, there is understandable confusion, vulnerability and exhaustion as we feel ourselves losing our footing in our old way of understanding before there is any solid ground emerging to form the foundation of a new comprehension. One of our journal entries describes it this way:

Part of what I know I need is to be able to process that gap that I am sensing, in order to unfreeze my responses. So I need to sort it, chew on it, make meaning of it, validate my intuitions and then the next time I am much less fumble-minded about it, less reactive and take it less personally. I can then see through the whole matrix of it and respond effectively at the time. It is like a new neurological pathway has been made.<sup>9</sup>

This journal entry illustrates how the reasoning capacity is struggling to make sense of what is occurring, the emotional capacity is stuck in a feeling of “fumble-mindedness” and the social cognition is “frozen” until some integration happens. If the reasoning ability begins to make sense of the situation without integrating the emotional and social aspects, there could be inconsistency between espoused theory and theory in use.

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<sup>9</sup> Author’s personal journal entry

## Supporting the Emergence of Complexity Intelligence Through Cultural Coaching

### Providing Support to Navigate the Gap

If we are saying that complexity intelligence naturally emerges as an adaptive response to complex conditions, why has it not emerged in response to the undeniably complex conditions of our modern world? Could it be that the gap between our current understanding of how the world works and the challenges we are facing is too big of a gap to navigate? While it is healthy for a challenge to be slightly greater than current capacities as it motivates us to grow, if a challenge is too great, it can overwhelm us and retard our development. If this is our current societal dilemma and if we are, as Kegan suggests “in over our heads,” what, if anything, can we do to stimulate the emergence of complexity intelligence to disclose this gap and support the navigation through it? Indeed, can its emergence be stimulated, nurtured and supported? Questions such as these are drawing much interest and attention by theorists and action researchers committed to public issues work. Rosenberg (2004) and Ross (2002) both suggest that designed pedagogical approaches to public processes can lead to an increase in the capacities we are defining as complexity intelligence. These pedagogical approaches can be a way of supporting openness and exposure to new conceptual frameworks.

There must be an appropriate balance between challenge and support. If the challenge is perceived as too great, there needs to be an increase in support to allow growth to occur. How do we provide that support and what form would it take? Could we stimulate the emergence of complexity intelligence with a designed process following what Kegan describes as “life’s natural curriculum” offering the right amount of challenge and support?

When individuals experience a gap, they have a variety of sources to turn to for help – personal therapists, life coaches etc., all of which could be called “gap specialists.” Many of these professionals specialize in supporting individuals to navigate the gap between formal operational and post-formal operational although they may not formally name their work as such. Through assessment and appropriately designed interventions, these professionals support individuals to adjust to their life situations or co-create more fulfilling circumstances. The shortcoming of this work is that it is done in the privacy of a therapist’s office, as if each individual’s issues existed separately from their culture.<sup>10</sup> The work of individuation from a specific clients’ pathology or “dysfunctional” family could, from a broader lens, often be viewed as the normal evolution from one cultural worldview of how the world works to another one more appropriate for the current situation. For example, is a client’s lack of identity and confidence to compete in a highly entrepreneurial market after being laid off, due to an unhealthy relationship with a dominant conservative father who did not allow much self-expression? Possibly, as of course all individuals must become conscious of their own path and influences. At the same time, however, this client is also an example of a culture struggling with a shift in worldview from one that values loyalty to tradition, morality and group standards to one that values personal initiative, practical efficiency and change.

For many individuals, personal therapy has been a great source for improving individual capacities for personal awareness, emotional bonding, sense of belonging, authentic expression, adequate body-mind integration to stay present and the ability to understand and empathize with

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<sup>10</sup> The book entitled *We’ve had a hundred years of psychotherapy and the world’s getting worse* by Hillman and Ventura (1992) challenges the hope that has been held that individual transformation would have been enough to change the world.

others who are different. These capacities are essential conditions for complexity intelligence to emerge and for engaging effectively in public processes. However, personal therapy, working as it does mainly at the level of the individual or family, cannot, by itself, effect social change. This is because the locus of change must include the culture.

## Coaching Societies Through the Gap

Clearly, there are plenty of resources for an individual in distress to access. But where does a society or a culture turn when it needs “therapy?” There is a need for a body of practitioners who can, as Kegan says “throw a sympathetic arm of disciplined friendliness across the burdened shoulders of contemporary culture.”<sup>11</sup> Such practitioners, we are calling *cultural coaches* - change agents who support the transformation of dysfunctional societal issues. This is not easy work and requires deep commitment, personal maturity and a thorough understanding of adult development, social systems and the process of public deliberation and dialogue. Individuals interested in cultural coaching should participate in a developmental learning process that is designed to stimulate the large perspective and capacities needed to meet complex 21<sup>st</sup> century issues. Well-trained, experienced cultural coaches would create carefully designed processes with the right mix of challenge and support to encourage public awareness, inquiry and reflection. Over time, a cadre of cultural coaches could stimulate and support the culture to evolve to the next stage in its development. This work needs to be approached with deep integrity. Personal therapists are aware of the power they hold in relationship with their clients. Their capacities are built and evaluated based on principles and professional codes of ethics. This must also apply if one is to be a coach of cultural transformation with the acknowledgement that this is life work with no endpoint in the learning/evolving process.

In our culture, the locus of change has been identified very much with the individual and it needs to shift to include both the individual and the culture and the relationship between them. By supporting the emergence of complexity intelligence in individuals, we are supporting the evolution of the organizations and communities where they work and live. Of equal, if not more importance, by supporting complexity intelligence of the culture we are also supporting the evolution of individuals, as the culture is the holding environment for development.

We have defined a society with complexity intelligence as one that has institutionalized structures that support the collective reasoning ability, emotional maturity and “inter-societal” capacity to respond to existing complex societal challenges. A society with complexity intelligence as its centre of gravity has social infrastructures in place that develop and support the collective capacity to reason and reflect together; to be emotionally responsible in facing the enormity of our local and global challenges without splitting into reactive camps; and to truly operate from a worldcentric perspective.

How do we support the emergence of complexity intelligence in our culture and how do we institutionalize it in our society? First, as one approach, we suggest that cultural coaching must become institutionalized as a recognized profession, just as personal coaching and personal therapy have become recognized professions in the individual domain. Secondly, we suggest that processes intended to support the emergence of complexity intelligence must be well designed. Too often, we expect that simply by gathering people in one room to talk about some complex issue that these collective capacities for dealing with the task at hand will just appear.

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<sup>11</sup> Kegan (1994/2000, p. 3)

## The Importance of Designed Processes

Our concept of complexity intelligence draws on the interrelated fields of adult development, integral theory, transformational learning, complexity theory, dialogue, deliberation and action research and inquiry. In designing public interventions, cultural coaches would draw on their knowledge of this theoretical framework. For example, program design can be informed by complexity theory. Public processes can be designed to support the process of self-organizing inherent in complex adaptive systems. Eoyang and Olsen (2001) suggest there are three conditions which, in their interrelationship, influence a system to self-organize: (1) creating a container i.e. the intent and support for dialogue and deliberation; (2) surfacing diversity and differences which allows creativity to flow; and (3) increasing the frequency of transforming exchanges so feedback loops can reveal the consequences of our choices and also inform us as to who “we” are.

In our opinion, the design of public processes should also be informed by recent work by Torbert (2004), Ross (2002) and Rosenberg (2004). Torbert’s approach to action inquiry provides an effective structure for aligning outward effectiveness with inner integrity in real time by increasing awareness of our inner process, building mutuality through how we speak to others and developing sustainability through how we organize. Ross (2002) has done extensive work in designing a developmental approach to complex public issues based on a framework of deliberative democracy, integral theory, human development, transformation theory, timely action inquiry and consciousness studies. In a recent paper on public deliberation,<sup>12</sup> Rosenberg advocates for public processes that develop the “cognitive capacities, emotional orientation and social context” for democratic deliberation.

If attempts to bring citizens together to grapple with complex social issues are not designed to consider the diverse worldviews, capacities and complexities, the best in people will not be brought forward, and participatory projects will flounder, leaving people frustrated and eventually apathetic. Rosenberg indicates that most citizens do not have the capacity to engage in deliberative democracy as they lack many of the cognitive, emotional and communicative capacities to participate effectively in this work:

A good deal of research on small group behavior and communications provides evidence of people’s evident inability to understand and fairly consider other people’s perspectives, to think critically about their own position or the social conventions to which they adhere, or think about problems creatively and generate novel alternatives.<sup>13</sup>

Rosenberg also suggests many citizens lack the ability for empathy and bonding with their community to allow for the commitment required for deliberative democracy. If adults differ in these essential components of complexity intelligence then there is a lack of autonomy and equality, necessary ingredients according to Rosenberg for democracy. As the complexities of our public issues increase, we will have to address the fact that we need to develop complexity intelligence to respond, understand and engage with these issues and with each other.

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<sup>12</sup> Rosenberg (2004).

<sup>13</sup> Rosenberg (2004, p. 4)



## Concluding Remarks and Suggestions for Ongoing Inquiry

In concluding this paper, we want to emphasize that human beings and societies are naturally adaptable. With the right combination of challenges and support, they will naturally evolve the capacities to meet the demands of existential conditions. However, in times of rapid change and in the absence of adequate support, large gaps can occur between the capacities needed to respond to life's demands and the actual capacities that have developed. Such is the case today where we seem to be living, as Vaill (1989) suggests, in a state of "permanent white water" and there is a large gap between the capacities needed to respond to our societal challenges and the capacities we have developed.

In this paper, we present the idea of *complexity intelligence* as a useful concept to frame our current global situation and our efforts to remediate it. We define complexity intelligence as the capacity to respond to the demands of life challenges and also the process of developing this capacity. In individuals, we consider complexity intelligence to be the integrated reasoning ability, emotional maturity and social cognition necessary to meet the demands of life. We define a society with complexity intelligence as one that has institutionalized structures in place that support the collective reasoning ability, emotional maturity and inter-societal capacity to respond to existing complex societal challenges. We suggest that complexity intelligence emerges as we navigate the transition from one set of operating beliefs about how the world works to a more expanded set of operating beliefs transcending and including the former. This process begins with the recognition of a gap between our beliefs of how the world works and the life conditions we observe around us. Perseverance is required to stay engaged in this gap along with the resulting confusion, contradiction and frustration as we disembed from our familiar beliefs. Also, there must be exposure to a new conceptual framework that helps validate the recognition that a gap exists.

We believe it is possible and, indeed, necessary, to stimulate the emergence of complexity intelligence in society, but we believe a new form of social change agent is needed to midwife its emergence. We call this new change agent a *cultural coach* and recognize this work requires deep commitment, personal maturity and a thorough understanding of the parameters of social change. Well-trained and experienced cultural coaches could design processes of public dialogue and deliberation that would support the transformation of dysfunctional societal issues. Over time, a cadre of cultural coaches could stimulate and support the culture to evolve to the next stage in its development. For social change to be lasting, we believe that it is imperative that cultural coaching becomes institutionalized as a recognized profession, just as personal coaching and personal therapy have become recognized professions in the individual domain.

## Questions for On-going Inquiry

There are several big questions threaded through this article. Some partial answers have been posited and yet many questions remain. How prevalent is the awareness that there is a gap between the challenges facing us as global citizens and our capacities to respond to them? If we are aware of the gap, how willing are we to stay engaged with the resulting confusion, contradiction and frustration to allow complexity intelligence to emerge? Do we have enough time? In fact, the largest question of all may well be will we, as a species, continue to evolve in a healthy adaptive manner? What are the conditions that will support that evolvment? How will we know whether an adaptation is advantageous or not? Will there be a threshold or limit to the amount and speed of complexity that we are experiencing as some suggest? Can posing and

pondering these questions be done with vitality and inspiration? We look forward to continuing this exploration and invite comments and feedback on this article.

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*Jan Inglis has integrated a diverse background that includes local and international community sustainability projects, body focused psychotherapy, program development and adult education. She is a member of the board of directors for ARINA. She lives in Nelson, British Columbia.*

*Margaret Steele, M.Sc., has a background in research, policy analysis and community development. She has worked with non-profit organizations and local and federal government agencies. She lives in Grand Forks, British Columbia.*

*They are the founders and co-directors of the Integrative Learning Institute, an organization offering programs and services to evolve capacities to respond to complexity.*

*British Columbia*

*Canada*

*Email: [www.integrativelearninginstitute.com](http://www.integrativelearninginstitute.com)*



# The Development of Dialectical Thinking As An Approach to Integration

Michael Basseches

**Abstract:** This article offers a description of dialectical thinking as a psychological phenomenon that reflects adult intellectual development. While relating this psychological phenomenon to the various dialectical philosophical perspectives from which the description is derived, the article conceptualizes dialectical thinking as a form of organization of thought, various aspects of which can be identified in individual adults' approaches to conceptualizing a range of problems, rather than as one particular stream of intellectual history. The article provides a range of examples of dialectical analyses, contrasting them with more formalistic analyses, in order to convey the power, adequacy, and significance of dialectical thinking for the sorts of challenges that this journal embraces. It suggests that events in all areas of life demand recognition of the limitations of closed-system approaches to analysis. Approaches based instead on the organizing principle of dialectic integrate dimensions of contradiction, change and system-transformation over time in a way that supports people's adaptation when structures undergirding their sense of self/world coherence are challenged. Higher education and psychotherapy are considered as examples of potential contexts for adult intellectual development, and the conditions that foster such development in these contexts are discussed. The article as a whole makes the case for consciously attempting to foster such development in all our work as an approach to integration.

**Key words:** dialectic, development, transformation, constitutive relationships, interaction, multiple systems, open systems, metasytematic, epistemic adequacy, dialectical thinking, dialectical philosophical perspective, dialectical analysis, psychotherapy, higher education

## Introduction

In this article, I present a description of what I have called dialectical thinking that was first written two decades ago.<sup>1</sup> My goal is to present it in a way that suggests its power, adequacy, and significance for the challenges that this journal is dedicated to embracing. I refer the reader to other work (Basseches, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1989) for a full exposition of the philosophical argument, the research methodology for recognizing elements and examples of dialectical

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: See the author's discussion beginning on p. 49 that describes his use of the term dialectical thinking as psychological phenomenon.

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thinking and assessing individuals' capacity for dialectical thought, and the empirical findings, all of which support my claim that dialectical thinking reflects adult intellectual *development*. Pending examination of that work, I invite the reader to critically evaluate the philosophical position reflected in this article. For readers who cannot embrace this philosophical position, it may be more appropriate to use my description as a diagnostic tool for recognizing dialectical thinking in the thinking of others, than as defining a goal to pursue. However, this article is offered to all theorists, researchers, and practitioners who share the goal of fostering integrative thinking, and as a plausible account of the sort of intellectual development that all our work ought to promote.

## **Power, Significance, And Adequacy**

Let me begin by offering a couple of scenarios of situations in adult life in which dialectical cognitive organization would make a difference in how meaning is made of phenomena. I hope these examples will provide an initial feel for what I include within the scope of dialectical thinking, as well as its implications. In each example, I will start with two non-dialectical, but not unusual, ways of thinking about the problem at hand, and then contrast them with a third, dialectical alternative.

Mary, Helen, and Judy are all mothers of daughters. Each mother has held a set of values that have guided her efforts to raise her daughter. Now, the daughters have grown up and each of them is rejecting many of her mother's values.

Mary is very troubled. She sees only two possible interpretations. If her values are right, she has failed as a parent in not having successfully transmitted those values to her daughter. On the other hand, if her daughter's values are right, the whole foundation of the way Mary has lived her life is wrong, and Mary neither deserves nor is likely to receive her daughter's respect.

Helen, however, is shrugging the matter off. She reasons that values are totally arbitrary and irrational anyway. All people have their own values and live their lives by them, and who's to say which ones are right and which ones are wrong. The important thing is to respect others, even if they have different values. Helen respects her daughter in spite of their differences.

Judy begins to think about the matter by looking at the evolution of values in historical perspective. She reasons that human values change over the course of history as old values interact with changing environmental circumstances. People need values in order to decide how to act, but in acting according to their values they change the world, and the changed world in turn leads to the development of new values. Judy understands her daughter's values as resulting from the interaction of the values Judy tried to share with her and the experiences of the world that her daughter has had but Judy herself never had. Judy says to herself,

Instead of assuming either that I am wrong or that my daughter is wrong, I can try to see what I can learn for my future life from her values borne of her experience. I can also see how she has learned from my values and transformed them to keep up with the times.

Mark, Howard, and George are college juniors. They are feeling very frustrated about three years of the routine of tests, paper assignments, and grades. They worry that going through this process has taken its toll, undermining their love of learning.

Mark is confused. Based on his own experience, it seems to him that students would learn

much more if they were given more freedom to pursue their own intellectual interests, rather than being required to take standardized tests and complete standardized assignments. On the other hand, he assumes that the college is run by experienced educators, who must have determined that the use of tests and assigned papers to measure and grades to motivate is the soundest educational method.

Howard is angry. He locates the cause of his own demoralization and that of his fellow students in teachers' illegitimate presumption that they can pass judgment on students' ideas. He believes that much of grading is subjective and that teachers use their power to impose their own personal tastes on what students think and how students write. Although Howard doesn't accept it as educationally legitimate for teachers to dictate what students should learn and then to evaluate them by subjective standards, he does accept that that's the way the system works. He has decided that he wants to make it through the system, and has cynically dedicated himself to cultivating the art of giving teachers what they want.

George begins to analyze the problem by locating the college within the larger society of which it is a part. The college is expected to perform a certification function for that society, providing transcripts that other social institutions can use in their selection processes. But the college is also expected to provide students with a good education. The problem that he and Howard and Mark are experiencing reflects a contradiction between the certification and educational functions of the college. The need to provide certification (grades) to the outside leads the college and its faculty to employ practices that may not be educationally optimal (i.e., standardized assignments). Similarly, the concerns with providing a good education leads to practices that may not be certificationally optimal (i.e., grading students on subject matter where completely objective evaluation is impossible). George reasons that this contradiction will only really be resolved when the basic relationship of the colleges and universities to society is transformed. He decides that he will devote his time at college to trying to learn all he can that might help him contribute to that kind of transformation of educational institutions. He accepts that in the meantime he will be given standardized assignments and grades and will have to make compromises just as his teachers do between what is educationally and certification ally optimal. But he is resolved not to lose sight of his own educational goals.

In my view, the example of "dialectical thinking" in each of the above cases reflects a power, significance and adequacy that is not present in the non-dialectical alternatives. I will consider the nature and bases of this adequacy in later sections of this article. However, first, I will discuss the sources of my conception of dialectical thinking.

My understanding of dialectical thinking as a psychological phenomenon is derived from a conception of a dialectical philosophical perspective. I will now describe this philosophical perspective in a way that indicates its underlying unity. In doing so, I will take the liberty of casting a net that in some ways may be broader and in other ways narrower than those nets intellectual historians might cast. My net may be broader in that I am grouping ideas and ways of thinking under the heading "the dialectical philosophical perspective" based merely on their philosophical and psychological similarities rather than establishing a "tradition" by demonstrating actual historical connections among ideas and thinkers. My net may be narrower in that I do not try to hold within it the various pre-Hegelian forms of thought that were called dialectical, whereas intellectual historians might advance accounts of the continuity between pre-Hegelian and post-Hegelian uses of the term.

## The Dialectical Philosophical Perspective

I view the dialectical perspective as comprising a family of world outlooks, or views of the nature of existence (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology). These world outlooks, while differing from each other in many respects, share a family resemblance based on three features: common emphases on change, on wholeness, and on internal relations.

Dialectical ontologies emphasize (1) that what is most fundamental in reality are some ongoing processes of change; (2) that in the course of these ongoing processes of change within existence as a whole, forms of organization emerge that have a coherence that cannot simply be accounted for by the nature of the parts that are organized within these forms (the forms are temporary and may disintegrate or give way to more complex forms of organization); (3) that everything that exists is in relationship to other things and that these relationships are internal to the nature of the things themselves—they are part of what makes the things what they are (and as a thing's internal relations change, its nature changes).

Similarly, dialectical epistemologies emphasize (1) that both individual and collective knowledge are essentially active processes of organizing and reorganizing understandings of phenomena; (2) that in these knowing processes there emerge individual and collective conceptual systems that give the knowledge a coherence that cannot simply be accounted for by the specific concepts, ideas, and facts organized within them; (3) that concepts, ideas, and fact exist in relationships not only to other concepts, ideas, and facts but also to the lives of the knowers who employ them. These relationships determine the meaning of the concepts, ideas, and facts, and as these relationships change, the meanings of concepts, ideas, and facts also change.

What ties together the emphases on change, wholeness, and internal relations in dialectical world outlooks is the concept of dialectic. This concept underlies both dialectical world outlooks and the particular approaches to analysis that constitute dialectical thinking.

### The Idea of Dialectic

Dialectic is *developmental transformation* (i. e., *developmental movement through forms*) that occurs via *constitutive and interactive relationships*. The phrase "movement through forms" is meant to distinguish such movement from movement within forms. To illustrate this distinction, consider what happens when a road is built from one city to another. The road has a certain form to it, and the form of that road regulates the movement of the vehicles traveling between those cities. Thus, we may take this movement of the vehicles as movement within forms. On the other hand, the movement or change associated with the decay of the road, the emergence of trouble spots in terms of accidents or traffic jams, and the process of building a new and better road with a different form to replace or supplement the old road can be seen as a movement through forms. Through the notion of movement through forms, or "transformation" the definition of dialectic relies upon and presupposes both the notion of movement and the notion of form and focuses on a particular relationship between them. Describing this movement through forms or transformation as developmental implies that there is a certain direction to it. This direction is usually associated with increasing inclusiveness, differentiation, and integration.

The definition relates this developmental transformational movement to constitutive and interactive relationships. A relationship may be understood as a connection. Although a

relationship is often thought of as a connection between things, where the things are taken to exist prior to the relationship, the phrase "constitutive relationship" is meant to indicate the opposite—the relationship has a role in making the parties to the relationship what they are (cf., "internal relations," above). The adjective "interactive" implies that a relationship is not static but is characterized by motion or action of the parties upon each other.

Our example of the road will also serve to illustrate the concepts of constitutive and interactive relationships. Constitutive and interactive relationships can be identified among the builders of the road, the road itself, and the users of the road and their vehicles. The road is constituted not only by its interaction with road-builders (who build it) but also by its relationship with the vehicles that travel on it. For if no vehicles were permitted to travel on it, it would no longer be a road. It would perhaps be a road that had been converted to a mall. Or if only airplanes traveled on it, it would be a runway rather than a road. Thus, its being a road depends on its particular relationship to vehicles. Likewise, it is clearly relationships with roads that make road-builders road-builders. It is also, though perhaps less obviously, relationships with roads that make vehicles vehicles. Vehicles are vehicles because they have the capacity to transport one someplace, and the extent to which they have this capacity is dependent on the extent to which suitable thoroughfares exist.

The relationship between the vehicles and the road is interactive, as well as constitutive, in that the vehicles change the road and the road changes the vehicles. This should be clear from the previous discussion of road decay or wear (vehicles changing the road) and of developing trouble spots on the road that cause accidents to the vehicles (the road thus changing vehicles).

Once again, as was mentioned earlier, this interaction between road and vehicles leads to the transformation of the whole situation described earlier in terms of the building of a *new* road. This is the sense in which the transformation occurs via constitutive and interactive relationships. Thus the movement whereby a new road is built as a result of the interactive and constitutive relationships among the previous road, the road-users and their vehicles, and the road-builders, may be seen as an instance of dialectic.

## **Dialectical Thinking and Dialectical Analyses**

Dialectical ontologies view existence as fundamentally a process of dialectic. Dialectical epistemologies view knowledge as a process of dialectic. Because dialectical thinking derives from a general world outlook, individual dialectical thinkers are likely to view both existence and knowledge dialectically. But it is possible to hold a dialectical view of one realm and not the other or to view neither realm as a whole in a fundamentally dialectical way but to think dialectically about particular phenomena. Most generally, we can say that dialectical thinking is any thinking that looks for and recognizes instances of dialectic and that reflects this orientation in the way in which it engages inquiry. Orienting toward dialectic leads the thinker to describe changes as dialectical movement (i.e., as movement that is developmental movement through forms occurring via constitutive and interactive relationships) and to describe relationships as dialectical relationships (i.e., as relationships that are constitutive, interactive, and that lead to or involve developmental transformation).

Formal operational thinking as described by Piaget can be understood as efforts at comprehension that rely on the application of a model of a closed system of lawful relationships to the phenomenal world. In contrast, dialectical thinking can be understood as consisting of

efforts at comprehension relying on the application of a model of dialectic to the phenomenal world. These latter efforts may be termed dialectical analyses, in contrast to formal analyses. I am suggesting that dialectical thinking is an organized approach to analyzing and making sense of the world one experiences that differs fundamentally from formal analysis. Whereas the latter involves the effort to find fundamental fixed realities – basic elements and immutable laws – the former attempts to describe fundamental processes of change and the dynamic relationships through which this change occurs.

Dialectical analyses can be found in the history of a wide range of intellectual disciplines, representing the natural sciences (Provine; Feyerabend; Horz et al), social sciences (Jay; Kilminster; Mandel) and humanities (Jameson; Adorno and Horkheimer). They have been used to support political stances ranging from the very conservative (Hegel) to the revolutionary (Marx and Engels). To illustrate the role of such analyses in intellectual history, I will consider briefly aspects of the dialectical analyses found in the work of Karl Marx and Thomas Kuhn. Then I will discuss dialectical analyses in day-to-day life.

Marx (1967) started with the observation that people collectively interact with nature so as to produce what they need to perpetuate themselves. He referred to this process as labor. In any particular society, this productive and reproductive activity takes a particular form (mode of production) and is characterized by a particular structure of social relations (relations of production) among the participants. Marx analyzed the history of production as a dialectical process in which many aspects of economic, social, technical, and intellectual life are all interrelated within a form of organization inherent in the existing mode and social relations of production. Tensions develop within these interrelationships as the form of productive life continues over time until eventually these tensions lead to the creation of a whole new mode of production that replaces the previous one. Marx described the replacement of feudal society with capitalist society as an instance of this kind of dialectical transformation and predicted the replacement of capitalism with communism.

Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, provided a dialectical analysis of the history of science. He argued that within a scientific discipline, research is shaped by what he called a *paradigm*. A paradigm binds together implicit assumptions about the phenomena being studied with assumptions about the methodology appropriate for studying those phenomena and with methods of defining problems and recognizing solutions. However, a paradigm at its root is a particular piece of research yielding a particular insight, which serves as a model for other researchers. According to Kuhn, research following a paradigm tends to produce anomalies—findings that are not easily reconciled with other knowledge in the field. When enough such anomalies are produced to make scientists within the field uncomfortable, new alternative paradigms are advanced that compete with the dominant paradigm for followers. A scientific revolution has occurred when a new more comprehensive paradigm, with a new set of assumptions, a new methodology, and a new way of defining what constitutes a research problem and what constitutes a solution attracts enough followers to become dominant and to define the nature of the field.

In the cases of Marx and Kuhn, dialectical analyses were presented as alternatives to formal analyses in classical economic theory and philosophy of science, respectively. These formal analyses assumed that a single set of fundamental laws of economic behavior in one case and fundamental rules of evidence for scientific hypotheses in the other case were universally applicable. Neither the constitution of the economic laws by the existing social relations of production nor the possibility of transformation to new modes of production in which economic

behavior was different was recognized by classical economic theory (Smith). Similarly, neither the constitution of rules of evidence by paradigms currently popular within scientific communities nor the possibility of reorientation of sciences to paradigms with new rules of evidence was recognized by confirmationist (Reichenbach) or falsificationist (Popper) philosophies of science.

We can find many examples of problems of adult life that, like scientific problems, may be approached in relatively formalistic or relatively dialectical ways, with differing outcomes. Consider, for example, the choice of a marriage partner. If I were to adopt a formalistic approach to analysis I might start with the assumptions that I am who I am and that there are one or more people out there who are "right" for me. I might proceed to analyze my personality traits and to try to logically deduce the traits a partner should have to be compatible. Courtship would then consist of evaluating potential partners to see if they have the desired traits and testing my hypotheses about the traits required for compatibility. Notice that the formalistic approach begins with the assumption that people have fixed traits and that the goodness of a relationship is systematically determined by a matching of traits.

A dialectical approach might begin with the assumption that my traits are not fixed and that the relationships I enter will shape who I become as much as they are shaped by who I am and who my partner is. Here, courtship would involve entering relationships with potential partners, being open to being changed by relationships. We would then need to evaluate whether the relationship is evolving in ways that allow both of us to develop as individuals while it continues to develop as a relationship.

The alternatives of formal analysis and dialectical analysis may also be applied when a relationship breaks up. If I adopt a formal approach, I might try to explain to myself why the relationship ended by choosing among the following three interpretations.

- a. I was inadequate as a partner.
- b. My partner was inadequate as a partner.
- c. We weren't really right for each other, and we made a big mistake in choosing each other.

If I adopt explanation (a), the result is likely to be an increase in pain resulting from lowered self-esteem. If I adopt explanation (b), the result is likely to be a great deal of anger at my partner, which, among other things, will make it much harder for us to get back together in any sense. If I adopt explanation (c), the result is likely to be my devaluing a great deal of what was beautiful and valuable in our relationship for as long as it lasted, as well as possible hesitancy to make future commitments. I may say, "If I thought this person was right for me and I was wrong, it means I can't trust my own judgment."

In contrast, if I take a dialectical approach to analyzing the break-up, I am likely to look for how experience both within and outside of the relationship has led us to grow in different directions, so much so that we would be hampered by remaining so tied to each other. The assumption is that a relationship can reach a point where it tends to interfere with the development of one or both of the partners rather than helping them to grow further and growing with them. This kind of analysis is likely to make it easier, rather than harder, to deal emotionally with the breakup. It also is likely to facilitate our working together to strengthen or rebuild the relationship. If we don't blame each other and don't treat the relationship as a mistake, but instead treat the occurrence as a natural function of human development, we are more likely to ask, "How does the relationship need to change in response to the changes it has brought about in us in order for it to continue?" If we do this, a developmental transformation of

the relationship rather than its continued disintegration is more likely to occur.

Another example of the difference between formalistic and dialectical approaches may be found in the analysis of value differences between parents and their children with which I introduced this paper. There a formal analysis (Mary's) led to a choice between viewing oneself as having failed as a parent or as unworthy of one's daughter's respect. The dialectical analysis (Judy's) viewed the problem in the context of a dynamic approach to the evolution of values. Similarly, in the example of frustrated college students, the formal analysis (Mark's) assumed that problems in the college's procedures derived from an educational theory. This analysis led to the two choices of either rejecting the wisdom of one's teachers or discounting one's own perceptions as incorrect. The dialectical analysis (George's) interpreted the problems as reflecting tensions in the interrelationship of various aspects of the institution's functions and led to a recognition of problems facing teachers and students alike, as well as of potentials for the institution to be transformed.<sup>2</sup>

In each case, a dialectical analysis does not preclude a formal analysis. We may believe that relationships change and that people change and still ask questions about what makes partners compatible and how individuals can learn to be better partners. We may believe that values change over time and still ask ourselves if our daughter's view or our own view is more adequate on any particular value disagreement. We may trace problematic procedures at a college to fundamental contradictions among its functions and still inquire as to the educational impact of those procedures.

However, the capacity for dialectical analysis makes it possible both to see the limits and to see beyond the limits of the context in which we apply formal analysis. For example, in the matter of finding a marriage partner, I may hypothesize that I am a serious person and would have trouble getting along with someone who was not equally serious. But a dialectical perspective would prepare me for the possibility that in getting to know a very playful new friend I may reverse my thinking about compatibility and find I get along better with someone who can help me to laugh and play. I may even transform my prior assumptions about myself and find, that I am a fun-loving person. I might then either (1) look back at my prior seriousness as simply an emotional defense and understand the interpretation of myself as serious as itself a useful product of the historical moment, or I might say (2) "No, I really was a serious person then and now I am a fun-loving one." While (1) reflects a dialectical *epistemological* perspective on the evolution of self-knowledge over time through interaction, (2) reflects a dialectical *ontological* perspective on the evolution of personality through interaction.

In *each* of the cases discussed above, I think the dialectical analysis has a power that is absent in the formal analysis. At the same time, the dialectical analysis can make use of the power provided by the formal analysis. Marxian economic theory may make use of the classical economic theory's clarification of the laws of human economic behavior under capitalism but also analyze the potential and actual transformations of those laws. Kuhnian analysis can make use of philosophical clarification of the rules of evidence employed within the paradigm that

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<sup>2</sup> While the focus in this section is the contrast between formal and dialectical analyses, Helen and Howard's thinking in these examples represent a "relativistic" alternative to both. Relativistic approaches often avoid the constraints that formal analyses impose, but they do so at the expense of eschewing the possibilities for integration that are present in dialectical analyses. While the discussion of the relativist alternative is beyond the scope of this analysis, see Basseches, 1984 for a fuller analysis of its structure, strengths and weaknesses.



dominates a discipline, while simultaneously analyzing historically how that paradigm achieved hegemony and where it is likely to confront its limits.

As stated above, dialectical analyses of courtship, break-ups, intergenerational value disagreements, and frustrations of college do not preclude formal analyses. But with respect to social reasoning it is important to note that in each case dialectical analyses provide alternatives to views of the problem that are destructive to self or others. In one of the examples, the mother's formalistic analysis leaves her with two emotionally self-destructive alternatives. The dialectical analysis provides an alternative that affirms the self within the context of historical change. In other cases, the constraints of formal analysis are oppressive to other people. The "formalistic" approach to courtship, which attempts to evaluate the traits of potential partners, may be experienced by a potential partner as a barrier to emotional closeness as well as to the partner's influence. The "dialectical" approach, which anticipates the possibility of development resulting from interaction with partners, is, in contrast, likely to be experienced as a warm invitation to interact.

In general, formal analyses that establish categories of analysis from the thinker's own perspective tend to remain relatively impermeable to the differing perspectives of others.<sup>3</sup> Dialectical thinking, in contrast, is actively oriented toward shifting categories of analysis and creating more inclusive categories, in response to the perspectives of others.

## Costs of Dialectical Approaches

I do not want to present dialectical thinking as either an intellectual or psychological panacea. Dialectical analyses are not without costs. The willingness to question the permanence and intransigence of the boundary conditions of a problem and to ask about situations that lie beyond those boundaries characterizes each of the dialectical analyses cited above. In one case, the boundaries were the capitalist form of production; in another, existing paradigms; in a third, existing conceptions of one's own personality; in a fourth, the social conditions in which one's moral principles were formed; and in a fifth, the assumption that educational practice follows from educational theory. In questioning these boundaries, we may be questioning precisely those points of reference that provide us with a sense of intellectual stability and coherence about our world.

To think dialectically, is, in a certain sense, to trade off a degree of intellectual security for a freedom from intellectually imposing limitations on oneself or other people. The open-mindedness thus gained is extremely important from the perspective of a concern with sociocognitive development because it facilitates the joining in collective meaning-making efforts with others whose reasoning is shaped by very different world-views or life-contexts. However, if our concern were only with individual psychological well-being, and not with sociocognitive development, we might not be so quick to advocate this tradeoff. It might well depend on the likelihood of the individual being able to organize life in such a way as to avoid

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<sup>3</sup> This problem is analogous to an oft-discussed problem of social research. When researchers deal with data by sorting subjects' responses into categories predetermined by the researchers, this excludes the possibility of the subjects contributing from their own perspectives to the definition of the problem and the shape of the results.

encountering events that shatter particular sources of intellectual security.

We face sources of limitations other than intellectual ones, and other sources of pain as well. In the example of the relationship breaking up, loss of the reassuring presence of someone one loves and whom one may have expected to spend one's life with is painful, usually excruciating, no matter how one thinks about it. Dialectical thinking cannot free one from that pain. However, the kind of formalistic analysis of the break-up that I presented before intellectually reinforces the pain. It adds to the pain of loss the self-punitive pain of failure or inadequate judgment or the divisive pain of blame and hatred. The dialectical analysis is more likely to allow one to experience the pain as loss and to mourn the loss. At the same time the pain of loss may be counterbalanced by an emotionally positive intellectual awareness of (1) order in the developmental process, (2) new discovery, and (3) the opening of new possibilities.

In the case of the Marxian analysis presented above, if one is embedded in the midst of a capitalist economy, whether as a government economic advisor or as an individual laborer and consumer, it may seem far more worthwhile to spend one's time analyzing the laws of that economy formalistically than analyzing how it got to be that way, how it maintains itself, and where it could be going, dialectically. Granted, not being able to imagine what living under different laws of economic behavior would be like is a limitation; but needing to live among other people, all operating according to the current laws, poses a more serious limitation. Again, if we were arguing solely about individual welfare, the tradeoff between analyses that help one make predictions given boundary conditions that are unlikely to change in the near future and analyses that might help one to change or prepare for change in those conditions would be tough to evaluate. But from the point of view of humanity, as a socioepistemic subject, involved in an ongoing pursuit of truth, the added power made possible by the capacity for dialectical analyses seems important to recognize. While recognizing the importance of seriously addressing the question, "Who has time for what kind of dialectical analyses, and when," I do want to claim that dialectical thinking is an important phenomenon of adult sociocognitive development.

To review, the following general characteristics of dialectical thinking have been cited above.

1. Dialectical thinking is thinking that looks for and recognizes instances of dialectic-developmental transformation occurring via constitutive and interactive relationships.
2. Dialectical thinking is philosophically rooted in a family of world outlooks in which knowledge and existence are viewed as essentially dialectical processes and in which change, wholeness, and internal relations are emphasized.
3. Dialectical analyses draw attention to the limits of the contexts in which formal analyses are applicable.
4. As a result, dialectical analyses have a power to deal with relationships and transformations beyond the boundary conditions of a formal analysis, while still making use of the power of the formal analysis within those boundaries.
5. Dialectical approaches are more permeable than formalistic approaches to the perspectives of other people who may define a problem in fundamentally different ways.

## **Dialectic as an Organizing Principle**

The organizing principle for formal operational thought is the structured whole, or system. In contrast, the organizing principle for dialectical thinking is the dialectic. If we equate the notion of form in the definition of dialectic with that of structured whole or system we see how the

concept of dialectic builds upon, but is more complex than, the concept of system. Dialectic refers to the developmental transformation of systems over time, via constitutive and interactive relationships.

Thus, whereas formal thinking is systematic, dialectical thinking is metasystematic. In formal operational thought, an underlying (closed) system organizes a *logic of propositions* into a coherent whole. It enables the thinker to deal systematically with various propositions and their necessary interrelationships. It also makes possible the analysis of phenomena that can be effectively modeled as comprising closed systems. But the closed-system model is not adequate for problems requiring analysis of (1) multiple systems and their relationships to each other, or (2) open systems that undergo radical transformation.

In contrast, in dialectical thinking, an underlying model of dialectic organizes a *logic of systems* into a coherent whole. It enables the thinker to deal with various systems and their relationships to each other over time dialectically. The model of dialectic does provide a basis for analysis of (1) multiple systems and their relationships to each other, as well as (2) open systems that undergo radical transformation.

In dialectical thinking, what it is that remains recognizable across a range of changes is the historical process as an evolving whole. Any change at all, no matter how radical, can be equilibrated if it can be conceptualized as a moment in a dialectical process of evolution. New events are integrated within a dialectical conception of a process as later steps in the evolution of that process; old constructions are conserved- they remain part of the process of dialectic- although their historical role is reconstructed in the light of subsequent transformations.

For example, consider this dialectical analysis of sex roles. Systematic regularities have existed throughout history in male and female sex roles. In each era, the description of regularities in male and female sex roles has led to abstractions about how women's nature and temperament is on the whole different from men's. As a result of a range of changes in society (e.g., overpopulation), phenomena began to occur more regularly that were discrepant with traditional sex roles. The abstract models, as well as social norms and laws that are based upon and support those models, were then viewed as no longer adequate. Contradictions or tensions emerged in the system of sex role-regulated behavior including demands for political, social, and economic equality of the sexes. These contradictions will only be resolved as new more developed conceptions of maleness and femaleness emerge that are consistent with a greater range of male and female activities and with equality between the sexes (see Gilligan 1978, 1982).

The basis of the equilibrium in this way of thinking are (1) the assumption that/change is what is most fundamental; and (2) the ability to conceptualize changes as (a) emergences of contradictions within existing systems and (b) formations of new, more inclusive systems. The nature of maleness and femaleness is not viewed as fundamental; it is seen as likely to change through history. At any point in time it may be useful to conceptualize the regularities in male and female roles, but these conceptualizations are meaningful as part of a historical process in which they will be challenged and transcended.

A closed-system model of sex-role behavior, which claims that such behavior derives from fundamental immutable laws of male and female temperament, must necessarily ignore or attempt to suppress what begin as anomalies and later become new patterns of behavior by males and females, if the equilibrium of the system is to be maintained<sup>4</sup> (i.e., if maleness is to continue

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<sup>4</sup> Note the arguments of the "Moral Majority" here.

to be recognized as maleness and femaleness is to continue to be recognized as femaleness). In contrast, a dialectical model can incorporate such anomalies and new patterns while maintaining equilibrium by recognizing them as developments in the continuing dialectic of the relations of the sexes.

I have argued elsewhere (1980, 1984) that dialectical thinking describes a post-formal level of cognitive organization. This argument is based in part on the fact that dialectic as an organizing principle builds upon (and treats at a level of greater complexity by integrating with the dimension of change over time) the concept of system, which is the organizing principle of formal operations. The argument is also based in part on the greater equilibrating power (ability to maintain recognizable continuity in the midst of a broader range of change) of dialectical cognitive organization vis-a-vis formal operational organization. But it should be clear from the above example that my view that dialectical thinking is a necessary advance in equilibrium is also based on the general ontological assumption that people will be confronted with anomalous events that do not conform to prior closed-system laws.

In the natural sciences, this general ontological assumption amounts to the assumption that scientists will have to deal with scientific revolutions (Kuhn). In the life sciences and social sciences, it amounts to the assumption that the phenomena dealt with are highly susceptible to rapid and radical change, which scientists will need to comprehend. In day-to-day life, it amounts to the assumption that for making practical decisions, closed systems (including moral systems) that are constructed on the basis of limited data and from limited perspectives will be inadequate. Social life is complex and requires multiple perspective-taking. People will be confronted with new data and new perspectives, and it is important that their cognitive structures leave them open to taking these new data and perspectives into account, accommodating to them, and dealing with them constructively. Confrontations, in science and in life, with phenomena that demand recognition of multiple interacting systems and radical transformation of systems, will point out the limits of formal thinking and stimulate the construction of more dialectical forms of reasoning.

## **Facilitating the Development of Dialectical Thinking**

The above assumptions imply the importance of dialectical thinking to the achievement of cognitive equilibrium. This does not, however, imply that all adults in fact achieve this level of equilibrium. Research indicates that just as all adults do not fully develop formal operations, so they all may not develop dialectical thinking. Whether individuals do develop dialectical thinking depends on both environmental factors and developmental characteristics of the person.

First of all, fully developed dialectical thinking presupposes something like what Piaget calls formal operations. The ability to organize the world into an abstract consistent systematic pattern is a prerequisite to proving an account of how such patterns evolve and change. It is certainly possible to recognize the ontological and epistemological centrality of change, as well as the power of relationships, without organizing the world into systems. In fact, these recognitions may constitute preformal precursors and dialectical thinking. However, to do more than assert the importance of change and relationship—to actually describe the course of dialectical change over time—requires the ability to describe the temporary patterns of organization systems that constitute moments in dialectical processes.

When adults systematize the world (1) using sets of fixed categories, and (2) holding to static

ontological and epistemological assumptions often associated with formal thought, their maintenance of cognitive equilibrium depends on their power to seal themselves off from anomalous data and discrepant viewpoints. For example, with respect to the analysis of sex roles above, individuals may attempt (1) to force others to conform to their notions of sex-appropriate behavior, or (2) to isolate themselves from individuals whose behavior does not conform, in order to maintain their systematic understandings of the nature of masculinity and femininity. These strategies are surely not optimal from the point of view of a concern with expanding human sociality, but they may succeed in the short term if the individuals employing them are powerful enough. However, if adults cannot seal themselves off from discrepant events, they are likely to experience frustrations and conflicts resulting from the limits of fixed categories of thought for addressing a changing reality.

When this happens one of two things is likely to occur. Either the adults will reject formal operational thinking and resort to less logical forms of thought, or the adults will begin to reorganize their formal operations within the context of the more adequate organization of dialectical thinking. A combination of personal support, exposure to diverse perspectives, and opportunities for careful, critical reflection will facilitate the latter outcome of Inglis and Steele's (in this issue) description of "complexity intelligence." The description of dialectical thinking as an approach to modeling events is clearly more specific in some respects, while the authors' definition of complexity intelligence is more specific in other respects.

I would like to consider briefly the categories of practice mentioned in that article. The authors mention personal therapy and coaching as examples of professions intended to support development at the individual level, while they also suggest that "cultural coaching" be institutionalized as the practice of creating containers for dialogue, exploration of diversity and differences, and opportunities for transforming exchanges. On the one hand, as someone who has practiced psychotherapy for over 20 years, and spent much of the time engaged in the training and supervision of clinical psychologists in psychotherapy, I would have to say that the authors' view of this profession is somewhat over-idealized. While some in the profession may aspire to stimulate complexity intelligence, it is probably a minority of the profession who define their role in anything like this way, and an even smaller minority that practices in the ways the authors describe. (I have written extensively on this topic-- See Basseches, 1997a, 1997b, and 2002). At the same time there are also several professions that come to mind, in which at least a substantial minority of practitioners might view themselves as engaged in something quite like the practice of "cultural coaching" as defined by Inglis and Steele. Higher education is one example of such a profession, but there are probably quite a few others such as politics and journalism.

In the remainder of this article, I will consider this range of contexts -- with a focus on higher education and psychotherapy as institutionalized examples at the individual and cultural levels. I will address the question, "What conditions must prevail and be widely available to adults if they are to serve as effective contexts for the development of dialectical thinking?" Several hypotheses suggest themselves.

First, these institutions must not be content to maintain a discourse simply at the level of "established facts." For example, institutions of higher education must present students with multiple frames of reference-multiple justifiable coherent ways of interpreting facts based on diverging assumptions-that can be contrasted to each other. This experience is likely to lead students to recognize the active, relativistic nature of the process of interpretation, a crucial recognition in the movement from formal to dialectical forms of cognitive organization.

Similarly, students should not be presented with single "correct" methods of discovery.

Rather, alternative paradigms for research should be contrasted, and all methods should be open to question based on their appropriateness to various human goals. The recognition of the relativity of the very process of research (i. e., the construction of facts) to alternate modes of interpretation forms a crucial foundation for development of dialectical thinking.

At the same time, educational institutions should not be content to leave students in the transitional swamps of relativism. Students should recognize that there are multiple ways of looking at things. However, it is also important to recognize that these multiple ways of looking at things, along with the people who look at things in these ways, interact with each other over history. Advances in human knowledge occur when people succeed in synthesizing valuable aspects of different perspectives so that they function together as a whole, just as advances in history occur as the people who look at things in different ways learn to live together harmoniously.

Multiple conflicting frames of reference and multiple points of view must be presented to students as facts of life and as crucial moments in dialectical processes. But while these facts of life are presented as facts to be recognized, they must not be presented simply as facts to be accepted. Rather, each instance of conflicting points of view must be presented to students as an epistemological challenge—a challenge not only to the student but to the faculty as well. It should not be expected that the student will meet the challenge by resolving such conflicts in the course of the semester, or perhaps even in his or her lifetime, but it should be recognized that to be a seeker of truth means to try. For it is through the efforts of those who have taken on the challenges of trying that knowledge has advanced.

Finally, educational institutions must provide personal support for development, or, as Perry (1978, 267) has put it, educators must share "in the costs of growth." They must recognize the pain of letting go of a world where every question has a right answer and either authorities or logic can be counted on to provide the correct answers, to slowly build a world where the only answers one will have are those one has struggled for—a world where in many cases one will struggle and not find any at all and where in the rest of the cases the answers one finds new questions. Educators must at least acknowledge their own pain, which comes of being dedicated to truth.

For if teachers hold up a bravado of confidence and comfort, students have to cope not only with their own pain but also with the feeling there is something wrong with them for feeling this pain when their teachers appear to breeze through a relativistic world so nonchalantly, in command. Beyond acknowledging their own intellectual pain sharing it with students, educators can actually share in students' if not by holding hands, at least by holding minds. Educators will themselves with many more opportunities to revel in the joys of students' growth—to share the release of emancipation that occurs the students realize new degrees of freedom—if the educators are willing to share in growth's costs.

Now let us compare the institution of higher education, a context in which the shared social commitment to rationality is normally taken for granted but where the need for personal support is too often ignored, with psychotherapy, a context in which the reverse is often true. Psychotherapy is another context in which the development of dialectical thinking in adults may be fostered. In this context, one finds more prevalent recognition of the importance of providing personal support at times when the individual's sense of coherence in the self and world are under attack. However, a greater understanding of, and more explicit commitment to, dialectical rationality on the part of therapists would make psychotherapy a more effective context for development.

The modal source of threat to self/world coherence is somewhat different in psychotherapy and higher education, although there is also significant overlap. Whereas in higher education the challenges to one's way of making rational sense of things are likely to come from exposure to alternative ways of making rational sense, in psychotherapy aspects of one's experience of self and world which are internally in tension with one's ways of making sense are more often the source of the challenge. Comparable to the educator's task of balancing supporting students' realization of the existence of alternative ways of looking at things with the awareness of possibilities for growth from the interaction of perspectives is the therapist's task and supporting both openness to discrepant aspects of one's experience and the desire to build a coherent sense of self and the world that integrates these discrepant "irrational" experiences. While in the social setting of higher education the shared commitment to rationality is built upon to maintain the balancing act between doubt and integration, in psychotherapy a commitment to suspending the demands of rationality is needed to protect the dialectic from "rationalization" and to maintain clients' openness to their own experience. Nevertheless, a commitment to the client as a rational meaning-maker is equally important to support the client's integrative tendencies and capacities, within which dialectical thinking can develop as a crucial tool.

Within higher education, the relationship between theorizing and practice is perhaps analogous to the relationship the therapist must maintain between the client's rational capacities and the fuller reality of the client's experience-in-the-world. The positive effects of the educational process are likely to be limited insofar as it is divorced from practical concerns. If one only studies the systematizations of science and philosophy as abstract objects rather than attempting to systematize the dynamic contradictory realities of life beyond the laboratory and the classroom (students' own lives and those of others), encounters with the discrepant may be limited. On the other hand, if (as happens in much preprofessional education), practical problems are addressed but the definitions of the problems are taken uncritically, from a single point of view, discrepancies may also be avoided (especially if the point of view is that of powerful elements of society-elements strong enough to impose the order of a static system on the lives of others.)

## Conclusion

Looking back at what I wrote 20 years ago, I continue to believe that we have no choice but to seek patterns, build patterns, and live within patterns. But I agree with Inglis and Steele, and the others whose work they cite, that the processes of disequilibrium emerging with the patterns are so pervasive that attempting to maintain and rebuild coherence at every organizational level is extremely difficult work for all of us.

Looking back, I also noticed that in my example of a dialectical approach to courtship, marriage, and breakup, I moved subtly from use of the pronoun "I" to use of the pronoun "we." In doing so, I also subtly neglected that possibility of a relationship that one partner approaches dialectically, while the other approaches it with a relatively fixed and resistant-to-change model of what marriage should be. Living, in the twenty years in between, through the pain of such a marriage and its breakup, has sensitized me to the more general pervasiveness in the world of a particular type of an encounter. These can be characterized as encounters between those adopting more dialectical or integrative perspectives, and those who cherish structures, however magnificent, in ways that lead them to defend those structures at the expense of being able to

take in what is left out. I invite, indeed implore, the readers of and contributors to *Integral Review*, to attend to and to develop the theory, research and praxis of such encounters.

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*Michael Basseches, Ph.D., a psychologist and psychotherapist, is Professor of Psychology and Former Director of Clinical Training for the Ph.D. Program in Clinical Psychology at Suffolk University, Boston, Massachusetts and he is Staff Psychologist at the Bureau of Study Counsel at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is currently working on a book entitled Psychotherapy as a Developmental Process.*

*Department of Psychology  
Suffolk University  
41 Temple Street  
Boston, MA 02114  
Email: mbassech@suffolk.edu*

# Toward An Integral Process Theory Of Human Dynamics: Dancing The Universal Tango

Sara Ross

**Abstract:** This article is an outline toward developing a fuller process theory of human dynamics aimed at practical applications by a diverse audience. The theory represents a transdisciplinary synthesis of a universal pattern and integrates humans' projection dynamics with complex systems dynamics. Five premises, presented in lay language with examples, capture basic elements involved in the meta process of human development and change: reciprocity, projection, development's structural limits, oscillations, and structural coupling. Based on a fractal dialectical pattern that shows up wherever complex systems are involved, the theory's applications are scalable. It could be useful for personal development, public policy design, issue analysis, and systemic action on intransigent issues. It may be a complementary adjunct to developmental stage theories because it deals in an accessible way with the processes involved in stage transitions. Throughout the article, its practical relevance at some individual, social, and political scales is illustrated or mentioned. Readers interested in individual and social change may gain a sense of the human dynamics involved in it, and thus the potential usefulness of a process theory that describes what goes on in human change and development.

**Key words:** developmental process, dynamics, fractal, human development, integral, meta pattern, meta process, metasystems, oscillations, physics, processes, process theory, projection, psychology, public policy, public issues, reciprocity, reciprocal interaction, social change, structural coupling, systems, tango, universal

*Everybody knows the world is made up of processes from which patterns emerge, but we seldom give pause to what this means.  
~ J. A. Scott Kelso (1995, 3)*

## Introduction

This article outlines an integral process theory that attempts to capture and integrate the meta pattern of dynamic processes involved in individual and social change and development. It offers a window into the processes of human dynamics, akin to the "black box" installed in a modern aircraft that tells what operations the aircraft has performed to adjust to flying conditions, pilot instructions, and its own mechanical functions and malfunctions.

The idea to formulate this in terms of a theory is a result of realizing I could no longer write about some subjects of social significance without having it—and some, though not all, of its implications—already spelled out in an independent and transdisciplinary way. Its genesis was

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this last year's series of attempts to produce manuscripts I was excited about, only to abandon them because they did not succeed in developing the subjects in writing as robustly as my thinking off-paper did. Each subject needed a lot of foundation laying before I could launch into it. I found myself trying to squeeze in references to only parts of this pattern, which just obscured it and packed its "building blocks" like sardines in a can. My central subjects were left no room to develop into the depth of social analysis I was aiming for in the first place. Through discussion with colleagues, I came to realize the whole set of premises my thinking has been based on for quite a while constitutes a theory, and it needs independent description as such. Thus, this article's origin is self-serving and functional. I offer it because I believe it can serve others in functional ways, too.

The theory's origins are not easy to relate as briefly as this article's origins. Overall, it is the result of my last twenty years' processes of integrating an eclectic range of reading and study with my continuously evolving experiences in all domains of life and intense exploration and integration of them. Periods of individual and family counseling awakened and sharpened my attention to projection dynamics and how they change. Myriad syntheses became platforms for subsequent ones, resulting in the scaffolding represented here. This process theory of human dynamics describes my own process in arriving at it, too. Milestones in my understanding in recent years included:

- Several years of intense study of over a dozen developmental theories and internalizing the human story they tell with the stories that life tells;
- Internalizing *how* our structures of operating<sup>1</sup> involve our entire function *as* whole, undivided organisms;
- Recognizing the concepts of reciprocal interactions and structural coupling are formal terms for the personal micro and macro processes of development I observed in my own functioning as well as in my family, one-on-one ministry, and public action research. Together, they led to developing my theory of how to foster individual and socio-political development – that development progresses *while and by* engaging in complex interactions (which I later found Vygotsky (1978) saying too);
- Integrating all the foregoing with why Bateson (2000) says cybernetic systems are the units of evolution
- And finally, delightfully, having the last explanatory "chunk" that tied it together for me fall into place via Laszlo's (2003) physics, and Wolff & Haselhurst (2005) recently tied the bows in it.

According to Commons and Richards (2002, 2), developmental theories need to address three dimensions of behavior: "a) what behaviors develop and in what order, b) with what speed, and c) how and why development takes place." This article addresses the third dimension: the how and why of development. It is about a *process* theory of development that refers to and requires developmental theories' specific insights. This dimension is often missing in developmental theories because "developmental psychology as a whole has been concerned with what develops and in what sequence" (Commons & Richards, 2) and has been largely silent about the processes involved. Complementary to the work of those authors, this approach to a process theory of human dynamics helps to fill that void.

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<sup>1</sup> Instrumental for my understanding were Rosenberg (1988; also see 2002) and Michael Commons' work with his numerous colleagues (see references).

## A Way To Peer Into “black boxes”

For many people, trying to understand human behavior can engender a desire to “peer into the black box” of individuals, groups, communities, organizations, governments, and societies. For those of us committed to fostering healthier individual and social relations and development, there is a fundamental need to understand the processes underlying them. Processes and the patterns they create have explanatory power for understanding how and why things happen as they do. Since the meta pattern’s processes transpire at all scales, the theory may be useful to a broad range of interests, which include but are not limited to personal, socio-political, and theoretical, e.g.:

- For people who want to increase their self-awareness and its reflexion, it could facilitate new noticing of specific inner and outer dynamics and learning more about one’s own motivations, assumptions, reactions, choices, and the learning process itself.
- For those who develop policy or organize approaches to address complex issues, it could be a complementary framework to recognize patterns that can hold intransigent issues in place as well as open them to healthier conditions.
- For those who study or use theories with universal stages of human development, this could complement them with an organic look at the dynamics involved in stage-transition processes.<sup>2</sup>
- For those who study complex systems and wonder how they correlate with developmental psychology or even describe humans, this may be an introduction.
- For those who think and write about human issues and design methods to address them, the theory may serve as a foundational set of assumptions from which to launch analyses, and enable them to focus more directly on their specific subject matter because some of the basic assumptions can be referenced rather than explained anew.

The meta pattern captured in this theory shows up in all systems’ dynamics at all scales of time-duration, breadth, and depth. In terms of humanity and time, it ranges from an instant, to the duration of reading this article or being in a meeting, to the lifetimes of individuals, organizations, and societies. In terms of breadth, its dynamics occur in our individual selves just as they do in dynamics between and among individuals and social groupings, our cybernetic systems, and our socio-cultural systems. In terms of depth, it is inherent in the nested layers of systems and metasystems, from individuals all the way up through their societies and beyond.

One implication is that we all participate in the processes and contribute to the pattern because they are inherent in how we function, interact, and develop. Yet, it is often difficult to notice things we are embedded in doing. Noticing patterns involves stepping back from things a bit. My aim for this article is offering an opportunity to step back, and to make transparent (a) the dynamics that make up the pattern I call the universal tango, (b) the many scales on which we are dancing that tango, (c) the “how” of the dance, and (d) the significance of observing the underlying processes in the “black box” of change and development.

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., Kegan’s subject-object, Graves’ theory of human emergence, life conditions and value systems, Wilber’s integral theory, quadrants, and holons

## Outline of The Process Theory

### Introducing the Meta Pattern It Describes

The outline I am presenting is based on the synthesis I described earlier, of years of eclectic study and observations, analyses, and reflections on processual patterns in myself, others, and the world we live in. I encountered evidence of the pattern everywhere in these domains whenever I “saw through the costumes” it dresses in across scales of time and space. Whether dressed up as anthropology, biology, chaos and complexity, education, human energy systems, history, neurology, philosophy, physics, political science, psychology, or theology, I found (as did Kelso 1995) that a range of fields describe the similar processes and patterns. I noticed, as did Van Eenwyk (1997, 13), that “analytical psychology and physical and mathematical science all employ virtually identical metaphors to understand particular phenomena.” A dynamic meta pattern shows up, and in Kelso’s terms, I gave pause to what it means. Condensed in one place here, it may give pause to others, too.

To convey this with practical applications in mind, I discuss it in tandem with a case to illustrate it at familiar personal and interpersonal scales (while I also take reasonable opportunities to indicate its broad application at all scales). I choose this focus for three reasons. First, we have in common our lived experience of the personal and interpersonal scales. Second, I have a conviction born of my own experience that when we (a) discover and become intimately acquainted with the dynamics going on in our selves, and (b) recognize how those dynamics play out in our interpersonal lives with others, that (c) we are far better equipped to recognize and understand dynamic processes of many kinds going on everywhere else and thereby transfer the learning. This is how we learn to “peer into the black box” of human dynamics. Finally, I hope by discussing it at these familiar levels that this article will be meaningful beyond any intellectual exercise.

To offer readers a sense of the theory’s applicability to other scales of experience, I periodically refer to dynamics reported in a short, web-accessible booklet. The result of participatory research with youth on the issue of substance abuse, it includes an approach to addressing the issue at the community level that reflects some understanding of this meta process.<sup>3</sup>

While I want this outline of a theory to indicate the rigor that produced it, my purpose in this brief article is its general introduction, not its theoretical defense. Therefore, my writing style is non-technical and I confine theoretical supports to footnotes that represent the broad transdisciplinary supports and foundations. My aim is to make this outline accessible so it is useful for (a) noticing and unpacking dynamics’ layers and relationships (b) ongoing reflection on what can be learned from them (in order to integrate the learning), and (c) eventually transferring the learning to perceptions of other events.

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<sup>3</sup> See *The problem behind the problem of youth substance abuse: What can we do?* (Ross, 2000) at [http://www.global-arina.org/readpublish/reading\\_room/read\\_room\\_commpol\\_develpmt/Problem\\_behind\\_problem%20youth\\_drugs%20booklet.pdf](http://www.global-arina.org/readpublish/reading_room/read_room_commpol_develpmt/Problem_behind_problem%20youth_drugs%20booklet.pdf).

## Premises Of This Process Theory

The theory describes one overall meta pattern I call the universal tango. As Kelso suggests above, patterns emerge from the processes that comprise them. I describe this pattern through five straightforward premises about its processes' qualities. My introductory-level outline of those premises is accompanied by the phased introduction of a model that depicts each premise's *role* in this pattern of human dynamics. The premises are:

1. It takes (at least) two (of something) to tango.
2. Whatever we don't tango with directly (but could), we put "out there."
3. There are limits to what we can tango with, and they diminish as we develop.
4. There are common dynamic processes involved in dancing the tango
5. Something new emerges from each and every tango.

These premises are like different zoom-angle lenses on qualities of the whole pattern. They represent its dynamic processes. Although they have item numbers for convenient reference, they should not be viewed as a linear sequence of steps because they are not steps at all, but rather premises about a whole. They aim to "reveal the whole elephant" by touching on key aspects of it. This is an important point that is easy to forget when we read in a linear, sequential fashion.

### **Premise 1: It takes (at least) two (of something) to tango.**

Nature, including our thinking and our personal experience, is full of what we call two-ness, dualities, or polarities.<sup>4</sup> The old dance saying that "it takes two to tango" is a useful reminder that we are never with "just ourselves" but rather we are always in interactive relation *with* our selves, others, and our larger environments. Interactive relations are characterized by continuous, dynamic feedback and feedforward processes or loops that connect the people and systems involved.

This first premise is that various forms of interaction of one with another are existential characteristics of being human. Such interactions are always going on at all scales of functioning we can identify. This is the universal dynamic of *reciprocity*.<sup>5</sup> It takes at least two of something to tango, and there are always tangos going on. For example, from the conditions that give rise to teenagers' stress<sup>6</sup>, to their reactions to that stress and their ways of coping with it,<sup>7</sup> to rewards of various kinds for supporting a political candidate, to the "tit for tat" behaviors between nations and other groups, the recursive feedback and feedforward loops characterize humans and all open systems. These dynamics look different—they "wear different clothes"—depending on contexts, scales, and how we adjust our zoom lenses to notice them. However, once the clothes

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<sup>4</sup> Systems from cells to humans to societies to galaxies and beyond are a part of and in relation (two-ness) to other systems, and even movement has relations to itself. New physics' understandings of the nature of matter posits waves of motion in two directions, in-coming and out-going (Haselhurst & Wolff, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Different terms are employed by various fields to refer to reciprocity dynamics, e.g., the human universal called reciprocity (Brown 1991), the reciprocity complex (Gouldner 1977), reciprocal perturbations (Maturana & Varela 1987), the reciprocal dynamics evidenced in brain research that apply to interpersonal, socio-political, and economic behaviors (Cory 2004), the reciprocal interaction of the universe's domains (Laszlo 2003), etc.

<sup>6</sup> *The problem behind the problem*, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 5-6

are removed, once we look inside the “black box,” we see the same dynamic pattern operating below the surface.



**Figure 1**

In Figure 1 an organic double funnel represents this premise, with dynamic and symbolic significance. Like one of the basic movements in the tango, it has resemblance to the figure 8 and also hints at strange attractors and the infinity symbol. In applications of this model, the funnel stands for the system we are focusing on at a particular moment in the course of trying to understand something. Its open “ends” indicate the (at least) two-ness of relationships with things beyond our immediate focus (which might be, e.g., our self, teenagers under stress, the juvenile court system, the community, etc.). Though hidden from our view, within any system’s bounds there is a tremendous amount of dynamic activity going on.

### *Application of Premise 1*

What happens when we act *as if* we do not realize it takes at least two of something to tango, yet there’s always a tango going on? I can illustrate this with the case of my earliest self-aware recognition of this dynamic. About fifteen years ago, I was in the internship phase of a training program for the one-on-one ministerial work I do. I knew from the way she dispassionately characterized her way of “doing life,” while introducing herself to the group of interns, that the supervisor who was assigned to me was not the one I wanted to work with. I asked the program director to assign me to a different supervisor, explaining I perceived in advance we would be a mis-match. Told that all staff were fully booked and reassignment was impossible, I discussed with the supervisor my willingness to give the supervision relationship a fair try even though she was not my preferred choice. She reciprocated by saying she would do her best with me and for me. At the end of the internship, we wrote our respective, customary supervisor and supervisee evaluations. Mine focused on what I learned about myself and my way of doing that ministry, the subjects explored or discussed in our supervisory sessions, and was silent about my experience of relating with her, as if it had not been important. Her evaluation of me was also silent about our way of relating, but included a distorted reference to things I had shared with her about the transparency I experienced while working with retreatants: she wrote that I reported those experiences as being “opaque.” I brought the error to her attention, and she corrected it before flying back home. We did not together investigate its roots. What had been happening between us? Over the next weeks, I was on an inner crusade to unpack our tango.

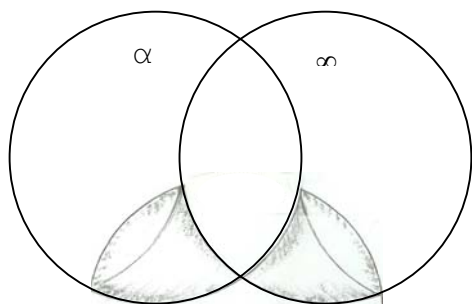
It became my first *consciously aware* encounter with the amazing reciprocity involved in a coping mechanism. I discovered that I had been “taking care of *her*” throughout the internship. I did this by not saying that I felt neither “met” nor “heard” by her, and that it had become pointless to explore anything very meaningful in our sessions. The tango lesson was this: at the time, I thought I was simply “taking care of *me*” by withholding explorations I would find meaningful to share with her only if she could live into the supervisory function of meeting me where I was. It was only when I realized that I took care of me *by* taking care of her, that I saw the reciprocal dynamic. Instead of taking responsibility to express my dissatisfaction and thereby let her take responsibility to hear and respond to it, I took care of her, and the program too in a way, by my silence. I suspect she sensed this on some level, yet like me, she was not transparent in expressing her experience. Thus, a misapplied “opaque” emerged in her evaluation writing.

We were doing a tango, but *acting as if* we each were alone on the dance floor, like only one end of the funnel in Figure 1, *as if* severed from the real interaction between us.

How many of our tangos—as an individual, an organization, a nation—are characterized by acting as if we are alone on the dance floor? From the developmental perspective, we spend a great deal of our adult lives carrying forward a perception we developed when we were younger, an atomistic feeling of being alone in a big world we have to navigate alone. It is a natural part of the developmental process to operate on this subtle, often-unnamed assumption. This first premise can support reflection and analysis on our assumptions about our interactions and dynamics within our selves and with others at any scale. Applicable to every instance and situation, this can help us discover where we operate as if we assume we are doing life's many tangos alone. While there is truth in the saying that “our perceptions are our realities,” it is also true that rarely do our perceptions take in all the realities that comprise our world. It is possible to learn how to take in more of them. As the case suggests, we understand our selves and our experiences to a greater degree when we can recognize, learn from, and consciously engage the reciprocity dynamics we're embedded in.

### **Premise 2: Whatever we don't tango with directly (but could), we put “out there.”**

Despite any subtle, deeply-seated—and transformable—existential assumptions that we navigate life within our own isolated orbit, we do not. We are not only dynamic open systems as represented by the organic funnel, but we also exist in a multitude of larger contexts with which we are always already in mutually co-creative and sustaining interactions. To represent this in the model, I add two multi-dimensional “wholes” or environments that organically give the funnel its shape. Premise 2 focuses on a particular kind of relation with our environments (and they are discussed more in later premises).



**Figure 2**

etc., and those without.<sup>8</sup> Languaged thought helps us assign meaning to complex events and to communicate that meaning to ourselves and others. Given that we inhabit such large domains,

<sup>8</sup> This premise reflects a coordination of psychology's insights into projection with biology's and other complex systems sciences; the physics' version of the “mechanisms” of projection can be found in Laszlo (2003). I believe one implication of having our feet in both domains is that we need to coordinate our assumptions about them when we are paying attention to things that may appear specific to one or the other domain. For example, in Miller's (1995) seminal work on living systems theory, he observes that despite their vast differences in size and complexity, there are [at least] eight levels of living systems: cell, organ, organism, group, organization, community, society, and supranational system. All of the systems have the same 19 critical subsystems with distinct functions to process information, matter, and energy in various combinations he identifies, and all exhibit a common set of systemic characteristics. On the other hand, Maturana & Varela (1987) point out that in addition to treating individual humans as the organismic systems they are, we must also consider our identities as “components of [our] linguistic



it's a big world we live in, and none of us can take it in all at once, or sort out meanings all at once; sometimes we just do not want to. Ironically, there are also aspects of our selves, others, and our environment that we *have* taken in and *do* know about, but we are not yet *consciously* aware of *what* we know of them, i.e, it is not languaged thought. The case example illustrated how I kept from myself the knowledge that I took care of my needs *by* taking care of (what I perceived as) my supervisor's need to avoid facing (what I experienced as) her inability to meet and hear me where I was. I did not tango with what I knew somewhere inside, but *could* have; instead, I put it "out there" somewhere.

Projection is a concept used to describe such things we do not tango with *directly*. It's a complex dynamic, especially because our languaged thought underlies so much of our ability to assign meaning to events. Things have meaning when they affect us. Things that affect us are—in systems' terms—interacting with us (and our meaning-making). All interactions involve a tango, and humans have ways of choosing whether to dance directly or indirectly. By contrast, other mammals seem to respond immediately *and* directly to environmental impacts, e.g., the fight or flight instincts. The purpose of premise 2 is to introduce that projection dynamics are part of our system dynamics and the universal tango we do. It extends projection's significance beyond the psychology field that first explained it, to include its place in a universal set of processes.

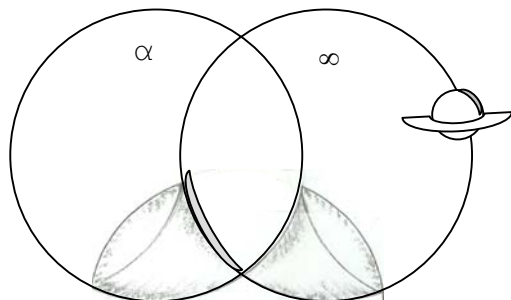
Projections can have a co-dependent aspect. It is common to refer to co-dependent coping mechanisms, such as I displayed in the case, as *dysfunctional*. They are also highly functional, because this is how we filter out what we feel we cannot yet deal with if it does not feel safe to do so. Yet that very language, "filter out what we feel we cannot yet deal with" refers to only half of the reciprocity complex. Fifteen years ago, my limited awareness of *how* I was taking care of me with my internship supervisor was also just half of the dynamic. It is essential to learn how to look for the "loose ends" if we want to peer into our black boxes. Oftentimes, projections are some of those loose ends, and they show up at many scales, including that of nations.

Projection "wears different clothes" depending on the context and focus. The case example helps to illustrate the logic of the process, which might help us to notice it. The basic logic is: what we do not take in, we put "out there." It is analogous to this: we keep inside our houses those things we want to preserve intact, and we place whatever we don't want to preserve, e.g. trash or garbage, outside in a garbage can or compost pile. Sometimes this is called *bracketing reality*, putting limits on what we want to deal with, and it can show up in different ways. Some of the teenagers I did research with used drugs and alcohol to bracket the reality of unmanageable stress, an *overt* way of dancing with reality. But, if the reciprocity complex of recursive feedback loops cannot complete overtly, then it will complete *covertly*. This is because there are no "loose ends" in whole system dynamics. The covert dynamic called projection is analogous to a movie projector that puts the story out onto a screen so we can see it when it feels safe enough to do so.

Another analogy for projection's logic is sunlight shining on a tree that then casts a shadow on the ground. Our *knowing* is like the sunlight, *what* we know but do not take into our conscious

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domains" and recognize that "human social systems exist also as unities for their components in the realm of language" (198). In other words, human social systems derive from our capacity for linguistic behavior, and as individuals we have characteristics of both domains. Therefore, "any analysis of human social phenomena that does not include these considerations will be defective, for it negates the biologic roots of those phenomena" (199).



**Figure 3**

we do not tango with overtly, and its corresponding shadow is indicated behind the open ends of the funnel.

awareness and interact with has substance like the tree, and we find a place to “put it”—to project it “out there” somewhere—until we are ready or need to notice its shadow. Our human growing edges always include learning to recognize what we project about our selves somewhere else “out there.” I believe there is a correlation between the amount of projection we do and the degree to which we also perceive ourselves navigating life alone. Thus, in the model, the planet Saturn represents any place “out there” we park things

### *Implications of Premise 2*

Images and models are one thing, and our real life system dynamics are another. What happens in projection and where do things really end up? There are different ways to consider this, and a common one is that, from a Jungian perspective, the shadow ends up in our unconscious, and the disowned *emotion* of whatever we do not dance with will flavor our perceptions of other people, events, systems, or beliefs. Thus, my supervisor probably projected her resistance to naming our mutually opaque relationship by putting the opacity “onto” (the way she heard) my experience with retreatants. In a corresponding way, I projected my assumption there was no resolution to my dissatisfaction by taking care of her: I had a lot at stake in that internship and did not want to risk the consequences of finding no satisfactory resolution. When we perceive we have something at stake, emotion accompanies the perceived risk. A way of noticing projections is by attending to *all* of our emotions, which alert us to their presence, and “recognizing the emotions that accompany projections begins the process by which they can be withdrawn from others” (Van Eenwyk 1997, 101).

As dynamic systems we have a lot of self-preserving or self-optimizing mechanisms, and in the context of projection, of course, one of them is that, at a systemic level, we do not allow ourselves to consciously know what we know we feel. This seems to reinforce subtle assumptions of navigating life in our own lonely orbit, and the reciprocal feedback/feedforward loops “go underground.” In his discussion of the transference aspect of projection, May (1983, 19) defines transference as “*the distortion of encounter*” (emphasis in the original). The same is true of the overall dynamic of projection, because “participating [in relationship] always involves risk” (20) and the “norm of relationship...is grounded in the nature of man [sic] as such” (18). Risk avoidance distorts our encounters by handling our part of the tango covertly, rather than overtly.

Until we withdraw projections from “out there,” conflicts (at some scale, perceived or real, internal and/or external, covert and/or overt) usually arise because some unresolved tension (e.g., lack of safety) underlies why we projected in the first place. At those times, we are not transparent about whatever seems to be practically or emotionally at stake. What we usually have at stake is a relational concern of some kind. (In severe cases it can be our relation to our own survival.) In the case example, I was more concerned about my relation to graduating from the overall training program than I was concerned about my ways of relating with its internship supervisor. Conflicts can bubble up from within these layers of different priorities, and this has

as much significance for socio-political patterns as it does for personal ones to ferret out the layers.

In reflecting upon our experiences, can we trace the connections among our (a) experiences of emotions that arise, (b) the context in which they arise, and (c) what we have at stake, relationally? And if we reflect on an experience where we did not directly attend to those emotions at the time, what was the nature of the inhibitions we decided to live with? Did they represent a risk to some “bigger” layer of relationship? At our current stages of social-cultural development, we can find it a challenge to detach from our familiar concepts enough to recognize the pervasive roles projections play from interpersonal to local to international issues. One of several reasons it is hard is that projection is still an obscure concept for many people. This theory’s emphasis on its systemic role in human dynamics suggests the importance of learning how to notice its dynamics in a supportive way.

**Premise 3: There are limits to what we can tango with, and they diminish as we develop.**

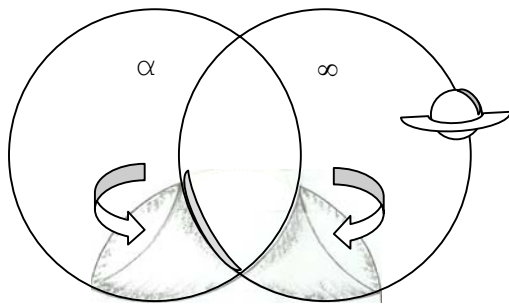
This premise is described in a variety of ways in the fields of developmental psychology, anthropology, biology, and history. In familiar talk we refer to people having “filters” that limit what they are able to perceive, react to, or process, i.e., what they are able to tango with. This is a natural developmental process of the whole human being, and these perceptions of the world change as we grow and mature. As children, we may have believed stories that a stork delivered families’ newborn babies to them, or that Santa Claus and reindeer delivered toys worldwide. These were simple, concrete things we could picture, no more outlandish than many of our storybooks, and the arrivals of babies and toys were very real. We were unable at that age to recognize the stories as family myths, which is a more abstract concept. Our “filters” prevented a tango with the idea of a family myth.

As we mature into adulthood, we develop new, usually more abstract, ways to understand how the world works. Yet, regardless of specifics, as users of language and therefore thought, our filters are constructed in a basic way. William James (1997, 26-27) put it succinctly: “The first thing the intellect does with an object is to class it along with something else [that it resembles].... The next thing the intellect does is to lay bare the causes in which the thing originates” [so there is an explanation for it]. And the next process we go through, whether consciously or not, is deciding what the thing *means* to us. This process of classifying, explaining, and deciding about meaning potentially develops us as we have more and more experiences. At any point in our individual and collective lives, we operate with some system of making-sense-of-things, which for all of us could be called a “filtered view” of the world. We can’t tango with things we can’t perceive because we haven’t developed the capacity yet. What we do not recognize, we do not tango with—like the concept of myth for a child. Instead, we believe storks deliver new babies.

The easiest way I know to describe *why* there are limits to what we can perceive is with arithmetic, in which adding numbers is the starting point. We know we cannot do multiplication unless we first can add. We cannot do division if we cannot multiply and subtract. Each task requires ability to perform the less complex tasks that build up to it. If we never learn any arithmetic beyond adding and subtracting, we will not have any way to conceive what multiplication and division are, what they are good for, or what they might *mean* to us. For example, if I am a street vendor selling individual fruits of several kinds, and quite a few remain unsold toward the end of the afternoon, the difference between knowing how to add and knowing

how to multiply could have significant meaning for my livelihood. If all I know to do is add, I will keep selling them individually to whoever wants one or some, and leftovers may rot unsold, earning me no money. If I know how to multiply, I might change strategies and bundle the remainder into bags of various quantities of fruit. I could calculate the selling price of each bag, and in the remaining time need only a few customers to sell the remaining inventory at full price while it is fresh. I may even sell out earlier this way and get to go home sooner. Multiplication would have *meaning* for me.<sup>9</sup>

Relating premise 3 to the previous one on projection, there is a structural-limit source of projection. Similar to—but different from—premise 2, whatever meaning an individual or social system cannot process due to developmental limits is projected “out there” onto some other person, event, system, or belief. The teen substance abuse issue—and most other issues—illustrates this in various ways. An obvious one is our societal habit of delegating away to agencies “out there” the responsibility to deal with the “presenting symptoms” of issues. We do this even though we individually and collectively co-create and sustain such issues by our personal and institutional behaviors against the backdrop of the cultures we sustain. At certain stages of socio-cultural development, an example is populations’ projections of heroic or father images on leaders they expect to defend and protect them from outside threats, and enemy images on those who are feared. The structural-limits source of projection is particularly noticeable when groups that act the same way toward others are variously called “freedom fighters” or “insurgents,” depending on who is talking about them. Limits on what we can tango with in a complex world play roles in the issues and conflicts.



**Figure 4**

As signs for modeling the dynamic of doing life’s tangos, and to signify limits to how much we can dance with at a particular time, in Figure 4 curved arrows that originate in the “wholes” of our environments indicate the smaller amounts we actually dance with in the funnel of life experience. Many limits diminish as we develop capacity for more complex interactions (like fancier dance steps), and if those limits decrease, we can perform a variety of fancier dance steps with more dance partners. We learn to dance *while* we dance, an idea developed more fully in premise 5.

<sup>9</sup> The math illustration is more than just an analogy. Arithmetic and mathematical operations do structure the increases in complexity of the tango-dancing we can do (Commons, Trudeau, Stein, Richards & Krause, 1998). The complexity of the meaning-making tasks we can perform, like dance steps, sets the furthest limit of what we can tango with at a particular time. This is because we do our tango with only the dance steps we *can* perform; anything more complex, like a myth for a child, is not perceptible because it requires more complex steps to “see” it at all.

## Interim Summary – The Tango As Universal Learning Process

This meta pattern can be characterized as the universal learning process operating at every scale imaginable.<sup>10</sup> The premises of the theory describe the main dynamics going on in the “black box.” From a certain vantage point we may begin to see a familiar, basic simplicity in the

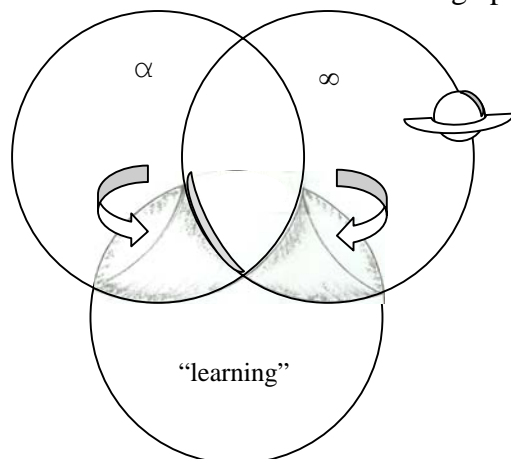


Figure 5

whole process. It is about the ways we learn, the *process* of learning. This kind of processual learning goes on with physically manifest systems such as human beings and the planetary environment, and with less tangible systems of projection and our institutional and cultural holding environments. We are thoroughly immersed in this dialectically-evolving process that constructs and deconstructs at the same time. It takes myriad forms at its different scales, for good or ill, but the same patterned process pervades our existence<sup>11</sup> and always constructs some form of learning. Learning always involves some structural change in some aspect of a system or person, something new. Figure 5 represents this as a new sphere emerging in the process.

### Premise 4: There are common dynamic processes involved in dancing the tango.

This premise focuses on *how* this dynamic learning process looks at a micro level, as compared to the relatively macro treatments thus far. The transformative learning field has provided essential insights into what humans do in the learning process, but does not seem to peer into the black box of *how* the underlying process looks and works. The process of determining what to dance with in life events (or what to park on Saturn) is the same *kind* of process we experience in our decision-making. Some decisions are much more complex than others, yet the *patterned process* is the same. This premise looks more closely at that pattern. If we perceive a decision lies between two options (e.g., yes/no, go/stay) there could be fewer factors to consider to come to the decision. If we perceive there are more than two options, there is a more complex bundle of variables to juggle. If a decision has several viable options and each option depends on contingencies, there are yet more layers of complexity to process in order to arrive at a decision (or a set of related decisions). A pause for reflection on a past decision we made between more than two options likely reveals a pattern of many back-and-forth interior

<sup>10</sup> Here, *learning* means more than knowledge-acquisition in a formal (and formerly traditional) education sense, and in another way perhaps literally means the universe’s recursive process of all-knowledge-acquisition-and-storage/retrieval/creation (see Laszlo 2003).

<sup>11</sup> This dialectical process is described across numerous fields, e.g.: Taylor’s (1989, as cited in Mezirow 1991) model of transformative learning; per Riffert (2002), Piaget’s genetic epistemology and Whitehead’s process philosophy; Commons et al’s various work in hierarchical complexity, Maturana & Varela’s (1998) biology; Thelen & Smith’s (1994) systems dynamics of the development of cognition and action, and Laszlo’s (2003, 74) physics. The inclusion of projection is essential, in my view, to understand the structure of human dynamics without systemic “loose ends” otherwise left out of the process’s equation.

movements (oscillations) to consider all the probable or possible costs, benefits, and consequences of any one choice. People construct many more options than, for example, other mammals, by virtue of having language. The more options we perceive, the more processing we have to do before we get to the end. Our common sense tells us that we can't know what we'll decide until we have decided it. A *dynamic process* is required.

This deliberative process illustrates in familiar terms the kind of process used by complex systems to determine what to dance with. The process is comprised of oscillations that move between at least two poles.<sup>12</sup> These could be characterized as possible choices. The oscillations may feel chaotic (when they are noticed, because very often they are not, i.e., in projections or where reflexive capacities are not developed). This is because the complexity of the process lies—in a scenario of conscious decision-making, for example—in perceiving, comparing and processing the implications of the various poles' *meanings* to us. In the process of assessing meanings, we may end up negating and transforming past beliefs and assumptions (Mezirow 1991). Such assessments are sub-processes nested within the overall process. Internal system dynamics like these can invoke the metaphor of computers: inputs and outputs processed through back-and-forth recursions at lightening speeds, faster for less complex problems, a bit slower for more complicated ones.

The process creates something new: a selection of new meaning, new insight, a decision (which might be a decision to not make a decision), discarding a former assumption and constructing a new one, etc. The process can co-create something else that is new: the capacity to coordinate more variables in a more complex way (changing the limits of what we can dance with, Premise 3).<sup>13</sup> By its conclusion, the process results in excluding some potentials in favor of others.

As a fundamental characteristic of dynamic systems, the oscillating process transpires at all scales, thus it has a fractal nature. Fractals are self-similar patterns that repeat at different scales, some from tiny to huge in size, and/or from extremely short to very long time-spans; the kind of pattern depends on where functions are similar (Kelso 1995). The vastly different scales can make them tricky to notice until we have practice at looking underneath the clothes that dress events and processes. To understand and apply this process theory (which is also fractal), systems' dynamics in general, and how these processes relate to functions at personal, social, economic, and political scales, it is very useful to learn to see *fractal patterns*. This can take a lot of the mystery out of things that seem very complicated, and contribute appropriate assumptions, order, and consistency to our analyses, evaluations, and reflections on experience.

The most accessible learning, perhaps, comes from our own laboratories of reflexive attention to the processes we use already, for example, in identifying how we feel about a disturbing interaction, figuring out (preferably with others) what is happening in a confusing situation, and

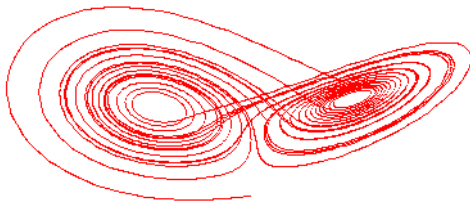
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<sup>12</sup> These poles form and operate in similar fashion, although called by different names, such as: attractors in chaos/complexity terms (Kelso 1995; Van Eenwyk 1997); archetypes in terms of the psyche's dynamics (Jung 1964; Van Eenwyk 1997); behavioral tensions (Cory 2004); and wave function ensembles related to a given species (Laszlo 2003). Based on the observations I have made of my own processing, and consistent with Commons & Richards (2002), as we develop our capacity for more complex tasks, the *kinds* of attractors we perceive (Kelso 1995) change radically both in nature and number, and they can include complex nests of additional poles to process.

<sup>13</sup> These can develop a high degree of complexity, e.g., dialectical reasoning described by Basseches (in this issue)



decision-making. Cory (2004) emphasizes that the universal tensions between self-interested and empathetic acts are embedded in our constitution, and are “tugging and pulling against each other” (30) from the “smallest interactions, the vignettes, of everyday personal life” (26) to the scale of our social, political, and economic systems. These recurring oscillating processes “repeat themselves through the establishment of tensions of opposites, their resolution, and the subsequent appearance of new tensions between the resolution and new possibilities” (Van Eenwyk 1997, 16). They are the “basic moves” of the tango: it doesn’t exist without them.



**Figure 6**

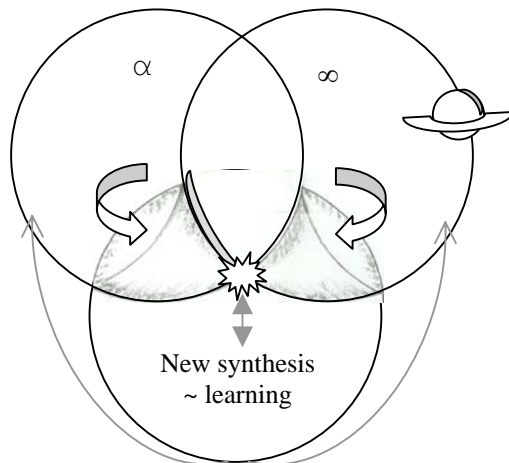
Premise 4’s dynamics are the primary window for us to peer into *how* the “black boxes” of humans and their societies look inside as they dance. The tango exists in a multitude of interactions with other individuals, other cultures, other social structures, and their own selves. In their dances they conduct ongoing, often complexly nested, patterned, oscillation processes, acting like the “engine” of learning, change, development, and yes, deaths. For a look at a basic oscillation (from atmospheric dynamics) this link includes an animation of Figure 6’s image of oscillation dynamics as the Lorenz attractor<sup>14</sup> and different views into the nested oscillations comprising it. <http://www.levitated.net/daily/levLorenzAttractor.html>

### **Premise 5: Something new emerges from each and every tango.**

This premise points to the dialectical nature of the meta pattern, that the dynamics of the tango’s processes create something new by virtue of happening at all. This is the *nature* of all life’s tangos, because they are creative. The entire process reflects the synergy of “(1) the environments acting on the system, (2) the interacting elements involved, and (3) what emerges from the interactions” (Kelso 1995, 17-18). In the process model:

- (1) the environments acting on the system [or meta system]
  - a. are represented by the two spheres on either side
  - b. the system that the environments “act on” (trigger, influence, constrain, liberate, etc.) is represented by the model’s funnel
- (2) the interacting elements involved
  - a. are indicated by the curved arrows heading into the funnel’s openings
  - b. include the elements from the environment and the system’s (funnel) elements
  - c. and the “intersection” where the real dance takes place is signified by the starburst added to the model in Figure 7 below
- (3) what emerges from the interactions
  - a. is something new
  - b. and it takes a variety of “forms” depending on what we’re studying, its nature, time span we’re considering, etc.

<sup>14</sup> This image is copied from a document at [http://encyclopedia.lockergnome.com/s/b/Lorenz\\_attractor](http://encyclopedia.lockergnome.com/s/b/Lorenz_attractor) licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License (GFDL), which means that you can copy and modify it as long as its entire work (including additions) remains under this license. <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>



**Figure 7**

My experience with the internship supervisor suggests some of the sorts of new things that may develop in a context like that. While the most significant new structural change in me was the learning that emerged from my crusade to understand what had been happening with us, it was throughout all our interactions that I built up, tore down, and built up something new in a recursive fashion. From hope to doubt, from invested trying to feeling unheard, from exploration to withdrawal, from resisting failure in relating to accepting it, from projection of self care to the explicit self care of confronting her error. It took interactions that created all of those new movements to create enough motivation in me at a systemic level to “bifurcate” into the new action of the crusade that, itself, was another series of diverse dynamics that restructured my understandings.

The new “things” that emerge from our tangos can include new systems. For example, if my experience with the supervisor had been very different, we might have created an enduring friendship characterized by mutual transparency (a new social system, as compared to the short-term, institutionally-created supervisor-supervisee system). The way we were structurally coupled did not result in dynamics for that possibility to emerge.

Teenagers developed a thorough description of how they and their substance abuse were structurally coupled with the cultures and institutions of their families, peers, schools, and communities (Ross, 2000). They were bound in such a way that the options they could access and make decisions about were severely limited. Their recursive learning from interaction upon interaction with those systems, in many cases, took the form of re-choosing their decisions to stick with their existing coping mechanisms for dealing with that stressful tango.

These examples hint at the significance of *structural coupling* (Maturana & Varela 1987) for change and development. Called by different terms, the dual-dynamic is inherent to complex systems, showing up wherever systemic processes are described.<sup>15</sup> The rather thorough treatments it receives in such works make for highly recommended reading. Often referred to as the diachronic and synchronic dynamics, which are always discussed together, it is *the structural dynamic of evolving development*. This concept is essential for understanding what’s in the black box. This dynamic tango will challenge many of us to think in more fluid, systemic-process terms to understand its role in change, development, and overall evolution. In basic terms, it refers to the connective relationship between interacting systems and the new structures that

The significance of the tango’s dynamic at all scales of time and space is immense: creation is learning how to happen all the time everywhere. From the perspectives of process, learning, and conscious awareness, all events *matter*, no matter how small. Helping us to *look for, notice, and use* this insight in new ways is a primary motivation for sharing this theory, and earlier points attempted to illustrate the implications at personal, interpersonal, and other social scales.

#### *Application of Premise 5*

<sup>15</sup> e.g., Bateson, 2000; Kelso 1997; Laszlo 2003; Riffert 2002; Thelen & Smith 1994; Van Eenwyk 1997; Whitehead 1960.



emerge *in each* by virtue of the interaction. It accounts for *how* new “things” emerge. The concept of *structural coupling* supports attention to both our selves and our partners in every tango at every scale: we trigger changes in each other with every interaction and something new is created, for good or ill. It may be more projections parked on Saturn, it may be new capacities for more complex diplomacy and policy- or decision-making, it may be new social systems that are more generative or more destructive for people within them. This concept can reinforce the importance to place on every tango and what it creates.

## The Universal Scale of The Tango

For this introduction to be complete, it needs to refer at least minimally to this meta pattern’s literally universal depth and scale, developed in somewhat lay-accessible ways by Laszlo (2003), Wolff & Haselhurst (2005), and Bohm (1999). Applied at that depth and scale to this outline’s model, the environmental sphere on one side would signify what Laszlo calls the virtual domain of the universe, and the other environmental sphere would signify what he calls the manifest domain. The manifest is the domain of the entire physical universe, while the virtual domain is not as easy to consider because its virtual contents are described in physics terms<sup>16</sup> that do not resonate very much with those of us outside the math and physics fields. An important caveat: the model is visually misleading because these two domains are not really separated in a such a bounded way, although the model represents their interactivity by the spheres’ overlap. By contrast, the latest physics would have us understand their thorough “entanglement” rather than any kind of compartmentalization (Laszlo 2003; Wolff & Haselhurst 2005). This structural coupling of the two domains is the universal tango at the highest known scale of dynamics and analysis.

Laszlo lays out the virtual domain’s intimate role everything, which includes individual and social change and development. This article shines only a little light on that role through a last illustration from its case, which briefly recapitulates the overall tango. Where did my sudden insight come from, after my internship and subsequent crusade to understand what was happening? What conditions enabled my crusade to begin? During the internship, I was not raising the question, thus I was not receptive to learning where I had hidden my own secret. I was structurally coupled in a very unsatisfying system that I didn’t see a way out of if I wanted to complete the program. Once it was over, I was “free” again and wanted to learn more about that tango. My searching oscillations processed all the information that seemed available to me, and accumulated many dead ends of possible explanations...then, Wham! There the insight was, in an instant, and I knew it was true, and it resulted in a new structure of understanding in me. I had to get to the point of looking for what I had parked on Saturn to understand the missing part of the reciprocal dynamic: taking care of me *by* taking care of my supervisor. One of the virtual domain’s functions is storing what we park on Saturn (in the form of their wave functions, like attractors). Once I was finally open to reclaiming it, I could “attract it back home.” This is because, as Laszlo describes, each individual act, thought, etc., generates its own wave function (an expression of its attractor dynamics) and these attractors’ “records” reside in the universal and cumulative “memory” which is the virtual domain.

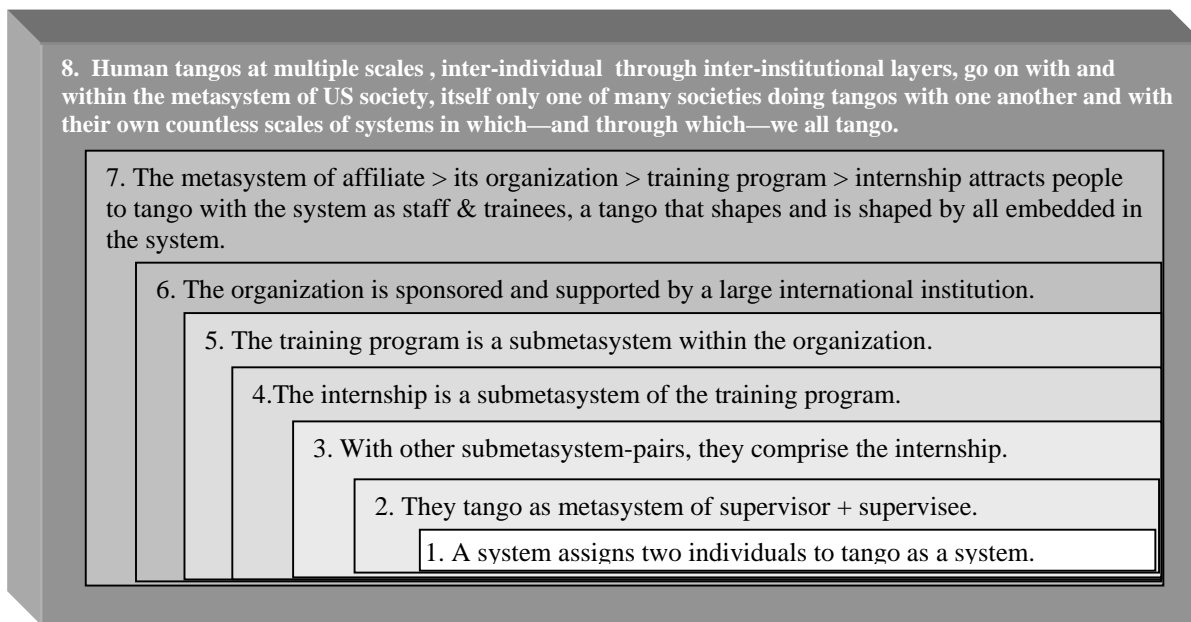
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<sup>16</sup> e.g., wave function, wave interference pattern, scalar field, and others

As Laszlo suggests, there is much more we can understand about change and development in the manifest domain when we understand its tango with the virtual. I believe these contemporary physicists' and philosophers' work has major implications for how we understand many kinds of connections, how we construct our beliefs, how we understand more about the "black box" of the tango, and for practical applications of this integral process theory. Wrapping up this discussion at the universal scale, Laszlo (2003) explains these domains' tango in the same terms as the systems discussed earlier, in "a two-way process" (74): "the two domains evolve in reciprocal interaction" (106-107) establishing the template for needing two to tango and creating something new by virtue of doing the dance in the first place.

## Scaling The Model's Environmental Spheres to Applications

The fractal nature of this process theory derives from the fractal scales of the tango it describes. Thus, the environmental spheres that dance with a system, metasystem, or group of metasystems will be different depending on the scale of attention, the context giving rise to a particular set of inquiries, and users' purpose(s) for exploring past, current, and/or potential dynamics.<sup>17</sup> Figure 8 illustrates the nesting of systemic tangos. It shows, using the case example, that tangos don't exist in isolated orbits any more than we do. They *are* the activity throughout and among systems related at different scales.

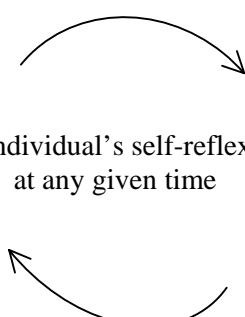


**Figure 8:** A partial model of the metasystemic setting of a supervisor-supervisee tango.

<sup>17</sup> Purposes may be as varied as the users that have them, and can include, e.g., self-reflexion, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person action inquiry and analysis, design and design-evaluation of systemic intervention processes, identifying recursive adjustments needed in intervention strategies, evaluation of intervention processes' impacts, comparisons and assessments of other frameworks, etc..

Table 1 is a way to convey an example of elements the environmental spheres may include (described *generically* for example’s sake) when the theory’s premises are scaled to focus on an individual’s self-reflexion process (focal systems at any scale are signified by the model’s funnel). But the contents of the table need to be situated in the meta process of dynamic recursions that create something new, which enters into the recursive processes already underway (tangos): nothing here is static. Systemic environments that have done and are currently doing tangos ( $\alpha$ )<sup>18</sup> with the system(s) getting our focus, are recursively placed in relationship with the environmental elements ( $\infty$ ) the system perceives as available to tango with.

**Table 1:** Example of Environmental Elements Scaled to a Specific Focus

<b>Environmental Sphere <math>\alpha</math> Have done or currently doing</b>	<b>With Focus On System Of:</b>	<b>Environmental Sphere <math>\beta</math> Perceived as available</b>
<p><i>Pre-existing, developing, or to-be-developed self-awareness of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ personal &amp; social history, including nuclear family’s and larger culture’s shaping influences, past &amp; currently held belief systems &amp; coping mechanisms</li> <li>~ felt constraints of behaviors and projections embedded in culture of relevant adjacent systems,</li> <li>~ current triggers giving rise to reflexion</li> <li>~ operating assumptions in context of triggers</li> <li>~ etc.</li> </ul>	 <p>An individual’s self-reflexion at any given time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ <i>Perceptions and assumptions (i.e., the stories I tell my self)</i> of what exists and what is at stake beneath current triggers in the layers of systems in my environment, and these in relation to:</li> <li>~ the meanings assigned to triggers</li> <li>~ perceived environmental constraints on responses</li> <li>~ perceptions of current capacities to tango</li> <li>~ existing or potential support systems for new tangos</li> <li>~ etc.</li> </ul>

## Summarizing The Process

This outline of a process theory of human dynamics distills a universal pattern down to five premises about its integrated processes to help us understand what goes on in the “black boxes” of individual and social processes at all scales. An important caveat is in order, too, with respect to the model: it is a *static* representation, offered via a limited medium, of *integrated not separate* processes taking place in *multi-dimensional environments over time*, which further *develop in time* by virtue of their interactive processes. Thus, the environmental spheres, the something new/learning sphere, the arrows, the funnel, the starburst, and Saturn and its shadow, are merely icons for the dynamic realities they signify.

As a whole, the aim of this presentation is to make the following interdependent ideas accessible to a wide audience.

<sup>18</sup> i.e., have been and currently are *structurally coupled*

- Premise 1, *It takes (at least) two (of something) to tango*, reminds us we cannot regard any individual or system of any kind as isolated in its own orbit, but rather seek out where the reciprocity dynamics are happening, and expect to find layers of them, like ripple effect interactions.
- Premise 2, *Whatever we don't tango with directly (but could), we put "out there,"* has significant implications. It reminds us we need to learn how to recognize projections, to keep an eye out for those that get parked on Saturn, to be alert to look for and reclaim them, and consider the conditions and potentials for projection dynamics in all our human undertakings. It highlights projection because it seems little-known or recognized outside the field of psychology, even though it plays phenomenal roles wherever human beings are concerned. If this premise gained traction, supportive human development methods that help people and societies recognize and reclaim their projections, along with the creation of healthier holding environments so fewer projections develop, might become higher on social change agendas.
- Premise 3, *There are limits to what we can tango with, and they diminish as we develop*, calls our attention to learning about and applying some basic understandings of structural limits germane to human and social functioning. The adult developmental psychology and transformative learning fields, which are as instrumental in this premise as complexity sciences, demonstrate their own limits in various ways, yet they are some we need to keep referring to, developing further, and integrating with other fields of research and practice.
- Premise 4, *There are common dynamic processes involved in dancing the tango*, encourages us to learn how to adjust our zoom lenses appropriately to look for and notice the dynamics going on all the time. It encourages us to decenter our attention enough to notice fractal patterns that can help us transfer our learning about how things work in black boxes at many human scales. It gives us some ways to start noticing our own "inner" dynamics, which can help us discover our own projections, assumptions, etc. This premise can help us make sense of how these dynamics affect what we want to learn, understand, or support, because the processes *are* what comprises whatever we consider our focus. Nothing is standing still inside the black boxes.
- Premise 5, *Something new emerges from each and every tango*, emphasizes the massive co-creative learning laboratories in which, with which, and as which we exist. It reminds us we need to find ways to identify and consider the complex range of environments interacting and/or coupled with anything we study. It challenges us to take a dynamic, processually-integrated approach to all phenomena, because all phenomena are dynamic processes in an ongoing pattern of co-creative evolution.

## Conclusion

If Kelso is right, that everybody knows the world is made up of processes from which patterns emerge, but we seldom give pause to what this means, I hope this article is an opportunity to give pause. I have shared what this means to me, and what I believe it could mean for others. I also believe this theory fills a void because it transcends boundaries of specific fields of study and practice, and offers a synthesis of some of their essential knowledge to general audiences. It illuminates the process dynamics that co-construct the dialectical meta pattern of development itself, and integrates "the stages of" development with "the process of" development. It places projections in the forefront of attention as some of our key individual and collective tango partners and integrates them with system dynamics. As a transdisciplinary distillation, the theory

puts a tool of developmental process analysis into the hands of people who want to understand and use what goes on in the “black box” of human dynamics.

As an experiment in distilling a lot of information that I, and others, can refer to and further develop, I have made my best effort to keep this introduction as accessible and accurate as possible. I do not know if I struck a useful balance, and I welcome suggestions for improving the theory’s structure and integrity, its alignment with lived experience and the bodies of knowledge that inform it, and its usefulness. I am also eager to both test the sufficiency and deepen the explication of the premises, and I hope others will participate in that discourse.

At the level of application, I hope it fosters new understandings to support holistic inquiry into, analysis of, and action on a wide array of complex individual and socio-political issues we need to address across the planet. And I especially hope it contributes to efforts to explore, discuss, notice, articulate, and integrate the significance of interrelated dynamic patterns doing their tangos all around us and within us. These are my hopes, and although the uni-directional language of this writing has its limitation when the subject is *process* dynamics, we can engage in the tango of discourse at an experiential learning level and watch our new tangos unfold.

*Language was never invented by anyone only to take in an outside world. Therefore, it cannot be used as a tool to reveal that world. Rather, it is by languaging that the act of knowing, in the behavioral coordination which is language, brings forth a world. ... We find ourselves in this co-ontogenic coupling, not as a preexisting reference nor in reference to an origin, but as an ongoing transformation in the becoming of the linguistic world that we build with other human beings.*

~ Maturana & Varela (1987, 234-235)

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*Sara Ross, Ph.D. (Cand.) founder and president of ARINA, Inc., has been an independent action researcher and scholar as well as spiritual director in one-on-one ministry. Her doctorate will be in political development. She is currently working on her dissertation research, which tests hypotheses drawn from the theory described in this article.*

3109 State Route 222  
Bethel, OH 45106-8225  
USA

Email: [sara.ross@global-arina.org](mailto:sara.ross@global-arina.org)

# Timely and Transforming Leadership Inquiry and Action: Toward Triple-loop Awareness

Anne Starr and Bill Torbert

**Abstract:** Drawing from situations in business, art, leadership education, and home life, this essay experiments with diverse ways to communicate the experience of triple-loop awareness. Contrasting it with single- and double-loop feedback in a person's awareness, the triple-loop supposedly affords the capacity to be fully present and exercise re-visioning, frame-changing timely leadership. The essay presents an encompassing theory of time and of its relationship with our own capacity for awareness. The experiment concludes with the reminder to readers that a first reading is like walking around the base of a mountain. The authors invite readers to try out one of the uphill paths of being with these experiments with a different kind of attention.

**Key words:** action-logic, awareness, inquiry, leadership, learning, re-visioning, timely action, theory of time, transformation, triple-loop

## Introduction

This essay consists of a number of qualitatively different example-experiments to communicate the experience of triple-loop awareness, which supposedly gives participants in any social process the capacity to be fully present and to exercise re-visioning, frame-changing leadership in a timely fashion.

In order to begin displaying and playing with the distinctions and relationships among single-, double-, and triple-loop inquiry and action, the first several mini-essays are portraits of particular situations in business, art, leadership education, and home life. The final experiments occur in the course of presenting a more encompassing theory of time itself.

Our aim is to point toward the qualities of triple-loop awareness, even though we will also claim that the experience of triple-loop awareness is always more than thought or words. We hope to illustrate this experience vividly enough to interest you in the new freedom, mutuality, power and efficacy such awareness-in-action promises.

Overall, this essay will, of course, interweave us, the authors, and you our readers, through the resonances among all of these example-experiments and your own experiments with your attention as you read and amidst your other activities. Initially, of course, you may find yourself reading in the habitual linear sequence of the journal layout, perhaps doing some incremental, single-loop learning about the concepts discussed.

Eventually, if you wish, you may choose how to approach the article more playfully, weaving your attention back and forth among the portraits, seeking to encompass a whole new pattern of thought or to find just what this approach reconstructs about your way of thinking and acting.

This may possibly catalyze (the beginning or acceleration of) a longer-term double-loop change in your thinking-in-action (or action-logic).

...Or perhaps, you may find yourself playing with the very attention you are using during this reading (in one exercise we will explicitly ask you to do this) – thus possibly experiencing what we call triple-loop inquiry and awareness as you read.

## **Brief Illustrations of Triple-loop Inquiry and Awareness in Action in an MBA Leadership Workshop**

In the closing two minutes of an MBA Leadership Workshop on a February evening of 2005, a student says, “We’re beginning to get the idea of single-loop learning, where you see you didn’t get the result you wanted during a conversation, or in hitting the nail you’re trying to drive into a beam, so you make little corrective changes in your way of talking or listening or hammering, and sometimes you pretty quickly get the result you were hoping for. Several of us have told good stories of just listening a little more carefully and then asking a question about what the other’s saying, and feeling the whole ‘weather’ of that relationship change...”

“And I think a lot of us have a feel for double-loop learning too (and why it’s less usual, but more important for a good leader to be able to do), where sometimes you realize the wood’s so hard you’d better switch to a screwdriver and screw or, say, change what result you’re even trying to get in your conversation. So, those are starting to make a little sense...”

“But what’s this triple-loop idea that – whether in our own 1<sup>st</sup>-person awareness, or in a 2<sup>nd</sup>-person conversation within a team, or in a much larger 3<sup>rd</sup>-person social organizing process – we can sometimes change, not just our specific actions, and not even just our overall strategies, but also (and somehow, supposedly most powerful of all) our very present awareness so that we feel our own presence and that of everything around us?” (pause, before student continues)

“...Actually, our consultant, Grace, gave our Learning Team a good example of single-, double-, and triple-loop learning tonight, but we still can’t see how the triple-loop part works. She pointed out that a room temperature thermostat is built to permit the occupants to set a limit such that the furnace then turns off or on at the limit, making repeated single-loop changes from off to on or vice versa at that limit.”

“Of course, the thermostat is also built to permit occupants to change the limits, and she said that’s an example of a double-loop change -- changing the parameters.”

“When we asked her what triple-loop change would be in that example, she said triple-loop change is when, in February in Boston, an occupant blows a gasket and flies to Costa Rica for a week. (Laughter from the class) But, you know, like how are we supposed to do something like that at work in the middle of the day?”

The instructor pauses, surveying the class, and nods to one member who looks like excited words are about to emerge. She says she thinks she’s recognized a triple-loop awareness generating phenomenon on a relatively large social scale, as she’s been listening. She speaks of being visually ravished by some e-pics her sister in New York City has sent her of the Christos’ Orange Gates installation in Central Park.

“It’s taken 26 years since conception to get done,” volunteers another student, “And it’s only up for two weeks before they take all 7,500 gates and orange flags down again.”

“It’s got people from all over the country coming,” said another. “Even Europeans.”



“And,” the original speaker pipes in again, “I read where they say the biggest miracle of all is that it’s getting millions of New Yorkers to wake up with a goofy smile on their faces and rediscover their center. Central Park seen as though for the first time. A kind of “waking up” where you and the phenomenon become unusually present to one another, passing through our perceptual and conceptual filters with less distortion and more wonder than usual. Don’t you think that, after they come down, those orange gates may wake a few of them up again later by their very absence? Are they powerful enough to portend a new period of hope after the nightmare of 9/11?”

“Maybe the Orange Gates are a good example of all the preparation that can go into a few moments of truly timely action on a spiritual/historical scale,” the instructor adds weightily. “Think of how short a time it took for Socrates to have his final inquiring conversation with his friends before ending his life by drinking the hemlock, yet how long that event has been re-awakening inquiry within Western civilization. Do you think the flavor of the Orange Gates will inspire re-awakening inquiry for as long as that? In the meantime, we still have the question about how to generate this kind of experience in the middle of a work day. Right now, it seems to me, the timely action is to end class. Can we do so without ending this fresh feeling of inquiry-in-action?”

### **Definition, Figure, Mathematical Analogy, and Experiential Test**

During the following class, the instructor offers a number of scholarly, definitional statements about single-, double-, and triple-loop awareness, such as:

First-order change is incremental, involving behavioral adjustments. ...Second-order change refers to change in cognitive frameworks underlying the organization’s activities... Third-order change ...give(s) organization members the opportunity to transcend schemata (and to) recognize how this schema and all schemata limit as well as guide understanding. ...Third-order change... presumes experience that is transconceptual. (Bartunek & Moch, 1994, 24-25)

Translating, he explains that triple-loop awareness re-presents a change in consciousness. It is the simultaneous awareness of all 4 territories of experience – of the outside world, one’s own behavior, one’s own feelings and thoughts, and at the same time, a kind of witnessing of all this. It can be called presencing (Senge et al, 2004). Triple loop awareness occurs in any moment when there’s an attention distinct from the mental thinking, from the physical sensing, and from the objects of perception, infusing them all with an immediacy that is at once passionate, dispassionate, and compassionate. You’re more likely to have these experiences when you put yourself in a position where you’re on the edge of your known reality – on the not-necessarily-comfortable threshold between the known and the unknown. The instructor also offers the following skeletal illustration of single-, double-, and triple-loop feedback to go with the definition (see Figure 1).

The instructor suggests that objects in the external world are solid, earth-like, distinguishable and countable in interval/ratio terms (how many chairs in the room, how many dollars in my wallet, how many apple pies made). By contrast, the world of sensations and behaviors is describable and enactable in liquid, moving, ordinal, sequential terms (to cook a pie, first you do

this, then that). The world of thought and strategy functions in airy, symbolic, nominal, relational, systems terms (e.g. a conceptual map). And the world of attention engages us with the entire aesthetic continuum from the fire-like, noumenal, non-dual origin of the empty light of attention itself, through our nominal categories of thought into the ordinal priority and sequence of our actions, to the interval accounting of the results we achieve.

### Attention/Intention

Triple-loop feedback

### Thought/Strategy

Double-loop feedback

### Sensations/Behaviors

Single-loop feedback

Perceptions/Outcomes in External World

**Figure 1:** Single-, Double-, and Triple-Loop Feedback Within a Given Person's Awareness

In this context, the instructor offers the class what he calls a first-person experiment in generating triple-loop transconceptual, noumenal experience. He hands out single sheets of paper with the following instructions and asks everyone to spend the next three minutes listening to themselves “playing” silently with its suggestions, as we now suggest our readers do:

## 0. Zero. Origin. Noumenon.

*Imagine that you are present in the present... that you can feel your own presence and other presences around you now...*

*How do you “imagine” this?*

*Are you merely thinking about these words as you read, or are you actually trying to feel yourself from the inside, becoming more aware of how your body feels now?*

*And, as for the other presences around you, are you becoming more aware, not just of the meaning of these words as you read, but also of their physical presence as ciphers on this page?*

*And the other people around you or the chair you're sitting on? How are you feeling their presences?*

*How does this waking up to your own and others' presence in the present feel?*

*How are you doing it?*

*Is “doing it” changing the pace and the way you read?*

*Can you “keep doing it” if you close your eyes?*

*Or are you “just reading” again?*

## Gleaned from an On-line Community of Practice Conversation among Developmental Consultants

Continuing our lightning-quick switches of frame, we turn from passionate, physical illustrations of triple-loop awareness (thermostats and orange gates) and from dispassionate intellectual illustrations of triple-loop experience (definitions, models, and an experiment with the mathematics of experience) to a compassionate, emotional illustration of how a professional organizational consultant, executive coach, or couples therapist can listen to clients. This statement was offered by Steve March in an e-mail conversation among a group of professionals dedicated to learning more about “integral theory and practice.”

“I can *listen for clients’ thematic patterns or patterns of action* during the meeting and propose or enact alternative patterns. This sort of listening and intervention can generate some important single-loop learnings on their part that can help clients improve their situation and the effectiveness of their interactions.”

“A second more subtle and more difficult way I can listen to clients is to *listen to their way of listening* – in particular to what they *aren’t* listening to. From this kind of listening I may suggest and try out with them a whole new practice that can help them make a double-loop change in their action-logic and embody that change in their way of listening.”

“A third way of listening is to hear both of the levels already mentioned and at the same time to *listen to my listening of the client’s listening*. How is the client showing up in my total experience? What am I feeling – emotionally and somatically? How am I being triggered? Who am I being such that this is the client I experience? I find, more and more, that this last question orients the unfoldment of my coaching.”

## Single-, Double-, and Triple-Loop Learning Interweaving in the Same Event

Single-, double-, and triple-loop learning may all occur in the course of the same momentary experience. For example,

*“I’ve been talking and fighting and weeping with my wife all night long and into the morning hours, trying gently and patiently to reassure her that, despite whatever vibes she thought she saw between me and another (also married) woman at the other end of a long dinner table from where she was seated when we dined at our friends yesterday evening, I do love her and have no intention of leaving her.*

*“As the morning continues without resolution, beyond exhausted, I remember a friend once saying that if all the different things you’re trying aren’t working, you should try the last thing you would ever think to do in this situation (thus, freeing yourself from the grip of your false assumptions).*

*“Right now, that would mean getting angry at my wife. I can’t imagine how that would reassure her, nor can I imagine what I have to be angry about. Then I remember that I have recently been teased about never getting angry. Maybe I can never imagine why I should be angry, but maybe I actually am angry without realizing it. Maybe I am rationalizing away an anger I’m not letting myself feel.*

*“I realize intellectually that I may be at my assumptive limit. And I’m certainly exhausted – at my physical/emotional limits. So, not even knowing what I will say, I start*

*making an angry roaring sound, and, to my surprise, hear myself yelling at her that she doesn't trust me and my love for her. That feels totally true to me. She immediately quiets down, begins to weep in a different way, as do I, and we're out of the cycle."*

Here, the speaker finally accepts the single-loop feedback that he is not reaching his goal of reassuring his wife. He next remembers a different, rationally preposterous strategy that is outside his current action-logic (double-loop feedback). He begins to rationalize about the strategy rather than acting on it, then sees that that's what he's doing (triple-loop feedback that changes his awareness). He then acts in a way that validates the single-loop learning by achieving the original goal, as well as in a way that validates the double-loop learning by the very uniqueness-for-him of the action, and that continues the triple-loop learning for a few moments of spacious high wonderment, seeing himself seeing, hearing himself speaking, and feeling the transformative alchemy work through them both.

## **Interweaving a Theory of Time with a Theory of Developing Awareness of Time**

In recent work (Chandler & Torbert, 2003; Torbert, 1991; Torbert & Associates, 2004), a group of our colleagues have been highlighting a three-dimensional theory of time (and this theory is also either implicit or explicit in a number of other works related to quantum physics and consciousness research [e.g. Priestley, 1964; Malin, 2001; Purser & Petranker, 2003; Senge et al, 2004]). As we will see below, developmental theory traces the path by which people can come 1) to interweave single-, double-, and triple-loop awareness; 2) to experience the three dimensions of time (or the six dimensions of space/time; and 3) to engage in powerful, vulnerable, transforming, and timely leadership action.

One of the basic ideas of the three-dimensional theory of time-experiencing is that we are ordinarily 0-dimensional time beings, altogether time-oblivious (e.g. when engaged in a repetitive task, when driving and daydreaming, when enthralled by what we are reading, or when asleep). In addition, we are episodically 1-dimensional time beings, aware of linear chronological time (e.g. when waiting impatiently for someone who's late, or when rushing to meet a deadline). These may be named zero-dimensional time-awareness and one-dimensional time-awareness.

In its most sophisticated forms, one-dimensional time-awareness can be cultivated into an awareness of psychological and historical patterns that inform current actions (this type of sophistication is found also in the historical theories of evolution and development that have characterized both the social and natural sciences during the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

One-dimensional time awareness of sequential passing time permits us potentially to act, then identify a gap between act and intended outcome, then adjust one's action, and achieve one's goal (maybe), thus doing single-loop learning. Developmental theory and research (see Table 1) suggest that only a minority of managers and executives develop to the Achiever action-logic where they are capable of reliable single-loop

**Table 1:** Seven Leadership Action-Logics (adapted from Rooke & Torbert “Seven Transformations of Leadership” *Harvard Business Review* April 2005, with permission)

<b>Action Logics</b>	% of 4,310 research sample profiling at this action logic	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Strengths</b>
<b>Opportunist</b>	<b>5%</b>	<i>Wins any way possible.</i> Self-oriented, manipulative, “might makes right.” Masters the outside world.	Good in emergencies or brief sales opportunities.
<b>Diplomat</b>	<b>12%</b>	<i>Avoids overt conflict.</i> Desperately wants to belong. Masters own behavior to fit group norms	Good as supportive glue within an office.
<b>Expert</b>	<b>38%</b>	<i>Rules by logic and expertise.</i> Always seeks the rational way. Masters some professional field of thought.	Good as an individual contributor.
<b>Achiever</b>	<b>30%</b>	<i>Meets strategic goals.</i> Juggles managerial duties and market demands. Uses single-loop feedback to work effectively with teams.	Well-suited to managerial roles; action and goal oriented.
<b>Individualist</b>	<b>10%</b>	<i>Interweaves competing personal and company action logics.</i> Encourages public reflection, creates unique structures to resolve gaps between strategy and performance.	Effective in venture and consulting roles.
<b>Strategist</b>	<b>4%</b>	<i>Generates organizational and personal transformation.</i> Exercises the power of mutual inquiry, vigilance, and vulnerability to generate double-loop change.	Effective as transformational leaders.
<b>Alchemist</b>	<b>1%</b>	<i>Inquires, listens, and acts.</i> Integrates material, social, and spiritual transformation through triple-loop awareness.	Good at generating society-wide transformation.

learning in the midst of ongoing action (Torbert & Associates, 2004; Rooke & Torbert, (2005). An even smaller percentage of adult professionals are measured as Strategists who reliably engage in double-loop learning and reliably generate successful developmental transformation (Rooke & Torbert, 1998). And only 1% transform to the Alchemist action-logic that is devoted to sustainable moment-to-moment triple-loop learning and awareness. Double- and triple-loop

awareness introduce us to the second and third dimensions of time, which are hidden within durational or passing time.

The second dimension of time can be imagined geometrically as orthogonal to linear durational time from the past to the future, passing through the present. From the point of view of our ordinary (zero or one-dimensional) temporal awareness, the present is a vanishingly small instant that can never be grasped because it is past by the time that its sensations, thoughts and feelings register within us. Is there a different quality of awareness that permits a timeless, conscious experiencing of the present – a quality of awareness that permits us to live nowhere but the present... inhabiting the eternal present in all of its unfolding fullness... experiencing a sense of our own presence and of other presences around us even while remembering something, or focusing on a particular task, or imagining a possible future? When smelling a flower, or facing a sunset, or embracing (and being embraced by) a beloved, many of us are occasionally graced by contemplative moments of harmony and communion... a conscious experiencing of presence-sensitivity-receptivity in what feels like an “eternal now” (in Latin this was called the “Nunc Stans,” the “Standing Now”). Similarly, we may experience vivid moments of disharmony as when we “see” that our practice contradicts our own espoused principle. But, paradoxically, these eternal moments of “time out of time” usually soon fade.

A third dimension of time can again be imagined as orthogonal (the Z axis) to the plane defined by chronological time (X axis) and eternity (Y axis). The three-dimensional “volume” of time can be imagined as holding all possibilities, all the potentialities of the future and the still-hidden meanings of the past, some of which emerge into the present (become actualized) and then pass into linear, historical time, through a translation process that quantum physics now describes as a “quantum collapse” (Ho, 2001; Malin, 2001).

What is actual... consists of both objects and subjects in a dance, or flow. Each new subject is constituted in part by antecedent actualities, but each new moment of experience, in addition to its physical constituents, is also a *creative subject* which exercises its freedom and creativity to unify *in the moment* its constituent completed moments of experience. Each object is an expired experience...; *and then* these objects provide the raw material for subsequent subjects... And so the cycle proceeds from subject to object to subject to object (de Quincey, 1999, 99).

Is there really a different quality of awareness that goes beyond a deepened sense of presence in the present to sensing oneself as a creative subject actively participating in midwifing an emerging future (Senge et al, 2004)? As a first taste, we offer the following meditation written in January 2005 by Maria, a woman in her thirties, who had been a member of a spiritual group seeking such heightened awareness, but had recently recognized that it was fraudulent and that she was being manipulated into donating a large proportion of her time and money to an organization in which she shared no control. Now faced with questions of love, marriage, and faith tradition (she Catholic, her fiancé Islamic), she writes:

I'm tired of pretending  
 To believe what I don't  
 I'm tired of pretending  
 I'll do what I won't.  
 I'm tired of pretending  
 I want what I “ought”

I'm tired of pretending  
To be what I'm not.

I'm ready to see  
What I previously couldn't.  
I'm ready to want  
What I want, though I "shouldn't."  
I'm ready for answers  
That come from me.  
I'm ready, so ready  
To finally be free.

Here, the writer seems very much "on the edge" of her known reality – on the not-necessarily-comfortable threshold between the known and the unknown, between the present and the future. Is she really ready as she says she is? In the passion, dispassion, and compassion (for herself) of writing this meditation, she may have momentarily been truly experiencing a birthing of triple-loop awareness. Yet her previous "pretending" had surely not all been intentional pretending. Often, no doubt, she had been convinced at the time that she wanted what she "ought." Has the experiential awareness of simultaneous completion with the past and emptiness of the future (not more of the same) lasted beyond the writing of the meditation? Does it return often? Or has the memory of the writing replaced her live experiencing of presence on the verge of the volume of possibility?

The following story from an autobiographical course paper illustrates a longer visit to this world of surprising presencing, followed by the writer's reflections on the aftermath:

*My older brother became ill, a reality almost impossible for me to accept as he was amongst my greatest life allies.*

*I visited him in Mill Valley and when there saw his terrible degradation. He didn't recognize me, mistaking me for a nurse though I had called to announce my arrival only 30 minutes before. I followed him into his office where he announced authoritatively, looking at his calendar, "My sister is due here at 11:00." Self-medicating, he had frightening overdoses with alarming falls and dangerous accidents in the kitchen. His pitifully thin body was bruised and cut where he had hurt himself.*

*Toward the end of my short visit I sat with a circle of his close friends, the hospice nurse and him. I was stunned and devastated, uncertain of myself. His friends were half-playfully chastising him, complaining about how difficult he was and how they worried about him, which he bore with his usual blend of humor, charisma and humility. In the midst of hearing all this, the thought came to me: I will come back to live with him and take care of him. I said so right then and the clarity of my statement and power of my intention were like the quiet birth of a new reality.*

*I went back to Boston and moved as if watching myself from above. I did not know how I would do it but knew I would with a certainty that was as though it were already true. My boss, who normally complained if I wanted to take any time away from work, didn't even question me. I seemingly effortlessly found someone to live in my house indefinitely. Two technical people emerged and with grace and patience, connected me*

*remotely to what I needed for work. Twelve days after I returned from San Francisco, I flew back there to live.*

*Thus began five of the most intimate, terrifying, hilarious, and grief stricken months of my life. I only worked when my brother didn't need me and learned a new trust that time would cooperate with what had to be done. As it turned out those five months were incredibly prolific and financially rewarding, and I found I liked my work more than ever before. I loved my brother's created extended family and with their help learned how to take care of him. In some ways this was my most satisfying creation: it was instantaneous in conception and fell into place like magic - its heart energy so strong and its intention so clear, nothing would stop it. It felt to me like a magician time, where the conception is the creation and time folds to meet any contingency.*

Quite apart from the profound personal experience that this was for me, it was also an unprecedented experience of a new kind of power. Being a constitutional worrywart, I was accustomed to thinking with limitation – seeing the barriers (in the “real” world) associated with attaining my desires (in “here”) as overwhelming. The emotional shock of this situation gave me a power and clarity I had not experienced before. Instead of seeing limitation, I saw only my intention and knew there were any number of ways it would be met. My desires and the real world were interacting in real time (the present). I never forced a connection or answer, but instead *knew* that things would fall into place. This felt physically like operating from above myself with infinite flexibility to play/enact in the world “below”. I should also say that I have not summoned this kind of power since then – unfortunately, not even to write this paper (Anonymous, 2004, with permission).

Here, we hear of a prolonged experience of a purportedly altered state of consciousness generated in part, it certainly seems, by the emotional shock this woman experienced in the face of her brother's imminent death and in part by defining for herself a very practical role to play that kept her entrained in the ongoing daily presence of this most dramatic of human transformations. While it was going on it gave her an unprecedented freedom of action and self-determination. But as she says, this extraordinary time also ended, and did not leave her with a reliable capacity to recreate that state.

Is it even conceivable that there is a spiritual/political/scientific/business inquiry and practice aimed at generating an ongoing triple-loop awareness that transforms outcomes through changing the quality of one's actions, of one's action-logics, and of one's very attention? To what degree can what kind of a spiritual community of inquiry support one's efforts toward a trans-conceptual awareness that can host all three dimensions of time – 1) the “line” of mundane, durational activity; 2) the archetypal, eternal, fractal “circles” of time that durational activity embodies; and 3) the “volume” of possibilities, from which spontaneous, imp-possible, tricksterish violations of past pattern are drawn? These questions carry us beyond the boundary of this short article. Let us instead contemplate one more example of a particular business leader who seems to integrate action and inquiry on an ongoing basis.



## Warren Buffett, an Exemplar of Triple-loop Awareness and Action?

For the many who believe that material success in business and life requires opportunistic cutting of corners, it may come as a surprise that we will tout one of the richest men alive as an intuitive practitioner of single-, double-, and triple-loop learning for whom integrity, mutuality, sustainability, and inquiry are truly primary in his life and work. We are speaking of none other than the Oracle of Omaha, investor Warren Buffett. Buffett's entire theory of value-based investing requires constant inquiry into specific companies, as well as mutual inquiry with the leadership of those companies, rather than formulaic responses to the stock market or particular industries. His approach also relies profoundly on self-oriented inquiry, in order to know the edges of what he calls one's "circle of competence" as precisely as possible and not make investments outside it.

Buffett approaches the companies he invests in as partners he wishes to relate to over the longest possible term, rather than as subordinates he can dominate or fleece in the short-term. He does the same with his shareholders at Berkshire Hathaway annual meetings, with reporters, and with business students. Rather than pontificating, he turns each encounter into an opportunity for open inquiry and gains trust through his self-deprecating humor and honesty. His basic principle of conversation and political practice is simple: "Never lie under any circumstances." (The *principle* is simple; *living up to it* is a complex work of art.) Or, as his friend Charlie Munger puts it, "One of the reasons Warren is so cheerful is he doesn't have to remember his lines."

But, the reader may ask, in what ways is Buffett transformational? He appears to have done much the same things his entire adult life. He has lived in the same home and eaten the same junk foods most of that time. Early on, he created a financial vehicle to give the vast preponderance of his fortune away and has stuck with it. And most of his close friends claim they've never known anyone who remains more the same.

True (although the very idea [not to mention the actual practice] of giving your fortune away before you've even earned it is a wee bit unusual and would require a huge personal transformation for many a businessperson). Yet it is also true that Warren's wife Suzie brought him out of his introverted self in a new way and taught him how to make friends across wide differences during his twenties and thirties. He's also changed from the Republican to the Democratic Party, a pretty unusual move. And in the past decade he's gone from being virtually a lone investor to being one of the largest employers in the US.

But perhaps the most striking, virtually instantaneous reversal of frame on a large scale that Buffett has accomplished occurred in 1991 when Shearson-Lehman fired its CEO as an ethics scandal broke. Buffett (a large shareholder) received a call early one Friday morning asking him to step in as interim CEO and try to rescue the company. By Sunday evening, he was closing in on choosing a permanent successor through an inquiry he had begun with senior management, and had met with the press for hours that afternoon, answering every question as honestly as possible. His presence, integrity, and collaborative inquiry transformed the credibility of the company almost instantly and it was saved.

And how about Warren's and Suzie's and Irene's act of transforming the notion of a romantic triangle? We usually imagine a romantic triangle as a temporary, unsustainable way of secretly cheating. But these three created a romantic triangle that was mutually honest, respectful, loving, publicly-acknowledged, and sustained until Suzie's recent death. Obviously, such an ongoing relationship is potentially susceptible to any number of jealousies and two-on-one power plays, unless all three persons continually enact each of the three couple relationships within the larger frame of concern for the unique triangular relationship as a whole. (If readers are interested in

evidence for this characterization, or just in sheer inspiration, we recommend that you order a copy of the 2004 Charlie Rose PBS interview with Suzie Buffett only months before her death.)

A final indication, both humorous and serious, of Buffett's trans-egoic perspective on his activities is his final letter to his Berkshire Hathaway shareholders, which he has already written and which will be released the day after his death, continuing his frame-changing leadership. It begins, "Dear Shareholders, Yesterday I died. This is bad news for me but not for you..."

## Conclusion

This essay has consisted of a number of qualitatively different experiments to communicate the experience of triple-loop awareness, which supposedly gives participants in any social process the capacity to be fully present and to exercise re-visioning, frame-changing leadership in a timely fashion. The examples have been drawn from particular situations in business, art, leadership education, and home life. We have also presented an encompassing theory of time itself and of its inextricable relationship with our own capacity for awareness.

If you have reached this point in the article after having read straight through it, please recall our admonition in the introduction that it is unlikely you will have yet achieved a satisfactory sense of comprehension, completion, and conclusion. Reading the article once through is like walking around the base of a mountain. Now, perhaps, your attention can try one of the uphill paths toward the peak of this little mountain of meaning (Daumal, 1974). What would it mean to play with the very attention we are exercising as we read, as we suggested in the introduction?

In other words, to what degree may it be possible to live, on an ongoing or many-times-a-day-returning basis, within in a six-dimensional horizon of conscious inquiry into the life and death of particular events, particular thought-episodes, and particular feelings, as well as of the sense of fractal patterns among them, not to mention the subjectively presencing origin toward whom our attention turneth when we seek through our winters and into our springs?

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*Anne Starr, MBA, has worked for a number of years in the organizational learning field.*

*Massachusetts, USA*

*Email: [anne.starr@verizon.com](mailto:anne.starr@verizon.com)*

*Bill Torbert, PhD, now professor of management at the Carroll School of Management at Boston College, earlier served as the school's graduate dean and director of the PhD Program in Organizational Transformation. He is one of the founding faculty of the Executive Program Leadership for Change at Boston College, as well as a founding research member of the international Society for Organizational Learning, and a board member of Trillium Asset Management (the first and largest independent socially responsible investing advisor).*

*Boston College*

*Organization Studies Department*

*The Wallace E. Carroll School of Management*

*Fulton Hall*

*140 Commonwealth Avenue*

*Chestnut Hill, MA 02467-3808*

*Email: [torbert@bc.edu](mailto:torbert@bc.edu)*

# Good, Clever and Wise: A study of political meaning-making among integral change agents

Thomas Jordan in an Interview with Russ Volckmann

**Abstract:** Thomas Jordan discusses the intellectual and research foundations that have led to his creation of a consciousness development model. In interview research that he conducted among selected personnel in Swedish defense and security agencies, Jordan has focused on three key skill sets: consciousness skills, self-awareness and embeddedness or identification. From this he has identified seven characteristics that show up in various patterns among those he interviewed. The first three—good, clever, and wise—are key characteristics. The next four follow from them: curious, inventive, modest and handy. These show up in variable combinations among these integral change agents involved with promoting change within political institutions.

**Key words:** Integral, change agent, consciousness, skills, political, meaning-making.

*Q: While your work historically has been focused on conflict management, since about 1998 you've been writing about development and politics while drawing on diverse theoretical approaches to do that. We're going to be considering the work you're currently doing. As a way of starting us off, what brought you to this work?*

A: The research I'm finishing now is about integral change agents, primarily in governmental organizations. I tried to find individuals who make sense of themselves, their aims and their world in terms of what we technically would call late post-conventional meaning-making. These are people who are unusually aware, sophisticated in their understanding of causality and have a deep, personal engagement with some kind of existential values—values that serve the whole, rather than some partial interest.

I'm doing this research with project financing from the Swedish Emergency Management Agency. That means I am focusing on people who work with societal security issues in a very broad sense (see Table 1). Some of them work with defense policies and others with internal security, for example, addressing how we can prevent society from disintegrating into a situation where we have a lot of street violence. All of the people I have interviewed in this project are in some way engaged with issues involving how we keep a decent society.

**Table 1:** Positions of Those Interviewed

<b>Profiles of Interviewees</b>	
<b>Positions</b>	<b>Total</b>
Officials and experts at ministries of the Swedish government	5
Senior officials in Swedish government agencies	5
Police officers in various functions	4
Officials with policy making and organizational development tasks, City Office of Gothenburg, Sweden's second largest city	2
High-ranking officer in the Swedish Armed Forces	1
Consultant working for the Swedish Armed Forces and Police	1
University professor	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

*Q: Is this a significant new step for you?*

A: There is a very straight line from what I have been doing for the last 20 years or even more. I have always been rather obsessed with trying to understand why the world looks like it does and why things happen the way they do. I have a very deep interest in understanding the inequalities in the world and finding some way to work with reducing suffering.

I started out trying to understand the world through economics, economic geography and similar sciences. Then I moved to looking more at how human consciousness works and to use that as a perspective for understanding societal conflicts on various scales. I've spent a very long time getting familiar with and learning to use theories on adult development and consciousness development in order to make them into tools for understanding political development and processes of various kinds. Thus, it's quite natural that I end up working with these issues.

*Q: As a way of laying a foundation it might be useful for us to take a look at what are those models and constructs that have been significant for the work you're doing now.*

A: I've always been interested in psychology as a way of understanding how people behave in social interactions. In the mid '80's I read two books that turned my whole conceptual framework upside down. One of them was Stanislav Grof's *Realms of the Human Unconscious*. The other was Ken Wilber's *Up from Eden*. They were very significant in different ways for the development of how I have been approaching these matters. Perhaps Wilber's book is more relevant to what I am doing today than Grof's.

The most important thing with Wilber's book was that it painted a vision of human history—cultural history, societal history—that focuses on the relationship between structures of human consciousness development on the one hand and societal systems, structures and cultures on the other hand. Reading that book gave me a key I had been looking for to understand politics. It started a process in which I quite systematically went to Wilber's theoretical sources.

I've focused mostly on the research-based sources. I've spent many years reading the research on adult development, ego development, consciousness development, and ego transcendence. In this very rich literature there are of course some researchers who have been more important to me than others. Among my favorites are Robert Kegan and the whole area of ego development psychology with Jane Loevinger, Lawrence Kohlberg, Michael Basseches, Robert Selman, Bill Torbert, Susann Cook-Greuter and a lot of other people.

So the research I have been influenced by has focused on cognitive development and ego development. I'm also very influenced by spiritual traditions, primarily Buddhism.

One very important person for me was Trungpa Rinpoche whose books I read early on. He influenced my thinking very much. I've been reading a lot of Buddhist literature, mainly Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, Thich Nhat Hahn, for example. Like Wilber, I find it very productive to make use of the Western traditions of empirical psychological research into meaning-making structures and Eastern traditions about how human consciousness actually works.

*Q: Has this resulted in your developing a framework for integrating these?*

*A:* Yes. I spent quite a lot of time trying to put together many different models and dimensions of consciousness development. Wilber talks about lines of development and tries to relate different models to each other by saying that they focus on different aspects of consciousness development. But Wilber has been quite reluctant to spell out details or delve into the more intricate aspects of how those different lines of development relate to each other and what it means when you look at them in an interrelated way.

It has been an important personal project for me to try to develop a conceptual framework for putting those different dimensions of consciousness development to work when I'm trying to understand such things as security policy reasoning or how people generally behave in various kinds of conflicts, like workplace conflicts.

What I have is not at all a finished framework, but I find it very productive to think about consciousness development in terms of three different aspects, three different approaches into the field. The first is related to what we could call *consciousness skills*. That is what the theories about cognitive development are very much about—for example the complexity in how you construct causality in the physical, social and psychological worlds. It is about such things as role-taking: what skills you have in imagining how differently other people think; or capacity to construct and use abstract, subtle and paradoxical concepts.

There are very many different models discussing various aspects of cognitive and consciousness skills, not only the cognitive part of it in a narrower sense, but also what is generally called emotional intelligence: how you can use your way of relating to people, use your empathy, using your tone of voice and such things in order to influence what happens in communication and relationships.

*Q: What do you mean by cognitive? We may tend to associate that with "intellectual" and it sounds like you're going beyond that.*

A: Cognition is not only discursive thinking, but also involves other types of mental representations and information processing, such as imaginal and symbolical processes. It includes the way you make images of things that happen, for example. It is about everything that goes on in your mind in terms of your thoughts about things, the way you make story lines out of what happens in your life, the way you think about things, the way you reason about cause and consequence and so on. So cognitive for me is really a very broad category and has a very broad spectrum of development as well.

When we look, for example, at Jane Loevinger's ego development theory and stages, we can see how—in the course of development—language becomes more and more differentiated. In early stages of ego development you have access to a very simple and crude repertoire of concepts and words in order to discern and describe inner states and what happens in the environment. Developing an increasingly differentiated repertoire of concepts and symbols is a key aspect of cognitive development. It allows a person to discern nuances, ambiguity and complexity.

Q: *It has to do with the capacity to differentiate?*

A: That's one important aspect of cognitive development, yes.

Q: *So far, cognitive is about thought and the capacity to differentiate with greater complexity, as well as emotional intelligence. What would you add to that?*

A: Cognitive processes include the whole imaginal realm of using non-verbal symbols and images. Academics may have a tendency to focus on rational thinking, but in understanding how people function in daily life we need to pay attention to how people make sense of events by creating stories. These stories make little use of logical analysis, but draw on metaphor, mythical themes, dramaturgical figures and so on.

Q: *And what would you add to the arena of consciousness skills?*

A: Unfortunately there is too little empirical research into development of skills in the realms of feeling, intuition, sensory-motor reflexes and pure action. We learn more by imitation than by intellectually understanding and many skills we use in highly purposeful ways cannot be articulated in discourse. So I hope we will see an expansion of knowledge about consciousness skills related to emotion, imagination, intuition, action, etc.

Q: *Consciousness skills is the first aspect. What's the second one?*

A: The second is *self-awareness*. I use the term self-awareness with a very specific meaning, in a very specific sense. I mean the capacity or presence you have in relation to your own on-going subjective processes. What's going on in yourself? I think this can be best understood if you are somewhat familiar with Robert Kegan's subject-object framework. He talks about the very important aspect of human development where you are able to take different things as objects for reflection, as objects for awareness.

Self-awareness means that you notice that you have certain patterns of thought operating in you. You can take your own thinking operations as an object of awareness. You can look at your patterns of thinking. You can reflect on those patterns. You are aware that those patterns happen in your mind. The same goes for other types of subjective processes such as emotion, the attitudes you develop toward other people, towards your wishes and cravings and so on—all the things that the spiritual traditions work with.

*Q: Would it be fair to say that consciousness skills as you are describing them relate to our life conditions and self-awareness is their interiority or is there a more complex relationship between the two?*

*A:* They are very strongly interrelated. The distinction is somewhat artificial, but if you look at skills and you look at the theories describing different kinds of consciousness skills, they always emphasize increasing complexity and increasing sophistication in those skills. But self-awareness has not very much to do with increasing complexity and increasing levels of sophistication, but more with actually noticing that certain things are going on in yourself. You are no longer a captive of your own subjective processes, but you can develop a witnessing ability. The witness self, which spiritual traditions talk a lot about, is the principle operating in self-awareness. You develop more and more of an ability to witness your own subjective processes.

That's central in understanding, for example, how people behave in conflicts. Some people are not really aware that what they feel towards another person is a process going on inside themselves. They tend to feel that when they dislike a person that is a direct consequence of that person having bad qualities. But persons who in a very clear way are aware of this process as going on inside themselves can differentiate between their own psychological processes and the inherent characteristics or the processes going on in other people.

I would say that skills have more to do with the level of capacity you have for understanding complex systems and so on, whereas self-awareness has more to do with your presence in relation to your own processes. In Buddhism and other spiritual traditions when you start meditating you start observing your thoughts, the mind streams going on in your own consciousness. That doesn't necessarily mean that when you can differentiate your witnessing ability from the cognitive processes going on in your mind, that you can look at the thoughts floating up in your mind and that those thoughts are very sophisticated. They can be quite simple.

Persons at a very simple level of cognitive development can develop a high level of self-awareness, but that doesn't mean that they automatically are particularly skilled in understanding complex systems of causation and so on. There is a point in differentiating between skills on the one hand and self-awareness on the other hand. They tell us very different things about how a person's consciousness operates. I think there are many monks in the Buddhist tradition, for example, who have very high levels of self-awareness, but not very high levels of sophistication in their consciousness skills. They weren't trained in sophisticated thinking operations. But since they know their thinking processes are subjective, they are perhaps not so inclined to be convinced that they already know everything, which is of course a great advantage.



Q: *What is the third area?*

A: The third I tend to call either *self-embeddedness* or perhaps a more accessible term: *identification*. The first two dimensions or aspects describe what you can do, but not what you *want* to do. Self-embeddedness includes those lines of development that have to do with what you find important, what you identify with, how you identify yourself. What kind of self image you have, what kind of value systems you are embedded in, what kind of morals you feel committed to and so on.

In the self-embeddedness aspect of consciousness development we find, for example, Robert Kegan's or parts of Jane Loevinger's ego development models. We also find models related to moral development or collective identifications. That's a very interesting aspect: what kind of collective you feel you are a part of. We also have Spiral Dynamics with the emphasis on value systems. What values do people identify with?

I think it's important to differentiate those three aspects of consciousness development, because no one of them can be reduced to the other.

Q: *As I understand the framework that you've put forth so far, you're suggesting that these three areas are useful ways to cluster lines of development and to begin to think about the relationships among lines of development, is that correct?*

A: Yes, exactly. They constitute a framework that may offer tools that can help us understand unique patterns of meaning-making. One of the criticisms I have about taking stage models too seriously—any of the different brands that are around—is that they may reduce our sense of the uniqueness among individuals or cultures. With a more open-ended framework defining different lines of development and formulating questions, rather than focusing on the definition of discrete stages, we can have much more openness towards understanding what is unique about meaning-making patterns of a certain individual or a certain group. And that's very valuable.

Q: *In one of your papers, you differentiate between idiographic and nomothetic approaches to research. Are you basically arguing for this framework to support an idiographic approach?*

A: I think nomothetic and idiographic approaches are necessary, but I feel that there has been too much emphasis on nomothetic approaches, that is approaches that try to develop theories that are universally valid and describe reality in, for example, a stage model. Idiographic approaches use theory in order to understand unique circumstances and unique individuals. I think that we need more of that if we want to be able to carry out really good empirical research on these matters.

Q: *The idiographic approach basically allows us to use theory to help us understand what is happening for an individual or in a current situation in some social system. Is that true?*

A: Yes.

*Q: By being able to use theory to help us create distinctions in a social system for ourselves and others we have an applied approach to creating change—well, first to creating meaning and presumably by creating meaning, then to creating change, be it the resolution of a conflict or the development of more capacity within a particular social system?*

A: Yes, that's how I see these things. I think that in order to be really useful for working with the real world our theoretical frameworks have to be very context sensitive. They have to be adaptable and flexible in order to make it possible to understand the variations and the nuances in what we encounter and identify what are the really relevant aspects of what is going on out there. If we who work with theoretical development in the integral paradigm want to be useful for a wider world we have to go in that direction—not only—but also in that direction.

*Q: Returning to these three elements or aspects in the framework you're using, you've also talked about the interplay among them, the relationships among them. I'm wondering if you have any construct or any framework for talking about that process, that dynamic?*

A: Not really. Only that I find it very productive to have these distinctions in the back of my mind when I interpret interviews, when I look for patterns in meaning-making of, for example, a political party or a group in a conflict—how they make sense of what is happening in their world. Then I find that this theoretical frame allows me to recognize the patterns operating in a very differentiated way. I have not, at least yet, tried to theorize very much about that in terms of a general theory about how these different aspects of development relate to each other. It might possibly be done, but I think we haven't come very far yet.

*Q: How do you use this framework to begin to talk about integral politics or to make meaning in looking at situations involving politics from an integral perspective?*

A: I've spent a lot of time looking into all those different theories about consciousness development in order to fashion tools for understanding societal processes, in particular conflicts of various kinds. I was invited to one of the early meetings at the Politics branch of the Integral Institute almost five years ago. I found it very interesting and productive to think about the concept of integral politics. What would integral politics be?

Some people regard integral politics as a kind of ideological framework that would replace existing ideologies by transcending them and integrating various kinds of values. I tend to think about integral politics not so much in terms of the content, the concrete opinions and policies, but rather in terms of the structure of meaning-making. I think even an integral community will have different political camps: integral conservatives, integral liberals, integral social democrats, etc. The key issues have to do with the ability to balance the spectrum from egocentric to world-centric concerns, the ability to perceive and handle systemic complexity and the capacity to reflect on the patterns of meaning-making.

*Q: This is how your framework is applied?*

A: Yes. One of the ideas that I had is that we shouldn't just try to develop a conception of integral politics by theoretical reasoning, by deducing integral politics out of some kind of basic principles. I found it attractive to use what we academics call an inductive approach, namely to search for people who have spontaneously developed a capacity for integral meaning-making and then study how these people think about politics. How do they think about their role in politics? How do they go about trying to change things? That has been an idea that has been with me for five or six years, but I didn't have the opportunity to do a project until two years ago.

*Q: And that's what you've been engaged in since?*

A: Yes, that has been one of the projects I've been carrying out for the last two years. What I could do at first was to explore meaning-making in Swedish defense and security policies. I also did a research project on how people think about what keeps the society decent, i.e., meaning-making in internal security policies. In the course of these two research projects, I had an opportunity to interview about sixty people in various positions in Swedish political and administrative organizations. I got to know quite a lot of people and to meet some very interesting individuals.

In the course of those projects, I thought I could recognize a group of very interesting individuals. I tried to look at them with a mind schooled by the theories I've been working with for a long time now. I thought I could discern certain patterns that fit quite well with certain aspects of consciousness development theory.

So, the background to this project is that I had an initial image of the existence of a group of interesting people active in Swedish authorities, government departments and other organizations. I wanted to have a closer look at them in order to learn how they think about what they're doing, how they define what they find engaging in what they do and how they go about trying to work for change in a complex society. This would be a way to learn about what integral politics might be in practice.

These are not people who have joined university courses in cognitive development theory or anything like that. They don't have a vocabulary for reflecting on and talking about themselves in that way. But they display many of the characteristics described by, for example, Torbert's model for ego development among leaders or Loevinger's, Kegan's and other theories. I devised a strategy for finding and interviewing such people in order to learn more and to use this material to develop a—perhaps I shouldn't say best practice model, but something like that. I want to assemble a portrait of how we can conceive of political change and political work as alternative politics or integral politics. That's what I'm deeply engaged in right now.

*Q: Before we go into the study itself in terms of the variables you were just talking about, can we go back to your identification and selection of these individuals? The way I'm interpreting what you are saying is that these are people that, when you talked with them, gave you some indication that they had developed to some higher capacities in the three areas of your framework having to do with consciousness skills, self-awareness skills and*

*their relationship or levels of identification with what's important in their world, their value systems, their self-embeddedness, is that right?*

A: Yes.

Q: *Were you able to identify the individuals that you thought might be valuable to talk with in this study because you intuitively picked this up or were there some specific things that helped you select the people that you would include in this study?*

A: Well, I had some points to start from that I knew were important and that I could look for in people. So, for example, I looked for people who felt a personal engagement in some kind of world-centric values; that was one of the points. I also looked for people who had a certain kind of interest in complexity. They have a good understanding of complex reasons and interdependencies behind what happens and also a sense for complex consequences. That's not as common as you might think when you look at how people go about their tasks in organizations—commercial or governmental.

Q: *Would this piece about complex consequences relate to moving past linear causality into systemic and meta-systemic causality?*

A: Yes, exactly. That's exactly what I was after. And a third very important factor was what Wilber could call vision-logic, which I conceive of as the ability to perceive and understand systems of meaning-making—individual and collective systems of meaning-making. This involves people having an intuitive or explicit ability to understand that perspectives or systems of meaning-making are actually very important causes for how people act.

Some of the people I've found have a natural ability to recognize that a person acts in such and such way because they are identified with a certain self image, certain values or they have a certain way of reasoning about causality and so on. That has very, very important consequences for their attitudes towards other people. These are people who have a very low propensity for making enemies out of other people. Even though other people may act in ways they disapprove strongly, they see the underlying reasons for their behavior and, therefore, they don't blame people in the same way that many others would. But these are, of course, very, very complex issues we are going into now.

Q: *Was there anything having to do with spirituality or morality that distinguished these people?*

A: Few of these people actually talk about spirituality. A few of them do, but most of them don't.

Q: *What meaning do you make of that?*

A: I'm not sure of how I would define spirituality. You can have two quite different ways of looking at it. One definition of spirituality emphasizes the sense of being in connection with some kind of greater presence or power. It is a very feeling-oriented sense of

spirituality. Another aspect of spirituality is more in terms of ego transcendence—you feel committed to a perspective that goes far beyond your own ego and your egoic needs and interests. For these people I'm studying, I think the second aspect is more pronounced and more important in understanding how they operate. These are not people who talk a lot about God or something like that, but some of them are in fact like Bodhisattvas...

*Q: How do you mean they're like Bodhisattvas?*

A: A Bodhisattva in the Buddhists world view is an enlightened person who has chosen to stay among humans and to work for other people's enlightenment and liberation from suffering. In particular, the last part is very relevant for many of these people. They have a very, very deep personal commitment to work for other people's liberation from suffering in various forms. This motivation is central to how these individuals choose to work, what kind of positions they look for, what kinds of organizations they belong to and what kinds of tasks they feel are important to engage in.

In a close-to-the-ground sense, these people are like Bodhisattvas. Maybe they don't wallow in cosmic consciousness and feel at one with the world soul and such things, but in a very sincere and personally grounded way they are deeply engaged in working for the good of the whole and working to alleviate human suffering. In that way I feel they quite closely fit into the image of the Bodhisattva.

*Q: Having selected the people that you were going to interview, what were you hoping to gather from the interviews?*

A: I wanted to invite these people to tell me about how they conceive of what is important. How do they make sense of how social and political processes function? How did they choose to work with and for change? Also, a particularly important question in this research, how do they handle resistance and inertia, because these kinds of processes are very difficult? They are trying to influence and work with governmental policies and large organizations. They work with foreign policy questions, social policy questions, crime and so on. You don't change things very rapidly when you are working there. So, how do they go about using their commitments, their understanding of complexity and their understanding of other people's patterns of meaning-making in order to devise change strategies? That was one very important topic.

*Q: Were you using the interviews in part to confirm what you had determined, that these people had the consciousness skills, self-awareness skills and awareness of self-embeddedness and to go beyond that to describe their meaning-making in these areas?*

A: You can say mostly the latter. My own personal purpose with this research project is to pinpoint and create a differentiated image of how these people make sense of what they are doing, what their motives are, how they work and also to learn from it, of course. I wanted to go beyond, as you said, these conceptions in order to differentiate and find more nuances in what we are looking at.

Another important purpose with this project is to actually document and show to people that you can make sense of politics in this way. These are real people. They are working in real organizations. They have been doing it for years and years and they actually make sense of their work in this way. There are interesting aspects of how they do this that we could all learn from. So, the target group for my research is not so much the general public, but people who are somewhere in these regions themselves. Here they can get a mirroring of what they are intuitively striving for, but perhaps have not articulated for themselves.

So, I am trying to articulate a kind of underlying logic that some people operate with. I don't think we can teach people at early conventional levels of ego development to develop in this way, but we can smooth the path for people who are already on the way with their own momentum.

*Q: It sounds like the way you found these people is that you used your network very effectively. You talked to people you knew who referred you to people they knew and so forth?*

A: Yes, that's right. And I tried to describe in simple terms what I was looking for. Of course, I couldn't know beforehand if the person I was going to interview actually fit into the target group. Some of the people I interviewed really didn't, but that was also very valuable because it helped me to make differentiations. Looking at how a person with a low level of awareness of his own subjectivity reasons about the resistance his efforts encounters, for example, gives me a better sense of what is characteristic of the people who actually have a high level of self-awareness. The contrast is valuable for discerning patterns.

*Q: How many people did you interview totally?*

A: I have interviewed 19 people in this project, but I also interviewed over 50 people in the earlier projects. Some of those people, reasoned in a way that allowed me in this project to draw on those interviews as well. So, there is a core group and then a wider reference group.

*Q: And the 19 are the people who show a vision-logic level of development?*

A: When you work with real people and real interviews, the differentiations don't get so very clear-cut. What I'm doing is to develop a kind of assembled portrait of a way of making meaning that some people operate with to a very large extent and some other people operate with only partially. There's a spectrum here of some people who very well fit into the model or image I'm assembling and there are some people who partly fit into it. There are a few people who don't fit into it very much at all. So, I have 7 or 8 persons who to a very large extent are similar to the image I'm assembling, whereas the rest to various degrees live up to those different characteristics.

*Q: Having done these interviews, what are some of the conclusions that you've gleaned from this work?*

A: I like being a bit drastic in order to grab people's attention. So, what I have been doing is to start with a very simplified description of this group of people in terms of seven characteristics or traits which I used one word each for. I go on to explain what I mean by those different words and give examples of them with quotes from the interviews.

Q: *What are the seven characteristics?*

A: They are divided into two categories that grew out of the analysis work over time. There are three characteristics that seem to be fundamental and they are not very much of a surprise when you compare them to consciousness development theories. Those three most fundamental characteristics I call 'Good,' 'Clever,' and 'Wise.' These are people who are good, clever and wise.

'Good' means here that these are people who are strongly committed to some world-centric or holocentric values. However, anyone would say that they are committed to values that are universal. One of the challenges here is to sort out what is actually specific to this group of people in how they construct what is 'good.'

Perhaps it would be to go too far in this interview to delve into the theoretical differentiations here, but what is central is that they have an autonomous set of values that is clearly differentiated from particular story lines. They don't use a great story that points out who is good and who is bad in order to make sense of what happens in the world, which would be a mythic-rational pattern of meaning-making. These people also do not use some kind of monological rationality where they use *one* particular ideology or perspective to interpret the world or make sense of what is good and bad. You can show this in their reasoning by looking at how, for example, they are very clearly able to be quite critical of their own country, their own organizations, the policies that their own organizations carry through and so on. They all have a quite distinctly felt autonomous value system to compare with all the time. This value system is clearly differentiated from concrete actors and organizations.

Q: *You've called it world-centric. Is it a value system that is transcendent in a sense?*

A: Well, this is also simplification.

It is quite useful for talking about these things to differentiate between egocentric, socio-centric and world-centric values. You can go on and talk about cosmos-centric values, for example, but that's not very useful here. It is sufficient to distinguish between three different levels. Egocentric values are values that relate to the individual, to the person. I try to maximize my own advantages and interests as far as I can. Socio-centric values make the interest of a particular collective the center of motivation, whereas world-centric values refer to what is good for the whole.

Q: *In this group were you able to distinguish how they related to egocentric values differently than others who would not fit into this group?*

A: Yes. That's a very interesting area of exploration, which I think you have to approach in a couple of different ways. One of them is that these are people who don't have very strong ego needs. They are not very strongly motivated by getting acceptance, collecting

admiration from other people, gaining status and so on. In that way, they are quite mature people. They don't define themselves in terms of an idealized ego they have to live up to and get recognition for from other people.

Their egocentric needs are not very strong, but of course, they have them. They have needs for recognition. They have needs for a secure life situation. They have needs for doing meaningful work and so on. But the world-centric values, the existential, principled or universal values they feel committed to constitute a broad frame within which they can try to satisfy their egocentric needs.

There is an interesting relationship between the egocentric and world-centric needs in these people, because they somehow get fused. When you feel a deep, personal commitment to universal values, it also becomes a personal need for you to be able to serve those values, to work for them and to realize them. If you are unable to do so, you feel dissatisfied. If you are able to do it, you feel satisfaction. An important part of the egocentric needs becomes conditioned by the commitment to world-centric values.

Another interesting thing is that these values are not always very clearly articulated among these people. So, it's not always that they can report a list of, "Those and those are the values I feel committed to and that are the compass for what I am doing." But in the course of the interview, you nevertheless get a very strong sense that these people have a kind of internal compass which points out the direction for them to work, but they have not always been able to formulate in concepts, words and discourse what this compass is about. This is theoretically interesting because, in my interpretation, it points to something significant: a world-centric value orientation is not a product of discursive thinking. It seems it is rather a result of a felt commitment and a commitment to 'the Good', a commitment to the health of the whole. But you cannot so easily pinpoint what that means. You cannot make an ideology of it. It is more like a feeling than a discourse. I find that very interesting and would like to explore this theme further.

*Q: Does this have implications for how you would describe self-awareness and self-embeddedness for these people?*

*A:* This is a very important aspect of self-embeddedness, of course. That's the aspect of consciousness development that most covers the characteristic 'good' here. So, you can use that aspect to discuss what is happening here.

Self-awareness is important for goodness in the sense that these are people who have a clear sense of what are actually their egocentric needs and interests. Therefore, they are able to consciously decide how they should balance their own egocentric interests and needs towards the broader commitment that they have to the good of the whole. So self-awareness is a very important element in creating some kind of solidness in this goodness that these people display.

There is also a last aspect of the characteristic 'good' which is quite self-evident when you think about it. These are people who often feel it is important to work with values. Values are a field of work for them. They find values important and they often engage in organizational change projects that have to do with developing a clear conception of values, of making people reflect on values and develop value systems and so on.

*Q: Would you give an example of that?*



A: One example is a teacher at the National Police Academy in Stockholm who spends a lot of time trying to raise awareness, start discussions and to influence the way the education program is built up in order to emphasize such aspects as respect for people who have a weak position in the society, what that means when the police is out working on the streets and so on. That is one example. There are very many other people who engage in trying to build reflection on values into the organizational culture and structure in various ways.

Q: *The second was 'clever.'*

A: With 'clever' I mean mainly what we talked about before: a systemic understanding of causality, going beyond linear conceptions of how things happen into a systemic conception of causes and consequences. These are people who are described by others as having some kind of 'strategic overview,' people who can perceive large systems and interactions between different parts of systems, between part and whole and whole and part and between different kinds of systems. Most important—and this is not very simple to put words to—is that these are people who, wherever they go, expect there to be complex causes and consequences of everything. That's not so common as one would think in a society with very highly educated people in authorities and in other organizations. For people to actually use an ongoing awareness of there being complex causes and consequences is not as common as I would have hoped.

Q: *Would you give an example of that?*

A: Well, when you start talking with these people about a particular project or problem they are working with, they often start with giving a broad background. They talk about changes happening in the society: globalization, the role of the media, technologies, value systems. All those things are long-term processes that change the very conditions for the work they are doing. That's very typical.

They don't narrow down their focus of attention on a small part of the problem. They see the problem in a much broader context. In particular, they have a very keen sense of long-term changes going on, that you have to be aware of those changes and to adapt existing structures and policies to those changed processes. That could be, for example, long-term demographic change in birth rates, migration and settlement patterns that change the conditions for social welfare policies, crime and value formation. It could be how new information technologies change the conditions for political activism and political violence. It could be how the structure of military and civil defense has to adapt to fundamental structural changes in the global security policy system, and so on.

Q: *Anything more about 'clever'?*

A: These people usually have a long time horizon. They think in terms of slow change processes and they develop a certain patience. They know that these are processes that take a long time. They can contribute to push those processes a little bit in some kind of

direction, but can't expect to achieve radical changes fast. They often engage in change processes that can take a long time.

What is also typical of these persons is that *because* they perceive systems and regard the characteristics of how systems operate as important causes for what happens, they see systems and structures as important fields of work. So, when we look at the 'good' aspects of these people, they like working with values. When we look at the 'clever' aspects of these people, they like working with systems. They like working with how their own organization operates as a social and administrative system. They like working with principles on a large scale.

*Q: As your description of this is unfolding, I get a picture of people who are working within a set of strongly held values, but not looking for a completion. They realize they're in an on-going, organic, dynamic process that probably never ends.*

*A:* Yes, and if we think about the historical development of politics in the Western world or in the world in general, we know that very much of the political dynamic that has developed comes from political movements having utopian visions of what society ought to be like—the Marxist movement, the Neo-Liberal movement and so on. But these integral thinkers, so to speak, don't find it meaningful to make a blueprint of what a society ought to look like and then try to implement this blueprint. They know that these organic, slow processes are very complex. There are very many conditions and interdependencies in those systems. Therefore, it is meaningless to make a blueprint of what solution would be ideal.

Instead, they look at those complex dynamic processes going on and start thinking about how we can introduce some elements into these processes so that they go in a different direction than they do now. How can we push this complex dynamic system in a certain direction? And then, what does it look like in ten years? It's probably nothing we could have expected because we cannot foresee how these processes are going to unfold in the future.

*Q: That sounds a bit like 'wisdom'?*

*A:* Yes, in a sense. 'Wise' means here, as I said, vision-logic, the ability to take systems of meaning-making as an object of attention. These are people who are well aware that people make sense of themselves and politics, for example, from within a certain kind of perspective. This has a lot of consequences. One is that these people are not embedded in one particular ideology or perspective, but they can shift among perspectives. They can use more than one perspective for understanding things and they are *interested* in the contrast between different perspectives. It also means that they usually have a certain sense of the characteristics of their own perspective. They know that their own system of interpretation has limitations. That also means that they are open to learning in a way that a more conventional meaning-making system is not open to.

*Q: How do you see the implications of this?*

*A:* Well, the consequence of being wise is that these are people who are quite interested in initiating processes that might lead to transformations of meaning-making patterns. They

think about how they can create a process or situation that invites people to re-evaluate their values or interpretations and so on.

*Q: Did you come across an example of a strategy that was successful in doing that?*

A: There are small and large examples of that. A small-scale example is that I can be working in an organization and realize that people around me or people for whom I am the boss may be very concerned with their self-image. They may be anxious about being exposed as incompetent. That means that they close down communication. If you understand that aspect of other people's meaning-making systems, you can start by trying to create safe spaces and trusting relationships so it becomes possible for other people to relax a little bit, open up and then start to engage in processes where they look with more openness toward, for example, critical feedback. People who are very defensive are not very keen on doing that.

At a larger scale, we have people at the Swedish Department of Foreign Affairs who are looking at strategies for involving the entire corps of diplomats in the Swedish establishment in reflective processes on values. They are trying to find a good way of locating and describing individual diplomats who have acted in a way conceived of as being representative of a value-oriented foreign affairs administration. They want to present those examples as something you can discuss as a way of developing a clearer sense of the deeper purpose of being a Foreign Affairs official, in terms of values, for example.

*Q: I find it absolutely fascinating in that context that people are even willing to engage with each other in looking that carefully at questions of values.*

A: There is a lot of resistance as well, so it's not all a rosy picture.

*Q: Okay, we have 'good, clever, and wise.' Those are the first three categories and those were the fundamentals, right?*

A: Yes, and we can take the remaining four much more rapidly because they actually follow from those three. But I find it useful to point the spotlight at some of those traits or characteristics as well.

The fourth one is '*curious*.' These are people who are curious. That follows from the wise aspect. They are aware of the limitations in perspectives and systems of meaning-making. That means that they are often strongly process-oriented.

They are interested in working in a way that invites people into inquiring processes. They don't believe that they already know everything that needs to be known. They don't believe that they or any other people already have all the solutions. They are interested in how we create processes where we can learn and discover more in order to find better solutions to central problems.

One of the main sources of frustration for these people is when they encounter people who resist inquiring processes. They are frustrated with processes in which people only criticize or have ready-made solutions to everything. They feel very uncomfortable in organizations where there is no space for searching for more and deeper knowledge,

where you can toss ideas around, where you can look at the drawbacks and advantages of a certain suggestion and where you can collaboratively develop new solutions. That's a quite important aspect of these people, this 'curious' trait.

*Q: And something that calls forth their wisdom hopefully.*

*A: Yes, they are strongly interrelated.*

*Q: And the fifth item?*

*A: The fifth is that these people are "inventive". A more academic term would be "generative." Because they have this autonomous value system, they have an internal compass that points out their direction. That means that they very often generate new ideas about directions one could go in. They identify needs for change and they also come up with lots of ideas about what could be done. They are not embedded in existing structures, but they have cognitive freedom to think about possibilities, because they have differentiated their values from the existing structures.*

*These are people who are interested in change and have ideas about change. That is not always comfortable for large organizations to have. It means that they might land in conflicts and often land in dilemmas about, "...in what sense should I be loyal with the decisions already made and in what sense should I work for change even though there is already a policy?" But these people are generally very aware of this tension between the need to be loyal to democratically made decisions, on the one hand, and on the other hand to look for room to maneuver where they *can* push policies in new direction. That's the fifth aspect.*

*The sixth is that these are people I would like to call "modest." They don't have very strong needs for being visible, for getting attention, for getting recognition. They like it when they get it, but they are not *craving* attention and recognition. That means they have a kind of inner freedom to be solution-centered. They use several words and metaphors that capture this orientation in images. They talk about themselves as catalysts, as matchmakers, as enzymes and so on. They think of themselves as being actors in complex processes where it is not so important that, "I get credit for things, but I can contribute to better solutions for going in the direction of the values I find important..." and so on. If other people see this, good and well. If other people don't see this that is not so important, because they are satisfied anyway. So, these are people who often are not very visible to the general public. They work behind the scenes and they are quite content to do so.*

*Q: And the seventh?*

*A: The seventh is that these people are "handy." That's the English word I found closest to the Swedish word I am using. These are people who are quite pragmatic. They have a high level of social skills—emotional intelligence, social competence and so on. Because they have a good sense of how other people think, they are also quite able to be effective in evading other people's defenses and finding new ways to move things around.*

*Q: Handy generally means that people can do things in the material world. Fix a clock or a lamp or an automobile. They are adept.*

A: Yes, that is what I'm after, at least metaphorically. It is a practical skill in getting things to work.

*Q: Isn't this Platonic in the sense that society needs people with differing sets of capabilities?*

A: Yes. I don't personally believe that these are things anyone could learn given enough time. I personally think that this also involves in-born talent. That is, of course, only an amateur theory of mine. But when I look around, I think that some people have the kind of natural talent for developing these kinds of skills and propensities whereas other people would have a very, very hard time or wouldn't even want to go in that direction.

*Q: So, this is the nature/nurture issue?*

A: Of course.

*Q: What are the implications of that for integral politics?*

A: I don't know if the implications are that far reaching, because any position you could take on nature/nurture has us back to the present moment where such development processes, if they are possible for all people, nevertheless move so slowly that it doesn't make a difference. In terms of our lifetime and our children's lifetime, we will live in a world with very unevenly distributed awareness, consciousness skills, identifications and so on. The people who have the inner freedom to put their talents and resources to work for the general good should have as good conditions as possible to do so effectively. That's somehow the way I think of it.

*Q: Where are you going from here with this research?*

A: I'm going to take a break from researching for a while and work more in the outside world, outside the university. I'm actually trying to put some of these things into action in terms of teaching and workshops for practitioners in various fields, but also in real world political processes. It could be smaller or larger issues.

I have some collaborative relationship with people at the Department of Foreign Affairs and allied authorities. I also work with the Crime Prevention Council here in Gothenburg, which is a very interesting organization with second tier people in it. They are presently concerned about an acrimonious debate going on about graffiti and how authorities should deal with young people who engage in illegal graffiti.

It is very interesting to think about how we can create inquiring processes for people who have diametrically opposed views on the best policy to follow here. If we can create processes that open up people's perspectives and make it possible to take in that there are different types of reasoning, we could apply it to this problem. So, those are some things I will do in the next few years. Maybe later I will go back to research and write up some

more theoretical things. I would like to do that, but for the moment, I'm inclined to engage in more practical activities.

*Q: Do you anticipate that the training and development programs that you want to develop would draw on the research you've done in this project?*

A: Certainly, very much. I do think in terms of creating a course for people who work with strategic change as leaders or as change agents in order to focus attention on skill development in this area. So, that's a direct implication of this research project. I think I have a quite distinct and clear picture of what kinds of skill development areas need to be included in such a program.

*Q: Given what you said about nature and nurture, what would be some examples of skill development that you think can be nurtured?*

A: First I think that it's important to find the right people, to find people who do have a good basis to build upon. Then I think that these seven traits or areas can be made the object of attention in a workshop or program as inquiring processes— inquiries into value systems, your own value system, how you relate to value issues, what you find important and how you work with value systems. Participants can focus on what this systemic understanding of causality actually means in their own fields of work. They can engage in processes that foster vision-logic capacity for perceiving and comparing perspectives. I don't expect it to be very difficult to develop a very meaningful training program.

*Q: One part that I would wonder about is the selection of the participants, because it sounds like you're suggesting that there are people who are ready and can take advantage of this and people who are not.*

A: I think it's not so very difficult to describe this course in such terms that the suitable people recognize, "This is what I've been looking for. This is something for me." Whereas people who are not really mature or right for this kind of project would say, "This sounds fluffy, it is probably a waste of time." So, I don't think that is very difficult. The most difficult thing is how to make such a training program known to the people who might benefit from it. You probably need to have patience and make use of informal networks of contact at the beginning and start from there, using the snowball effect.

*Q: Finally, Thomas, what have you learned about yourself in relation to the model that you have created?*

A: Well, I have certainly obtained a set of differentiations that allows me to orient myself more keenly in any kind of change project. I sometimes have a tendency for developing grandiose plans, and this framework reminds me to attend to complexities, use my energies where they have a fair chance of achieving something worthwhile and then let go of ambitions that simply go beyond what is possible at the time being. I think the framework helps me manage my own resources in a more efficient way.

*Q: Thank you, Thomas.*

A: Thank you.

**Thomas Jordan, E.D.** is an associate professor at the Department of Work Science, Göteborg University, Sweden. He holds a doctorate in economic geography, but for ten years has worked primarily with research, teaching and training in the fields of conflict management and adult development. He has published articles and research reports in a number of academic journals and a comprehensive website in Swedish on workplace conflicts. Some of his English texts are available at [www.perspectus.se/tjordan](http://www.perspectus.se/tjordan).

Department of Work Science  
Box 705  
SE-40530 Göteborg  
Sweden  
E-mail: [thomas.jordan@av.gu.se](mailto:thomas.jordan@av.gu.se)

**Russ Volckmann, Ph.D.** was an organization development consultant for over 20 years and an executive coach since 1997. He holds a doctorate in political science from the University of California, Berkeley. Among his publications, including as publisher and editor of the *Integral Leadership Review*, are numerous interviews with leading thinkers and practitioners in organization change and leadership. Some may be found at [www.leadcoach.com](http://www.leadcoach.com). He is also author of the E-book, *A Leadership Opportunity: An Integral Approach*.

LeadCoach  
733 Mermaid Avenue  
Pacific Grove, CA 93950  
E-Mail: [russ@leadcoach.com](mailto:russ@leadcoach.com)

# What's Integral about Leadership?

## A Reflection on Leadership and Integral Theory

Jonathan Reams

**Abstract:** This article provides an introduction to the idea of integral leadership. It describes the basic premises of integral theory, focusing on the four quadrants, levels or stages of development, and lines or streams of development. It briefly examines the relationship of consciousness to leadership, and then provides an overview of the history of leadership theory from an integral perspective. It then suggests a distinction between an integrally informed approach to leadership and integral leadership, and closes with questions deserving further inquiry.

**Keywords:** integral, leadership, consciousness, development, transpersonal.

### Introduction

What's integral about leadership? I hear the term "integral" being applied to just about everything these days. There is integral psychology, integral ecology, integral education, integral kabbalah, integral politics, integral naked, and even this journal, the *Integral Review*. Leadership is no exception to this phenomenon. There are seminars on integral leadership, academic programs on it, marketing slogans based on it, and essays aiming to define it. Integral seems to be the buzzword of the times in many circles.

All this talk about integral this and integral that leads to assuming some widespread common understanding of what integral means. While there does seem to be a basic common cognitive knowledge of the main aspects of integral theory, what it means to apply the theory (let alone naturally embody an integral consciousness) is at best a project just beginning, and at worst a rationalization for private agendas. This state of affairs makes for a broad spectrum of offerings on the subject. For my part, in this article I will present observations on my experience with both integral theory and leadership theory, and speculate on implications that have emerged for me. I have engaged in an ongoing personal inquiry in both of these areas, and it is my hope that these reflections will open up space for the inquiry of others as well.

So why do I care enough to write about this? As I think back, I realize that there has been a thread, or trajectory in my life that has brought me to pursuing this question. Early on in life I was exposed to notions of leadership somewhat indirectly. I grew up on a farm, and my father was involved in agricultural politics, as well as some local church leadership issues. I seldom witnessed any of this activity directly, but it did seem to seep into the implicit context informing my early development. Looking back on early experiences with friends and neighbors, at school and so on, I can see how I wrestled in my own way with a question – how could groups of people accomplish things together?

Of course at such an early age the ways of doing such things was implicit for me. As I matured and had children, I came to be more involved in community activities, especially around their education. I found myself in positions of leadership, not from seeking them, but because nobody else seemed interested, or able to do the job. Experiences like these led me to begin questioning why others seemed confounded by the demands of such positions.



Eventually, such questions led me to the formal academic study of leadership. My involvement in community activities (I never actually worked in a business or organization) continued to reveal that people tended to operate from levels of consciousness inadequate for the situation. My formal study of leadership confirmed this, and also began to reveal a way to deal with the situation as I read of attempts to cultivate leadership.

Concurrent with this trajectory in my life was another one, and I have only recently been able to begin consciously integrating the two. I recall an evening conversation with a friend when I was 19. In the course of our discussion of esoteric topics, he stated that he wanted the ability to bend spoons psychically like Uri Geller. This drew out of me a response that I wanted the ability to change consciousness. While it has taken decades to realize the implications of that unanticipated pronouncement, it reflected a deep drive within me. It led to taking up a spiritual practice and eventually to pursuing a concurrent academic agenda (along with my course work in leadership studies) in the field of consciousness studies. My dissertation research (on *The Consciousness of Transpersonal Leadership*) began an attempt to integrate these threads, and has informed my understanding of the relevant issues in leadership and in integral theory.

In the course of my studies, I came across integral theory as a comprehensive framework for understanding the context for what I been learning and experiencing. For instance, I had wondered how to understand the seemingly competing truths of various theories on leadership over the last hundred years. I wanted to see the complexity of thought that has emerged as a coherent whole. I also wondered how the implications of a spiritual or transpersonal perspective could become meaningful and relevant in the context of figuring out how people could accomplish things together. It is these questions that will guide my reflections in this article.

To provide a snapshot of how I view these questions today, I will lay out what I view as the essential elements of integral theory, my thoughts on the development of leadership theory in this context, and then make a distinction between integrally informed and integral leadership in order to try and sort out what is integral about leadership. In making this distinction, I hope to find a useful way to distinguish why I would talk about integral leadership apart from all of the other ways of discussing it.

## Integral Theory

Integral theory has as its goal to contextualize the “truth” about everything – that is, to show the domain of validity of any theory – its truth and its limitations, as well as the relationship of the theory to other theories.

“An integral vision” - or a genuine Theory of Everything - attempts to include matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit as they appear in self, culture, and nature. A vision that attempts to be comprehensive, balanced, inclusive. A vision that therefore embraces science, art, and morals; that equally includes disciplines from physics to spirituality, biology to aesthetics, sociology to contemplative prayer; that show up in integral politics, integral medicine, integral business, integral spirituality. (Wilber, 2000b. p. xii)

Grounded in the work of Ken Wilber and those who have influenced his work (such as Jean Gebser, James Mark Baldwin, Jurgen Habermas, Abraham Maslow and Sri Aurobindo), it seeks a level of integration that has historically played out in debates between competing points of view. This is as true for the field of leadership theory as it is in hard sciences such as physics, or in the social sciences.

It is this capacity of integral theory to contextualize things, place them in a framework, that has been most useful for me as I have endeavored to understand the questions articulated above. I have found great value in the recognition of integral theory (in a way similar to post-modernism) that everyone is in some way right in their view. This validation of multiple truths has enabled me to hold my relationship to others with a more humble attitude. At the same time, knowing that each view also has its limitations, that all truths are not *equally* right, (not as present in post-modernism) has helped me understand, in very specific ways, how and why some views are more useful than others in a given context.

A core aspect of integral theory that resonates with me is how Wilber's conception of it is guided by a fundamental principle of wholeness. For me, this wholeness represents a transrational way of framing things. Gebser's (1985) notion of integral consciousness as being a "world[view] (that) goes *beyond our conceptualization*" (emphasis in the original, p. 267) points clearly to its being beyond our rational analytical mode of knowing the world. My experiences from spiritual practice, research in transpersonal areas of consciousness studies and psychology, as well as studies in hermeneutics and quantum physics have all reinforced and validated this view of the fundamental nature of wholeness.

To look more closely at integral theory I will focus on three fundamental aspects of the model that have been useful to me; the four quadrant model, levels or stages of development, and lines or streams of development.

## The Four Quadrant Model

In my life I have encountered many varied points of view, most of which do not tend to agree with mine. At the same time I often perceive an underlying commonality in experience with others. As I struggled to understand why this was the case, coming across this aspect of Wilber's articulation of integral theory was very useful. With the four quadrant model, I could see how others were tending to emphasize different aspects of the wholeness of their experience in perception. This model shows that any phenomenon can be characterized along a pair of axes, a continuum between poles of internal and external aspects, as well as individual or collective aspects. Table 1 shows how these four quadrants map out the different domains.

The upper left hand quadrant covers the interior individual aspects of experience, and are intentional. This quadrant includes areas of study such as psychology. The lower left hand quadrant covers the interior collective aspects, and describes the cultural world space, and includes the interpersonal domain of relationships. The upper right hand quadrant covers the exterior individual, and is behavioral in its focus. It also covers the physical sciences such as physics, chemistry, geology etc. Finally, the lower right hand quadrant is the exterior collective, or social system, and includes approaches like sociology.

**Table 1:** The Four Quadrant Model  
(Adapted from Wilber, 2000)

	<b>Interior</b>	<b>Exterior</b>
<b>Individual</b>	Intentional	Behavioral
<b>Collective</b>	Cultural	Social

The holistic principle underlying the integral model shows up here as a fundamental inter-connectedness. Wilber (1996) notes that "a pathology, a 'sickness,' in any quadrant will reverberate through all four quadrants, because every holon has these four facets to its being" (p. 138). An example he gives is of a society with

slave wages for dehumanizing labor (lower right quadrant), reflecting in low self-esteem for laborers (upper left quadrant), and corresponding dysfunctions in brain chemistry (upper right quadrant), leading to alcohol abuse becoming institutionalized (lower left quadrant). Thus a dysfunction that shows up most prominently in any one quadrant is also present in the entire system.

## Levels or Stages of Development

The most helpful aspect of integral theory for me has been the concept of stages of development. Having a way to clearly distinguish stages of the evolution of a host of aspects of human nature (more on this in the next section) has enabled me to make coherent meaning out of previously baffling experiences. It has also helped me work more effectively with other people, taking into account how to communicate in ways that will make sense for them at a given stage of development.

Developmentalism is a key element of integral theory. The process of development is one of a fusion or identification with one level, a differentiation from or transcendence of that level, and an integration and inclusion of the new level. This process, while fluid, tends to stabilize or center itself around definite stages, or levels that are clearly recognizable. A number of theorists have set out models of development, based on extensive research, that Wilber has drawn on for his integral model. While there are differences in the number of stages listed in some models, and differences in terms of what lines of development is being looked at (ego, cognitive, moral, emotional, spiritual etc.), there is remarkable similarity in the overall patterns discerned by researchers.

A good description of the process of how our self sense develops comes from Robert Kegan (1994, 1982). Kegan describes how two basic personality structures relate to each other as development evolves. One structure is our sense of self as an object, something which one can consciously examine, suspend, or have a relationship with. The other is our sense of self as subject, or the structure from which we construct order from experience. The relationship between the subject and object fluctuates. Overall, this relationship is dynamic and evolving continuously in various dimensions. Within this dynamic evolution, there are periods of relative stability during which the self has a period of identification with each level, or order, of consciousness.

Subject-object relations emerge out of a life-long process of development; a succession of qualitative differentiations of the self from the world, with a qualitatively more extensive object with which to be in relation created each time; a natural history of qualitatively better guarantees to the world of its distinctiveness; successive triumphs of 'relationship to' rather than 'embeddedness in.' (Kegan, 1982. p. 77)

This qualitative differentiation allows for distinct qualities and characteristics to be recognized as gains of each level. The "more extensive object" that we gain the capacity to be in relationship to at each level continually enlarges our capacities for acting in the world.

An example of a developmental model that illustrates this process comes from Bill Torbert (2004). His research has identified eight distinct levels of development, or what he calls action-logics. At each level, a new organizing principle, or action-logic emerges as the self as subject from which one makes meaning and order out of experience. What had previously been the operating logic of the self as subject at the previous level is now a self as object, or an object of

reflection, governed by the new operating principle. Thus the development of each stage transcends and includes what came before.

One begins at the impulsive level, where impulses rule behavior. At the second level, needs rule impulses, making an object out of what was the self as subject. At the third level, norms from society rule needs. At the fourth level a person has the norms of society as an object, and is ruled by a craft logic, or expert mentality. A person moves to level five when the self as subject operates through system effectiveness, and has craft logic as an object to relate to. Level six brings a capacity for reflexive awareness that rules the need for system effectiveness. At level seven, a self-amending principle rules reflexive awareness, and at level eight, process (an interplay of principle and action) rules over the self amending principle. From these descriptions, the “more extensive object” Kegan talks about is illustrated through the progressive expansion of what one is capable of having a relationship to rather than being embedded in.

## Lines or Streams of Development

I noted above that the concept of developmental stages applies multiple aspects, or lines of human nature. In each of these lines, also sometimes described as streams of development, the process of evolving from simple to more complex relationships to these aspects of our human existence is similar to the one described for our self sense. Examples of other lines of development are intellectual, emotional, relational, spiritual, ethical, aesthetic, physical. Note that these relate to the individual quadrants, internal and external, the latter since there are corresponding behaviors associated with the internal streams. Thus the “the *overall self*, then, is an amalgam of all these ‘selves’ insofar as they are present in you right now . . . all of them are important for understanding the development or evolution of consciousness.” (Wilber, 2000a. p. 34)

One implication of differentiating the various streams of development is that it helps us understand how we can be at different levels of development in different areas of our lives. We can have very well developed intellectual capacity, with poor moral development. Or we can have high levels of emotional and interpersonal development, but have stunted spiritual development. A central line of development is that of consciousness. My early interest in working with consciousness and my later formal study of the subject makes it is worth explicit attention on its own.

## Consciousness

Consciousness is a core aspect of integral theory. Consciousness is seen as a fundamental component of reality by many researchers in fields like transpersonal psychology, quantum physics, and even leadership. Debashis Chatterjee (1998) notes that consciousness is not the result of processes in the human brain, but rather “an integral, unchanging entity characterized by the qualities of wholeness and indivisibility” that orchestrates all of the complex tasks of the human brain. In this context, even our self sense, or identity, is shaped by our level of consciousness.

Chatterjee goes on to explain that while;

there can be various states of consciousness, . . . these different states do not alter the fundamental nature of consciousness. . . it is not consciousness that changes, but it is our

way of becoming conscious that changes from one human being to another. (Chatterjee, 1998, pp. 35-6)

This reflects the self's personal *experience of* consciousness as changing, contrasted with the impersonal *nature of* consciousness itself as unchanging.

One way Wilber describes the developmental levels of consciousness is in terms of a ladder, with the rungs representing the different levels, or stages of consciousness. First, the rungs themselves represent the various levels of consciousness as fulcrums, or centers of gravity in the stages of consciousness. It is the self sense, identity, or ego, that climbs the ladder. This self has complex levels of development within itself, but tends to be centered around one particular rung at any given time. As this self climbs the rungs on the ladder, it gains a perspective, or world view corresponding to that rung. Thus there is the ladder, the self that climbs the ladder, and the world view from each rung.

### **Consciousness and Leadership**

The intersection of consciousness with leadership is where the trajectories of my own life have come together. In doing my dissertation research, I came across a number of authors who had undertaken similar lines of inquiry. Chatterjee (1998) goes on to say that "leadership is not a science or an art, it is a state of consciousness" and that "we can now begin to grasp the phenomenon of leadership as the field of awareness rather than a personality trait or mental attribute" (p. 24). Harald Harung (1999) has done studies of leadership based on Transcendental Meditation. Harung's primary principle is "that how people perform, individually and collectively, is fundamentally controlled by one factor – human development" (p. 7)

In a study of world class leaders, Harung, Heaton, Graff, and Alexander (1995) describe how peak performance was related to experiences of higher states of consciousness. Findings showed that, compared to people in a normal population, a significantly higher percentage of world class performers had frequent experiences of higher states of consciousness. Descriptions of these experiences also listed heightened awareness as the major focal point. Harung et al. also noted a generalizability of peak performance to a wider range of activities, indicating that these higher states of consciousness were not tied to specific forms of activity or training.

Torbert's work, described earlier, provides another example of the relationship between consciousness development and leadership capacity. A long term study done by Torbert and associates clearly showed that the success of organizational transformation efforts was dependent upon the level of consciousness of leadership. In order to handle the complexity of change required for organizational transformation today, a level seven consciousness was required in CEOs.

These few examples of the centrality of consciousness to both integral theory and leadership point to the seeds of an integral approach to leadership that will be discussed later. In some ways they represent the result of a century of thought on the subject of leadership.

## **A Brief History of Leadership Theory**

The brief introductory overview of integral theory provided above follows one of the main trajectories of inquiry in my life, the development of consciousness. The other main trajectory has been around understanding leadership. As I have moved along this trajectory, a question that has arisen for me is; how did leadership theory get to the place where it is beginning to take an

integral perspective? This section will follow this question by examining some of the main themes of leadership theory over the last century. Along the way I will apply the integral framework to the different theories. While there are many attempts to synthesize current and historical understandings of leadership, they often attempt this integration from the same level of consciousness as the theories they are integrating. This leads to a lack of perspective essential to the integration. Applying an integral framework to an examination of leadership can provide the necessary meta-perspective to move beyond current theories towards pointing out what an integral approach to leadership might look like.

## **An Integral Perspective on Leadership Theory Development**

The four quadrant model of the integral framework can provide a useful way to look at how tensions in leadership theory development have emerged over time. The fundamental holistic principle underlying the integral perspective reminds me not to fit theories neatly within a quadrant. Instead, I have come to recognize that they represent lenses that frame our perception along certain lines. Actual experience always encompasses all four quadrants. Thus in leadership studies, the lens of leader's character and traits emphasize the upper left quadrant, or the intentional realm. Leader behavior and style shifts attention towards the upper right, or behavior quadrant. Cultural issues such as role expectations, implicit or explicit group norms and values are the focus attention of the lower left or cultural quadrant, and organizational structure issues generally emphasize the lower right, or social quadrant.

Examining the history of leadership theory along the axes of the four quadrant model, I see a tension between internal aspects of leadership, seen in areas such as traits and qualities on the individual side, and culture and communication on the collective side, with external aspects such as skills and behaviors for the individuals, and organizational structure and position for the collective. Also, there is a tension along the vertical axis that runs from the individual or agency aspect of leadership at the top to the communal or collective aspect at the bottom. This continuum is seen clearly in the history of leadership theory. There is a fundamental tension between the effect and role of the individual and the effect and role of a host of other factors including followers and their relationship to leadership, as well as to the context, situation, or environment.

### **Trait Theory**

A hundred years ago, the value of the individual and the role of groups were hotly debated. While followers of Marx pointed to economic and social class factors in the progression of society, and followers of Darwin looked to the nature of biology as a determining factor, William James was defending "the notion that individual human beings can and do make a difference in the course of history" (Harter, 2003. p. 4) and that the study of such individuals is a valuable contribution to leadership.

This set the stage for some of the first systematic attempts to study leadership in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and contributed to the development of a trait oriented theory. Trait theory is also known as the "Great Man" theory, or the heroic model of leadership. It posited that by identifying the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great social, political, and military leaders, one could find appropriate kinds of people to hold the reigns of power. (Northouse, 2001) This theory focused leadership almost exclusively in the upper left quadrant, with it being about individuals and their innate, intentional qualities and characteristics.

## **Style Theory**

As time went on and people examined the trait approach to leadership theory and application, its limits became more apparent. For one thing, the growth of business in North America and elsewhere led to an increasing need for people in positions of management that entailed leadership capabilities, and there were not enough “Great Men” to go around. Thus there was a shift in emphasis in leadership theory from the “Great Man” personality trait that was innate, to the need to see leadership in terms of styles of personality and behavior that could be learned. This moved leadership theory into a focus on the upper right quadrant.

The style approach to leadership conceptualizes leadership as a “form of activity” and focuses on what leaders do and how they act. This includes the actions of leaders toward subordinates in various contexts (Northouse, 2001). A limitation of this shift in perspective from an integral view is that it fragmented leadership theory by not connecting the interior trait aspects of leadership with the exterior behavioral aspects.

As the style approach was developed over time, it identified two broad categories of leader behavior; task and relationship, expanding attention into the lower right quadrant as well as the upper right. Several important studies done in the 50's and 60's (e.g. Ohio State, Blake and Mouton) examined ways leaders mixed task and relationship to create a particular leadership style. This move into the relational aspects was also influenced by the concurrent growth of group dynamics approaches to leadership.

## **Group Dynamics Theory**

While this move from trait to style still primarily focused on the individual, others were looking at the role of group dynamics in leadership, moving down the vertical axis into the collective domain. A definition that emerged in the 1930's stated that “Leadership is personality in action under group conditions. . . . It is also a social process” (Rost, 1991. p. 47). Rost describes how during the 30's the influence of sociologists recognized that leadership had a huge relational aspect – that leaders did not lead in a vacuum, but that they were dependent on the group. This group dynamic view of leadership continued to gain prominence during the 40's and 50's, in part fueled by the impact of the famous Hawthorne studies.

## **Situational Leadership Theory**

As the study of leadership progressed, the limitations of trying to explain all leadership through theories that emphasized either the individual or the group became apparent to some researchers. Hersey and Blanchard developed the situational approach to leadership theory in the late 60's. This approach was based on the premise that different situations demand different kinds of leadership (Northouse, 2001). In the situational approach, a leader assesses the development level of subordinates and matches his or her leadership style (a mix of directive and supportive elements) to the subordinates needs in the particular situation. This represents a step towards being more sensitive to the context of leadership, an important integral principle, and indicates beginning to include the lower right quadrant in the picture. It should also be noted that what is meant by development level of followers is not necessarily the same as the levels of development of consciousness used in integral theory, but do represent a line of development, making distinctions between levels of capacity in people.

## Other Theories

Other leadership theories have emerged over the last 30 years or so that looked for ways to better address the increasing complexity of the topic as researchers kept questioning the gaps between existing theories and experience. Contingency theory, similar to situational theory, looked to match the traits of leaders (upper left) with the context (lower right). This theory suggests that a leader's effectiveness depends on how well the leader's style fits the context, and that effective leadership is *contingent* on matching a leader's style to the right setting (Northouse, 2001).

Path-goal theory was the first leadership theory to strongly emphasize the leader/follower relationship through its focus on the level of motivation of the follower (lower left quadrant focus, also introducing a line of development, motivation). This theory was a kind of contingency approach that emphasized the relationship between the leader's style and the characteristics of the subordinates and their work setting (Northouse, 2001). As a style approach (upper right quadrant) rather than a trait approach, it sees that appropriate behaviors can be taught, and is thus less dependent on the traits of the leader and more amenable to training.

The psychodynamic approach is an attempt to explore the emotional factors at play within the leader-follower relationship. This brings another line of development into the picture, and has been developed more recently by Goleman (2002, 1995). From an integral perspective, emotional intelligence makes an important distinction of a key element of the interior aspects of leadership.

Transformational leadership was introduced by Burns (1978) and is concerned with inspiring or motivating followers to achieving higher levels of moral conduct and value based actions. It involved assessing followers' motives, satisfying their motivational needs, and treating them like full human beings. Transformational leadership introduces more lines of development, values and morals, into leadership theory.

Another aspect of an integral view of leadership development is the movement from egocentric views through ethnocentric ones, to worldcentric views. Some of the early trait theories centered on a very egocentric view of leadership. As group dynamic approaches became more popular, the good of the group brought a more ethnocentric view into prominence. An example of a worldcentric approach to leadership can be seen in Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership model, which placed the leader as servant, not primarily of the needs of the individual or company, but of the greater good of humanity. (See review of Greenleaf biography in this issue). Some of this worldcentric level of development can also be seen in transformational leadership.

More recently, there have been a number authors exploring new territory about how to look at leadership and organizations. Most of these new theories have arisen as theorists began to explore more advanced levels of development that recognize a need to respond to the complexity of the post-modern world with new ways of thinking that can meet these challenges. Thinkers such as Margaret Wheatley (1993), Peter Senge (1990, 1999, 2004), Ronald Heifetz (1994, 2002), Debashis Chatterjee (1998), Harald Harung (1999), Dee Hock (1999), Joseph Jaworski (1996), Harrison Owen (2000), Robert Rabbin (1998), Bill Torbert (2004), and Peter Vaill (1996), have all aimed to expand how we view leadership. These explorations have ventured into areas such as consciousness, spirituality, and new scientific theories. They have taken leadership theory into new territory, and help to bridge between older views of leadership and an integral approach to leadership.



## Outlining an Integral Approach to Leadership

Having examined some basic principles of integral theory and then the development of leadership theory over the last century, I now turn to outlining what I perceive as the basic elements of an integral approach to leadership. The various leadership theories just examined cover the broad strokes of the territory for understanding the evolution of thinking on leadership, but none puts them all together. Not only that, none of them is grounded in a meta-framework able to contextualize and understand the value of each aspect of and approach to leadership, as well as their relationships to each other. What further distinguishes an integral perspective on leadership is that it also refers to a very specific set of developmental capacities that transcends how leadership has been seen up until now.

In laying out an integral approach to leadership, I want to distinguish between two variations. One is to talk about an “integrally informed” approach to leadership and its development. The other is to talk about “integral leadership.” The integrally informed approach has a broad appeal, can be used by a wide spectrum of people, and sets the stage for some very strategic approaches to leadership development. Integral leadership in and of itself refers to a very specific level of development and set of capacities being present in a leader.

### Integrally Informed Leadership

In the integrally informed approach, the integral model is utilized by and for leaders across the spectrum of developmental capacities. The advantage this has is that it makes the integral model accessible to those who wish to benefit from its strengths. Strategies for leadership development programs can benefit from understanding the need to address the four quadrants, recognizing specific lines of self that need growth, and tailoring all of this to the levels of development of those in such programs. An example of this is how the U.S. Military Academy at West Point “has updated their curriculum and pedagogy so that it now accounts for a cadet’s level of self-development. . . . awareness of levels is primarily a tool for increasing *instructor* awareness and effectiveness” (Putz and Raynor, 2004. p. 13).

A challenge or drawback of this approach is that the capacity to gain intellectual understanding of the integral model can outstrip the ability to actually engage and act from an integrally informed perspective. Anyone using the integral model will comprehend and act on it in a way that is filtered by the leading edge of their developmental capacity. This can lead to a reduction of the concepts and principles of the integral model. This is further complicated by the issue of disparities in development along different lines within a person. These factors can produce a false sense of having grasped the integral model, and misusing it as a tool to justify actions that are less than integral in their scope or intention.

My own initial encounter with the integral model was of great benefit in understanding one situation in particular. At the time I was finding myself continually at odds with a person from whom I had taken over a leadership position in a small community non-profit organization. When we explored the foundation of our understanding of the mission of our organization, we appeared to see things the same way. Yet when we would act on that understanding, clear differences in interpretation would emerge. This led to constant frustration, and confusion for members of this organization dealing with the discrepancies in action and resulting conflict. For a long time I tried to understand this phenomenon without success, until I read through a section of Wilber’s *Integral Psychology* that described the relationship of different developmental worldviews. A light went on, and I could see how the similar language between us was being

implicitly interpreted and acted upon in very different ways. This insight allowed me to stop banging my head against the proverbial wall, and begin to take a different approach that, while not totally resolving the situation, allowed me to make significant progress.

The integrally informed approach to leadership can make useful distinctions and bring insight into situations. A growing number of programs are utilizing the integral model to guide how they approach leadership development. Notre Dame University's Mendoza College of Business has begun an Executive Integral Leadership Program ([www.nd.edu/~execprog/programs/eilp/](http://www.nd.edu/~execprog/programs/eilp/)). The Leadership Circle ([www.theleadershipcircle.com](http://www.theleadershipcircle.com)) has begun using a 360 assessment tool that is grounded in the integral model. The number of such programs, as well as consultants and businesses that will make use of the integral model is bound to keep rising, as early adopters continue to have success in meeting the complex demands of leadership development today.

The other variation for approaching integral leadership is often viewed as being a more "elite" approach, as it says that integral leadership is not simply about being informed by integral theory, but is about displaying the level of development necessary to perceive and act from an integral place within oneself.

## Integral Leadership

So now I come to the punch line – what's integral about leadership? How does integral leadership distinguish itself from any other kind of leadership? Also, why is it important or even necessary? What can one do as an integral leader that they could not do as any other kind of leader? These are big questions, and to answer them in full is beyond the scope of this article. What I can do is offer a perspective that distinguishes integral leadership in a very specific way, to introduce it as a concept. I can also point to areas for further exploration that take the convergence of these trajectories and project them out. In the end, integral leadership may be both invisible and obvious at the same time. It may exist around or in us, and yet not have the need to appear, or be recognized, unless circumstances elicit it.

To get started, I will draw on a distinction made by Putz and Raynor (2004). They delineate a view of integral leadership in the context of challenges for business to sustain growth in two areas, their existing core business competencies and simultaneously secure future growth through radical innovation that opens up new markets. "We call the ability to manage through paradox – to navigate the apparent irreconcilable demands of creating a sustainable growth business – *Integral leadership*" (p. 2). In examining the essential nature of what is being called for with integral leadership, they say that "the systematic development of the psychological maturity – rather than the intellectual capability" (p. 7) is key to the capacity for integral leadership.

Looking back at the discussion of levels of development, there is clear evidence that this is what is being described as psychological maturity. Kegan's (1994) work identifies five levels of consciousness. Putz and Raynor have adapted this to leadership capacities. Their description provides a specific set of conditions related to an integral consciousness and how it applies to leadership.

**Table 2:** Levels of Self Development and Leadership (Putz and Raynor 2004, with permission)

<b>Level of Self Development</b>	<b>Subjective Self-Understanding</b>	<b>Leadership Strengths</b>	<b>Leadership Weaknesses</b>
1) Impulsive	"I" am my impulses (like a very young child) and unable to take the perspective of others	None	Leaders not found at this level of development
2) Egocentric	"I" am my needs and desires -able to manage my impulses and to take the perspective of others, but motivated solely by my own needs and desires	Aggressive, "can do" personality	Destructive to teamwork and initiative ("my way or the highway")
3) Interpersonal	"I" am defined by my relationships and social roles – what is "right" is defined by rules, regulations and proper authority (chain of command)	Strong team player and supporter of organizational vision	Independent thinking, mediating competing relationship demands, e.g., boss, family, subordinates
4) Autonomous	"I" create my own identity, inclusive of but not defined by my roles, relationships and the expectations of others	Better able to take independent action and mediate competing relationship demands, e.g., boss, subordinates	Rigid self-identity that is associated with current success and threatened by fundamental change
5) Integral	"I" am a continually evolving person who is <i>aware</i> of development in myself and others; "I" have a flexible sense of identity that embraces complexity and paradox on a personal level (not just intellectually) but nevertheless has clear values and boundaries	More adaptive to fundamental change without threat to personal identity; better able to support the self-development of others, and understand oneself in a multi-paradigmatic way	Flexible self-identity may be confusing or threatening to subordinates; might push others to grow before they are ready

Putz and Raynor note that "an Integral leader is able to objectively assess how one's own identity tends to be formed within the frame of a true but partial paradigm and is more capable of evolving their sense of self-identity as required in the face of paradoxical change" (p. 11). This capacity to reframe identity is one way in which integral leadership sets itself apart from other kinds of leadership. This ability also only emerges in specific circumstances, with the above example from the world of business describing the paradoxical nature of such circumstances. These paradoxical circumstances are such that other levels of leadership are not able to meet the challenge, making integral leadership necessary in order to be successful.

When conditions of this nature arise, they are in essence asking a leader to be of two minds, literally, in order to manage the paradox. A leader will need to operate from a level five (See Table 2) consciousness, and choose to construct an appropriate identity, or mind, for operating in each pole of the paradox. An identity, or mind, will be constructed (utilizing a level four consciousness as a tool, or an object of reflection) with specific capacities, tendencies and strengths to engage the world, chosen for best dealing the particular pole of the paradox it is designed for. The leader will then construct another mind with the same process to deal with the other pole of the paradoxical situation. They will then be “of two minds” which can be confusing for those working closely with them! Yet it is this very capacity that is essential to handling the level of complexity brought about by the paradoxical situation.

This ability to be of two minds elicits a question. Who or what is choosing the design and doing the operating of those minds? This question speaks to the heart of the notion of integral consciousness. The lead article in this issue of *Integral Review* discusses Jean Gebser's opening of the integral paradigm, and he is quoted as characterizing the difficulties in representing integral by saying that “this world[view] goes *beyond our conceptualization*” (1985. p. 267). In turn, this leads into transpersonal realms, and notions of the soul. The burning question for me then becomes, what is the nature of this transpersonal beingness, and how does it show up at all of these different levels of consciousness, in leadership, and in our everyday lives?

## Conclusion, or at least a pause for now

I now come to the end of this article, and pause to summarize where I have been and where it might lead. Writing this article has enabled me to reflect on two major trajectories in my life – leadership and consciousness. Excursions into the realms of integral theory and the history of leadership theory provided the background in these areas, and led to looking at their convergence in the notion of integral leadership. The question that titles this article, what's integral about leadership, now has the beginnings of a provisional answer. Fleshing out this answer is a subject for future consideration, as is the relationship between transpersonal consciousness to leadership.

So is there something to all the buzz about integral you name it? I find myself of two minds on the question. When I delve into the heart of the issue, I feel that yes, there is something of inestimable value behind the buzz. When I encounter it in the world, whether in application, discussion, or debate, I am not always so inclined to give my hearty approval. This could mean that we are all simply in the early stages of moving into this paradigm, and have not yet distinguished clear markers of its presence. It could at the same time reflect my own struggle to manifest a self in the world in an integral way. These are open questions for me, and reflections on these and other such questions will have to await a future issue of *Integral Review*.

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*Jonathan Reams, Ph.D. is a Director of the Institute for Transformative Leadership ([www.transform.bc.ca](http://www.transform.bc.ca)), on the board of directors of ARINA, and co-editor of Integral Review. He was born in 1960, and his path in life has taken him through farming and trucking to a degree in Leadership Studies. He spends his most of his time now doing consulting and training work in organizational development and leadership.*

*Box 127*

*Balfour, BC*

*Canada*

*Email: [Jonathan@Reams.com](mailto:Jonathan@Reams.com)*

# Ein Integraler Gestalt-Ansatz für Therapie und Beratung

Reinhard Fuhr und Martina Gremmler-Fuhr

**Zusammenfassung:** In diesem Text stellen wir unseren Ansatz für Psychotherapie und Beratung auf dem Hintergrund des integralen Paradigmas dar. Wir erläutern zunächst kurz vier Anforderungen an ein integrales Konzept in diesem professionellen Bereich: Umgang mit Komplexität und Vielperspektivität, Berücksichtigung gerichteter, vieldimensionaler Entwicklung, Orientierungs- und Sinngebungsfunktion, Realisierung relationaler Qualitäten in der Arbeit. Nach einer Begriffsbestimmung von „Therapie“, „Beratung“ und „Bildung“ charakterisieren wir das seit vielen Jahren von uns entwickelte Konzept für den Integralen Gestalt-Ansatz unter den Fragen nach (1) den Intentionen und Aufgaben von Therapie und Beratung, (2) der Gestaltung der Kommunikation und Beziehung, (3) der Art der Problemdefinition und dem Umgang mit Diagnostik sowie (4) den Strategien und Methoden - alle unter Rückkopplung an die zuvor erläuterten Anforderungen an ein integrales Konzept.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Psychotherapie, Beratung, intentionaler Dialog, Gesprächszyklus, Beziehung, holarchische Entwicklung, Phänomenologie, Hermeneutik, Problemidentifikation, Diagnostik

**Abstract:** In this text we present our approach to psychotherapy and counselling on the background of the integral paradigm. We shortly explain four major requirements for such an integral concept: handling complexity and multi-perspectivity, considering directed and multi-dimensional development, offering orientation and meaning, relational qualities. After defining the terms „psychotherapy“, „counselling“, and „education“ we present our concept for the Integral Gestalt Approach which we have developed and evaluated for many years by dealing with four questions: (1) the intentions and tasks of therapy and counselling, (2) the formation of communication and relationship, (3) the specific way of defining problems and using diagnostics, and (4) the strategies and methods - all related back to the major requirements of an integral concept.

**Key words:** therapy, counselling, intentional dialogue, cycle of contact, relationship, holarchical development, phenomenology, hermeneutics, disidentification, problem identification, diagnostics.

## Eine paradigmatische und gesellschaftliche Herausforderung

Eine immer unübersichtlicher und komplexer werdende Welt stellt uns vor neue Herausforderungen und Orientierungsprobleme. Deshalb wachsen gleichzeitig auch der Bedarf und das Angebot an Therapie und Beratung. Dieses psychosoziale Feld ist jedoch selbst nicht weniger komplex und unübersichtlich. Als schon seit vielen Jahren praktisch tätige Berater und Psychotherapeuten und im akademischen Bereich Forschende und Lehrende forderte uns dies heraus, nach neuen Möglichkeiten der Orientierung und Konzeptentwicklung zu suchen. Jede dieser neueren Beratungs- und Therapieschulen und Ansätze wie klientenzentrierte, systemische, hu-

manistisch-psychologische sowie ressourcen- und lösungsorientierte Beratung und Therapie fanden wir zwar interessant und hilfreich, aber sie blieben auch immer etwas schuldig: sie betonen bestimmte Aspekte - und vernachlässigen andere. Auch die Versuche „integrativer“ Ansätze haben uns insofern nicht überzeugen können, als sie zwar oft theoretisch oder forschungsmäßig gut begründet sind (Grawe 1995, Petzold 1998), aber die zugrunde liegenden Paradigmen entweder nicht ausreichend mitreflektiert werden, oder sie mit den philosophischen und meta-theoretischen Grundannahmen des Integralen Paradigmas nur teilweise vereinbar sind.

Solche Grundannahmen konnten wir schließlich selbst auf der Grundlage der Philosophie von Jean Gebser, der Synopse vieler Entwicklungstheorien durch Ken Wilber sowie der Theorie der Gestalttherapie zusammenstellen und in langjähriger Praxiserfahrung und eigenen Forschungen weiterentwickeln.<sup>1</sup> Es war und ist immer noch ein intensiver Prozess der philosophischen und (meta-)theoretischen Reflexion, der Praxiserprobung und eigener (Selbst-)Erfahrungen - und dies im ständigen Wechselspiel -, was uns schließlich zu dem hier in aller Kürze dargestellten Konzept geführt hat. Dabei werden wir zunächst vier grundlegende Anforderungen an den Ansatz formulieren und dann das eigentliche Praxiskonzept unter vier Fragenkomplexen darstellen.

## Anforderungen an das integrale Praxiskonzept

Die Anforderungen an unser Praxiskonzept für den Integralen Gestalt-Ansatz für Therapie und Beratung (meist zu „Ansatz“ oder „Integraler Ansatz“ gekürzt) möchten wir zu vier Komplexen bündeln:<sup>2</sup>

1. *Umgang mit Komplexität, Vielperspektivität und Widersprüchlichkeit*: Dies sind wesentliche Herausforderungen unserer Zeit, nicht nur im beruflichen und persönlichen Alltag, sondern auch durch die exponentielle Zunahme an Informationen, Erkenntnissen, technischen Möglichkeiten und Entscheidungsalternativen. Die Aufgabe des Ansatzes muss daher auf konzeptioneller ebenso wie auf praktischer Ebene Antworten geben auf Fragen wie: „Wie können wir in der komplexen, oft verwirrenden Welt zurecht kommen?“ oder „Wie komme ich mit den vielen Widersprüchen in der Welt und in meinem Umfeld klar?“ und „Welche persönlichen, ethischen sowie politischen Entscheidungssituationen ergeben sich daraus?“ Gleichzeitig müssen wir immer wieder sinnvolle Formen der Reduktion dieser Komplexität und Widersprüchlichkeit finden, zumal wir nicht mehr zu eindimensionalen Ursachenerklärungen wie in früheren Zeiten zurückkehren können.
2. *Gerichtete, vieldimensionale Entwicklung über die gesamten Lebenszyklen*: Diese ist heute in einer Weise möglich, die in der Vergangenheit nur einzelnen Menschen offen stand, und auch nicht unbedingt erforderlich war. In individueller, gemeinschaftlicher, ökologischer und

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<sup>1</sup> Siehe hierzu „Veröffentlichungen“ unter [www.gestaltzentrum.de](http://www.gestaltzentrum.de).

<sup>2</sup> Ausführlicher hierzu in Fuhr & Gremmler 2004 und [www.integrale-studien.de](http://www.integrale-studien.de). Anregungen zur Formulierung dieser Anforderungen und zum Textentwurf insgesamt verdanken wir auch Thomas Jordan (siehe den Leitartikel in diesem Heft).



politischer Hinsicht scheint sie heute jedoch mehr denn je zwingend notwendig zu sein, wenn wir den Herausforderungen der Gegenwart und Zukunft auch nur ansatzweise gerecht werden wollen.<sup>3</sup>

Diese Art der Entwicklung kann aber nicht nach überkommenen linearen Denkweisen konzipiert werden, sie muss der Komplexität und Vielschichtigkeit Rechnung tragen. Darüber hinaus ist Entwicklung als *gerichtete Entwicklung* hin zu größerer Vielfalt, Komplexität und Einheitlichkeit zu verstehen; gleichwohl kann sie nicht *determiniert werden*, ist also letztlich immer *ergebnisoffen*. Bei dieser Entwicklung spielen überdies eine Vielzahl von Dimensionen des Menschseins eine Rolle.

3. *Orientierung und Sinngebung*: Ein Integrales Praxiskonzept muss in der in jeder Hinsicht unübersichtlichen Welt Angebote der Orientierung und Sinngebung in allen wichtigen Lebensbereichen machen können, ohne auf allzu konventionelle Glaubenssysteme zurückgreifen zu müssen. Dies betrifft also etwa Berufsfindungs- und Neuorientierungsprozesse ebenso wie ökonomische Formen oder Partnerschaftsmodelle und Lebensziele sowie existenzielle Entscheidungsprozesse.
4. *Realisierung der Beziehungsqualitäten alles Lebendigen*: Es wird zunehmend deutlicher, dass jeder Einzelne, jede Gemeinschaft und Nation in ein Kommunikations- und Beziehungsgeflecht eingebunden ist, und dass jede (neue) Technologie und praktische Entscheidung oft unüberschaubare Konsequenzen für den jeweiligen engeren und weiteren Kontext hat.<sup>4</sup> Ein Integrales Konzept muss daher neue Modelle für zwischenmenschliche Austauschprozesse und Beziehungsentwicklung anregen. Hierzu können wir auf vielfältige Konzepte aus der dialogischen und systemischen Tradition, u.a. der Gestalttherapie, zurückgreifen, diese weiterentwickeln und integrieren.

Diese generellen Anforderungen schlagen sich auf vielfältige Weise im Praxiskonzept des Ansatzes nieder, wie wir beispielhaft verdeutlichen werden. Beginnen wir aber zunächst mit einigen Anmerkungen zu den Begriffen "Beratung", "Therapie" und „Pädagogik“ aus einer Integralen Perspektive.

### **“Therapie”, “Beratung” und “Pädagogik”**

In einer Welt vernetzenden und ganzheitlichen Denkens ist es nicht so leicht, klar zwischen Beratung, Therapie und beratenden Tätigkeiten im Rahmen von Bildungsarbeit zu unterscheiden, wie dies in vielen professionellen und öffentlichen Kontexten üblich ist und gefordert wird. In all diesen Settings geht es darum, dass Einzelne, Gruppen und andere soziale oder organisationale Einheiten durch „Experten“ unterschiedlicher Art in ihren Anliegen, Herausforderungen, Problemen und Schwierigkeiten sowie bei ihren Entwicklungsinteressen angeleitet und unterstützt werden. Die Experten übernehmen dabei spezielle Aufgaben und Funktionen, für die sie qualifiziert sind. Natürlich unterscheiden sich die Anforderungen und professionellen Kompetenzen, je nachdem, ob die Experten mit Menschen mit schwerwiegenden psychischen und so-

<sup>3</sup> Siehe hierzu z.B. Laszlo (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Siehe auch hierzu z.B. Laszlo (2004).

zialen Problemen arbeiten, oder ob sie eine Abteilung in einem Produktionsbetrieb umstrukturieren helfen, oder ob sie Schülern bei der Lösung von Mathematikaufgaben helfen. Diese unterschiedlichen Anforderungen und Kompetenzen stellen jedoch ein Kontinuum dar, das beispielsweise von der Klärung sachlicher und fachlicher Probleme bis hin zur Arbeit mit tiefgehenden psychischen Beeinträchtigungen einzelner Personen reichen kann. Aber die Beschäftigung mit einem sachbezogenen Thema kann rasch zu biographisch bedingten Problemen hinführen und umgekehrt. Da kommt es dann nicht nur auf die jeweiligen Kompetenzen des Experten an, sondern auch auf den Vertrag zwischen ihm und den Klienten, der mit darüber entscheidet, wie weit man sich einlässt und wo Grenzen gezogen werden sollen. Trotzdem sind die Grenzen zwischen Therapie, Beratung und Pädagogik oder Erwachsenenbildung fließend, auch wenn die Vorstellung, dass Lehrende in Bildungsinstitutionen sich auch oder vielleicht sogar in erster Linie als Berater verstehen müssten, ähnlich ungewohnt ist wie die, dass Beratung und Therapie als eine besonders intensive und nachhaltige Form des Lernens verstanden werden könnte.

Aus all diesen Gründen scheint es uns gerechtfertigt zu sein, ein Basiskonzept für Therapie *und* Beratung einschließlich aller beratenden Aufgaben in Bildungszusammenhängen zu entwerfen. Auf diesem Basiskonzept können dann Spezialisierungen für unterschiedliche professionelle Felder mit unterschiedlichen Aufgaben und Anforderungen aufgebaut werden. Die professionellen Funktionsträger (Berater, Therapeuten, Dozenten etc.) nennen wir dabei einheitlich "Mentoren", diejenigen, für die die Dienste der Mentoren in Anspruch nehmen, bezeichnen wir durchgängig als "Klienten", und wir meinen in jedem Fall Personen beiderlei Geschlechts oder auch Gruppen und andere soziale Einheiten.

Dieses Basiskonzept für soll anhand von vier Fragenkomplexen erörtert werden (siehe auch Abb. 3):

1. Intention und Aufgabe des Ansatzes,
2. Kommunikations- und Beziehungsgestaltung zwischen Mentor und Klient sowie die Rollenfunktionen, die jeder der Beteiligten dabei einnehmen kann,
3. Art und Weise der Problembestimmung und Diagnose sowie
4. Strategien und methodische Vorgehensweisen.

Begründet sind die Vorstellungen unseres Praxiskonzepts einerseits in den allgemeinen und speziellen Prämissen und Prinzipien eines Integralen Ansatzes, und andererseits in unseren langjährigen Praxiserfahrungen in Therapie, Beratung und Pädagogik in verschiedenen Berufsfeldern (mit einem Schwerpunkt im Non-Profit-Bereich sowie in Bildungs- und Gesundheitsinstitutionen).

## Das Praxiskonzept

### 1. Intention und Aufgaben

Die Anliegen des Praxiskonzepts für den Integralen Ansatz besteht erst einmal darin, Orientierung, Anregung, Unterstützung und Begleitung bei allen möglichen Herausforderungen und Schwierigkeiten zu bieten. Darüber hinaus geht es aber auch um Lern- und Entwicklungsprozesse, d.h. *lernende Weiterentwicklung* in persönlicher, sozialer, ökologischer, organisationaler oder politischer Hinsicht soll initiiert und unterstützt werden. Eine Notwendigkeit, sich weiter zu entwickeln, wird von den Personen, die Therapie oder Beratung aufsuchen, zwar oft empfunden. Allerdings gehen die Erwartungen meistens in die Richtung von veränderten Verhaltensweisen, neuen Strategien und Problemlösungen, weniger in Richtung grundlegender Veränderungen oder gar krisenhaften Lernprozesse. Trotzdem gehen wir davon aus, dass jedem Menschen und jeder Gemeinschaft auch ein grundlegendes Entwicklungsstreben eigen ist, auch wenn es nicht im Vordergrund des Interesses stehen mag.

### Polarität des Akzeptierens und Veränderens

Unser Ansatz hat somit eine doppeltes Anliegen, die einen polaren Gegensatz bildet: Zu akzeptieren, was ist, und gleichzeitig grundlegende Veränderungen anzustreben. Die Notwendigkeit zu grundlegender, nachhaltiger Veränderung ist darin begründet, dass sich Schwierigkeiten im Lebensalltag von einzelnen und sozialen Einheiten sehr häufig daraus ergeben, dass alte Gewohnheiten und Muster wirksam werden, die der gegenwärtigen Situation und den neuen Herausforderungen nicht angemessen sind oder sogar destruktiv wirken. Auf gesellschaftlicher und globaler Ebene besteht an dieser Notwendigkeit zu grundlegendem Wandel in den meisten Lebensbereichen eigentlich kein Zweifel mehr, doch diese Einsicht auch auf sich selbst und die eigenen sozialen Bezugsgruppen anzuwenden, scheint sehr viel schwieriger zu sein.

Der Mentor muss sich also einerseits in den Klienten einfühlen, ihn vorbehaltlos unterstützen und Partei für ihn ergreifen, und er muss andererseits als *Change Agent* wirksam werden können. Die meisten Beratungs- und Therapieschulen setzen auf den einen oder anderen Pol, und dies nicht ohne Grund; denn diese Polarität auszubalancieren, ist keine leichte Aufgabe: wir müssen als Mentoren empathisch sein und Verständnis zeigen, gleichzeitig müssen wir uns auch für grundlegende Veränderungen der Reaktions-, Verhaltens-, Beziehungs- und Lebensmuster stark machen. Wenn wir Menschen, die in Schwierigkeiten sind, dabei allerdings mit dem ausdrücklichen oder heimlichen Imperativ entgegentreten, dass sie sich wandeln müssten, provozieren wir leicht Widerstände aller Art.

### Perspektivenwechsel und “dritte Instanz”

Bei diesem Balanceakt hilft das Integrale Prinzip der Vielperspektivität, hier besonders im Hinblick auf die verschiedenen *Bewusstseinsmodi*: es geht darum, sich identifizieren zu können mit der aktuellen Situation und dem eigenen Erleben sowie mit dem des Klienten, dann aber wieder herauszutreten und sich zu disidentifizieren und den Bewusstseinshorizont zu erweitern,

damit die größeren Zusammenhänge, die anderen Parteien in einem Konflikt, die sachlichen Bedingungen und die Prozesse in den Blick kommen, in denen sich die Klienten selbst und auch der Mentor mit den Klienten befinden. Es geht hierbei also nicht nur um den Wechsel der Perspektiven, sondern auch darum, dafür verschiedene Bewusstseinsmodi verfügbar zu haben und diese den Klienten verfügbar machen zu können. Dabei spielt die Fähigkeit zur *Disidentifikation*, das Sich-Lösen aus der unmittelbaren Erfahrung (ohne den emotionalen Kontakt dazu zu verlieren), eine herausragende Rolle.

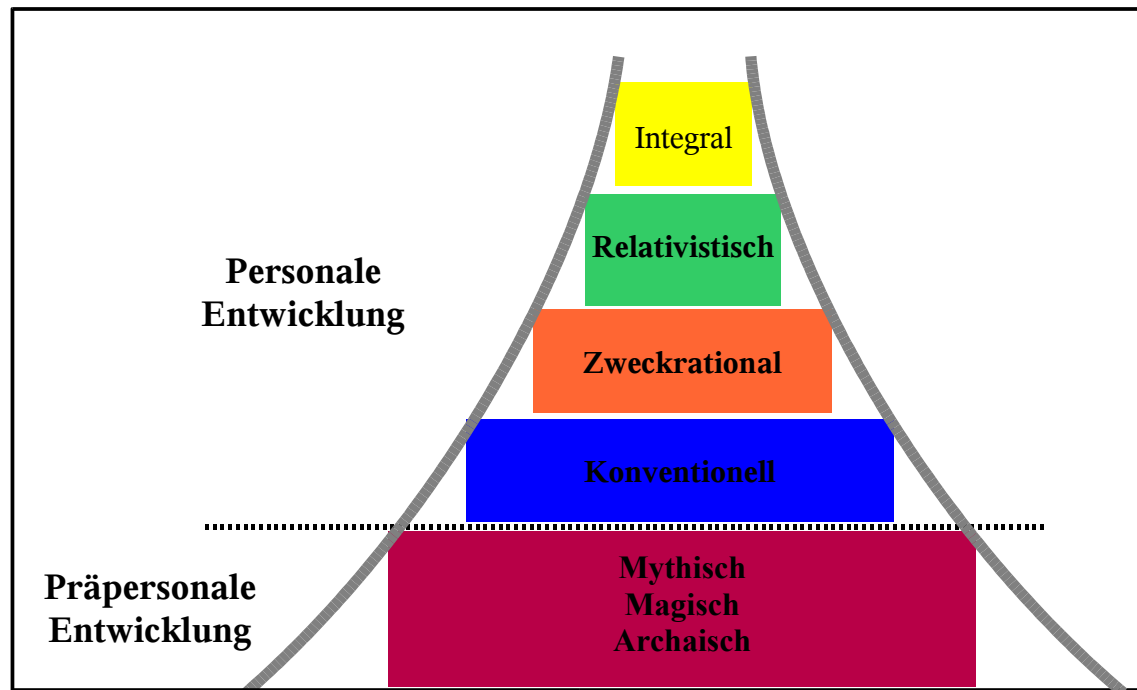
In vielen Traditionen, die sich mit Bewusstseinsentwicklung befassen, wird in diesem Zusammenhang vom *inneren Zeugen* oder auch von der *dritten Instanz* gesprochen. Diese dritte Partei ist akzeptierend und wohlwollend, aber keineswegs unkritisch, sie ist weder verwickelt noch kühl distanziert. Daher kann sie dabei unterstützen, sich immer wieder aus Verstrickungen und Reaktionsbildungen zu lösen und (wieder) Zugang zu erweiterten Sichtweisen, zu Mitgefühl und zu eigenen Ressourcen zu finden. Die dritte Instanz ist also der innere *change agent par excellence*, da er sowohl das, was ist, mitempfindend akzeptieren, als auch für grundlegende Veränderungen die Energie und Richtung vorgeben kann. Ein zentrales Anliegen dieses Ansatzes ist es, dass auch der Mentor den Zugang zu dieser dritten Instanz immer wieder findet, diese Instanz eine Zeitlang für den Klienten übernehmen und dem Klienten selbst Zugang dazu ermöglichen kann.

### Entwicklungsperspektiven

Bei diesen Herausforderungen spielen persönliche und soziale Entwicklungsprozesse neben den sich ständig verändernden materiellen, institutionellen und politischen Bedingungen eine wichtige Rolle. Wir können hier nur auf die vielen Entwicklungsmodelle, die Synthesen von Ken Wilber (z.B. 1996, 2000) oder unsere eigenen Modifikationen und Anwendungen dieser Entwicklungsmodelle auch für den Kontext von Beratung und Therapie hinweisen.<sup>5</sup> Thesenartig zusammengefasst geht es um Folgendes: Die Entwicklung von Personen und sozialen Einheiten vollzieht sich stufenmäßig und in vielen verschiedenen Dimensionen über den gesamten jeweiligen Lebenszyklus. Die Stufen bilden Holarchien: die jeweils höhere Stufe transzendiert und umfasst wesentliche Strukturen der vorhergehenden Stufen. Diese Stufen können als unterschiedliche Paradigmen charakterisiert werden, die trotz aller kulturellen und persönlichen Varianten wesentliche gemeinsame Merkmale aufweisen. So kann man beispielsweise präpersonale Paradigmen von personalen unterscheiden und diese jeweils wieder untergliedern, wie dies auch schon Jean Gebser vollzogen hat: vom Archaischen zum Magischen zum Mythischen zum Rationalen zum Integralen. In Anlehnung an diese paradigmatischen Stufenfolgen von Gebser (1995) und die differenzierteren von Wilber (2000) und in deren Modifikation hat sich nach unseren Erfahrungen die in Abbildung 1 dargestellte Holarchie für die Arbeit mit Erwachsenen sehr bewährt. Für Kinder und Jugendliche und für klinische Zwecke müssen die präpersonalen Stufen sicher weiter differenziert werden, und einige Theoretiker glauben, dass auch der integrale Stufenbereich weiter zu gliedern ist.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Siehe auch den Einführungsartikel in dieser Ausgabe.

<sup>6</sup> Siehe z.B. Daniel Stern (1992) im Hinblick auf das Kinder- und Jugendalter und Commons & Richards (2002) für den Integralen Bereich.



**Abbildung 1:** Fünf Stufen oder Paradigmen der Entwicklung

Dieses Spektrum der Entwicklung kann man unter *verschiedenen Entwicklungsdimensionen* betrachten. So entwickelt sich das *Weltbild* vom Magisch-Mythischen zum Konventionellen, Rational-Erfolgsorientierten und Relativistischen zum Integralen (Abb. 1). Damit wandeln sich auch die *moralischen Einstellungen und Handlungsweisen* vom Ego-Zentrischen und Gruppenbezogenen zum umfassenderen Soziozentrischen hin zum Weltzentrischen und Universellen. Das *Selbstverständnis* entwickelt sich von der starken Selbstbezogenheit der präpersonalen Paradigmen über ein Selbst, das sich vor allem als Rolle in einer überschaubaren Gemeinschaft versteht, über ein sich selbst reflektierendes Selbst, ein sensibles Selbst, das mit möglichst vielen Anderen mitempfindet, bis hin zu einem Selbst, das all diese vorherigen Selbstverständnisse im Wesentlichen integriert hat und jeweils autonome Entscheidungen fällt und verantwortet. Auch die *Denkweisen* wandeln sich in diesem Spektrum der Entwicklung vom vorkausalen zum monokausalen Denken, dem zufolge es nur *eine* richtige Ursache für Probleme gibt, hin zum multikausalen Denken, das mehrere Ursachen anerkennen kann, zum systemischen Denken, bei dem nicht mehr nach einzelnen Ursachen, sondern nach Dynamiken, die bestimmte Probleme hervorbringen, gefragt wird, bis hin zu vernetzendem Denken, das die Verflechtungen vieler solcher Dynamiken und die verbindenden Muster erkennen kann.

Ähnliche Entwicklungsdimensionen können aufgezeigt werden für die Gefühlswelt, das ästhetische Empfinden, das Verständnis von Sexualität und Liebe, von Spiritualität, aber auch für eher kollektive Phänomene wie Kommunikationsweisen, Formen der Beziehungsgestaltung, oder der Lebensgestaltung und der Institutionalisierung.

Da also eine Aufgabe unseres Ansatzes in der Moderation von Entwicklungsprozessen besteht, ist es wichtig für den Mentor, sich zu vergegenwärtigen, in welchem Paradigma er sich selbst und der Klient gerade bewegen. Das schlägt sich nicht nur im Problemverständnis oder im Reflexionsvermögen und in vielem anderen nieder, sondern auch in der Erwartung des Klienten an den Berater. So kann in ihm vor allem der „Helfer in allen Lebenslagen“ gesehen werden, oder jemand, der einen nur unterstützen muss, das eigene Durcheinander zu klären, damit man seine autonome Entscheidungsfähigkeit wiedergewinnt, oder er wird als Begleiter bei grundlegenden krisenhaften Umwälzungsprozessen angesprochen usw. Und natürlich bewegt sich auch der Mentor vorwiegend in einem bestimmten Paradigma, aus dem heraus er mehr oder weniger Schwierigkeiten hat, den Klienten zu verstehen und mit ihm in Kontakt zu kommen.

Die Verwendung dieses Entwicklungsmodells, das wir hier nur kurz angerissen haben, wird dadurch noch komplizierter, dass wir es normalerweise nicht mit einheitlichen Stufenausprägungen und in sich stimmigen Paradigmen zu tun haben, da sich die Entwicklung in vielen Dimensionen vollzieht und es bei diesen dimensional Entwicklungsprozessen große Unterschiede geben kann. Daraus erwachsen dann innere Spannungen und Konflikte bei Personen und in sozialen Einheiten. Außerdem kommt es immer wieder vor, dass wir zeitweise auf frühere Stufen im Spektrum regredieren oder „Ausflüge“ auf Entwicklungsstufen machen, die weit über dem liegen, was uns normalerweise verfügbar ist. Mehr als eine Orientierung für ein hochkomplexes Geschehen können diese Entwicklungsvorstellungen also nicht leisten, aber diese Orientierung kann von großem Wert für die Gestaltung der Prozesse sein.

Die Aufgabe unseres Ansatzes entpuppt sich also auch hier wieder als mehrschichtig: zum einen muss sich der Mentor bewusst sein, dass nicht nur grundlegende Erwartungen an seine Rolle entwicklungsabhängig sind, sondern auch die Fähigkeiten der Klienten zur Verantwortungsübernahme und zur Reflexion der eigenen Schwierigkeiten und Verhaltensweisen. Er muss darüber hinaus in der Lage sein, sich auf die jeweiligen Paradigmen einzustellen und auch eventuelle Diskrepanzen zu erkennen und zu akzeptieren. Vor allem aber muss er die Klienten dabei unterstützen, solche paradigmatischen Möglichkeiten und Begrenzungen zu realisieren und sie nicht innerlich oder äußerlich zu verleugnen oder zu bekämpfen. Zum anderen hat er die Aufgabe, Entwicklungsanstöße zu geben, damit sich die Klienten lernend im Rahmen des Spektrums weiterentwickeln können.

### **Transformative und translative Lernprozesse<sup>7</sup>**

Diese Entwicklungsprozesse können sich nun auf die Erweiterung und Optimierung der vorhandenen Einstellungen und Kompetenzen im Rahmen ein und desselben Paradigmas beziehen - dann sprechen wir in Anlehnung an Ken Wilber von *translativen* Lern- und Entwicklungsprozessen.

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<sup>7</sup> In den USA wurde ein Konzept zur *Integral Transformative Practice (ITP)* auf der Grundlage der Arbeiten von Michael Murphy und Ken Wilber entwickelt, das jedoch einen ganz anderen Schwerpunkt als unser Ansatz hat: dort geht um die Integration von Übungen für die persönliche und spirituelle Entwicklung (siehe z.B. Ferrer 2003), während unser Ansatz für die ganz normale professionelle psychotherapeutische und beraterische Praxis und Theorie-Entwicklung gedacht ist und den Schwerpunkt auch nicht auf die spirituelle Entwicklung legt (siehe Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr 2005).

zessen. Oder es kann sich um grundlegende Wandlungsprozesse von Einstellungen und Kompetenzen in den verschiedenen Dimensionen auf allen Stufen der Entwicklung handeln - dann sprechen wir von *transformativen* Prozessen, bei denen alte Gewohnheiten und Muster erkannt und überwunden werden.<sup>8</sup> Transformativ sind sehr oft von Turbulenzen und Krisen begleitet, die der besonderen Beachtung und Unterstützung bedürfen. Normalerweise finden transformative Prozesse allerdings auch viel seltener statt als translativ, wobei Krisen (die ja häufig in der Therapie und Beratung zur Sprache kommen) transformative Prozesse auslösen und unterstützen können.<sup>9</sup>

Bei transformativen, also Paradigmen überschreitenden Entwicklungsprozessen, kann man wiederum zwei Arten unterscheiden. Prozesse der *Nachentwicklung* und solche der *Weiterentwicklung*. Bei Nachentwicklung geht es um das Nachholen von Reaktionsweisen, Kompetenzen und Einstellungen in bestimmten Dimensionen, die sich nicht organisch und in Balance mit der Gesamtentwicklung der Person oder sozialen Einheit entwickeln konnten wegen schwieriger Lebenssituationen, Deprivationen oder gar traumatischen Ereignissen. Dabei haben sich bestimmte Defizite, Fixierungen und Störungen herausgebildet, die es soweit wie möglich aufzuarbeiten gilt. Als ein paar Beispiele seien starke Selbstwertprobleme, Schuldkomplexe, Abgrenzungsschwierigkeiten, Suchtphänomene, Machtdynamiken, regressive Abhängigkeiten oder paranoide Vorstellungen und Verhaltensmuster genannt. Bei einer Weiterentwicklung geht es um gegenwärtige Veränderungswünsche und -notwendigkeiten, um das Bedürfnis, im Leben und in den Beziehungen grundsätzlich etwas ändern zu wollen, sowie um existenzielle Sinnfragen.<sup>10</sup>

Wie wir eingangs feststellten, bewegen wir uns bei diesen Entwicklungs- und Lernaufgaben auf einem Kontinuum zwischen Psychotherapie oder sogar Psychiatrie einerseits und fachlich-sachlicher oder organisatorischer Beratung andererseits. Je nach Ausbildung und Interessenschwerpunkt und eigenen Entwicklungsprozessen und -problemen werden sich die Mentoren mehr der einen oder anderen Aufgabe zuwenden, sich hierfür qualifizieren und unter entsprechenden Vereinbarungs- und Vertragsbedingungen arbeiten. Es wäre jedoch wünschenswert, dass in jedem Fall das *gesamte Spektrum der Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten* vertraut ist, da man sonst allzu leicht entweder die Schwierigkeiten der Klienten verkennt oder sie beispielsweise auf bestimmte "Störungen" fixiert, obwohl es ihnen um ganz andere Anliegen geht.

## Erfolgskriterien

Woran und wie überprüft man nun, ob die Aufgaben erfüllt und Intentionen realisiert werden? Auch diese Frage fordert vielschichtige Antworten heraus. Während diejenigen Therapie-

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<sup>8</sup> Dieser Unterschied zwischen translativ und transformativ ist manchem Leser vielleicht aus der Entwicklungstheorie Jean Piagets bekannt: Assimilation und Akkomodation. Häufig wird der Begriff „transformativ“ allerdings nur für den Wandel vom „postmodernen Relativismus“ hin zum integralen Paradigma verwandt (z.B. Mezirow 2003 oder die *Integral Transformative Practice* des Esalen Instituts), nicht jedoch für *alle* Paradigmenwechsel im Spektrum holarchischer Entwicklungen.

<sup>9</sup> Allerdings sieht es ganz so aus, als ob wir vor der Notwendigkeit transformativer Prozesse im großen Stil stehen, wenn die weltweiten Krisen in nahezu allen Bereichen des Lebens nicht zur Überlebensfrage werden sollen (siehe hierzu u.a. Laszlo, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Siehe hierzu auch Fuhr (2001, 2003).

und Beratungsansätze, die einem anderen als dem Integralen Paradigma zuzuordnen sind wie psychoanalytische, verhaltens- und lösungsorientierte oder systemische Ansätze, relativ klar angeben können, wann eine Beratung oder Therapie erfolgreich und „ihr Geld wert“ ist, sind wir nur in der Lage, Kriterien zu nennen, die im Rahmen rational-erfolgsorientierten Denkens als vage und kaum überprüfbar gelten. Der Ansatz hat natürlich auch eine Dienstleistungsfunktion und daher sind Erfolg und die Zufriedenheit der Klienten ein wichtiges Kriterium. Aber eben nicht nur, denn Entwicklungs- und Lernprozesse machen nicht immer - und vor allem nicht rasch - zufrieden und glücklich.

Sicher ist es wichtig zu überprüfen, ob der Klient nach der Therapie/Beratung klarer sieht, ob sich sein Selbstwertgefühl gesteigert, sein Zutrauen in seine Kompetenzen erhöht, sich Symptome verbessert, verworrende Beziehungen und Konflikte im Team geklärt wurden usw. Solche Erfolge sind relativ leicht einschätzbar und teilweise sogar objektivierbar.

Dann kommen aber Kriterien hinzu, die eben der anderen Intention des Ansatzes entsprechen, zu nachhaltiger Entwicklung beizutragen. Unter diesem Gesichtspunkt heißt das allgemeine Kriterium schlicht: „Ist Bewegung in die Erstarrungen und Fixierungen gekommen?“ Viele (wenn nicht vielleicht sogar die meisten) Probleme und Unzufriedenheiten rühren aus erstarrten Gewohnheiten und Mustern, die den gegenwärtigen Herausforderungen nicht mehr gewachsen sind und kreative Anpassungsprozesse erschweren oder unmöglich machen. Wenn solche Erstarrungen gelockert wurden, die Klienten flexibler wurden in ihren Einstellungen, Verhaltensmustern und Reaktionsweisen, ist viel im Sinne eines Integralen Ansatzes erreicht. Dabei sollten die „Bewegungen“ auch eine Richtung haben: hin zu mehr Komplexitätsbewältigung, zu mehr Freiheit und (Mit-)Verantwortung in den Entscheidungen, mehr Blick für das jeweils größere Ganze, mehr Bewusstheit usw.

Solche Qualitätskriterien zu überprüfen ist in Auswertungsgesprächen möglich, die immer wieder einmal durchgeführt werden, besonders natürlich zum Abschluss einer Beratung oder Therapie, aber auch zwischendrin, wenn man einen Scheideweg erreicht hat, im Prozess stecken geblieben ist oder der Jahresrhythmus solche Zwischenbilanzen nahe legt. „Prozessevaluation“ heißt das Zauberwort; diese liefert jedoch kaum objektive Daten, aber doch nachvollziehbare Ergebnisse; vor allem kann sie den Lernprozess selbst wieder neu anstoßen und ausrichten.

All dies sind keine geringen Herausforderungen an den Mentor ebenso wie an die Klienten. Um in dieser Weise produktiv arbeiten zu können, sind bestimmte Grundbedingungen erforderlich, allen voran die Gestaltung einer vertrauensvollen und respektvollen Beziehung.

## **2. Kommunikations- und Beziehungsgestaltung**

Bei dem zweiten Fragenkomplex, unter dem wir unseren Ansatz darstellen wollen, geht es darum, wie die Gesprächssituationen selbst gestaltet werden. Wir brauchen hier nicht die für die Profession üblichen und selbstverständlichen Bedingungen zu erläutern wie den Vertraulichkeitsschutz, Bewahrung der Integrität der Klienten durch den Mentor und umgekehrt, Vertragsklarheit etc. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit gilt jedoch der Gestaltung der Kommunikation und Beziehung. Hier können wir auf eine Reihe bewährter und theoretisch begründeter Konzepte zurückgreifen: Martin Bubers „Philosophie des Dialogs“; Carl R. Rogers' personenzentrierte Ge-



sprachsführung; das Prinzip der „selektiven Authentizität“ aus der Themenzentrierten Interaktion von Ruth C. Cohn („Was der Mentor mitteilt, muss authentisch sein, aber er sollte keinesfalls ungeprüft alles mitteilen!“); insbesondere aber Modelle der Gestalttherapie-Theorie wie der „Kontaktzyklus“ und die „Kontaktfunktionen“ und schließlich unser Konzept des „Meta-Dialogs“.<sup>11</sup>

### **Relationale Bedingungen**

All diese Konzepte und Modelle legen es nahe - und die Erfahrung bestätigt dies immer wieder nachhaltig - dass Lernprozesse generell, besonders aber diejenigen, die nach diesem Integralen Ansatz ausgelöst werden, bestimmte Bedingungen für Kommunikation und Beziehung erfüllen sollten. In zusammengefasster Form geht es dabei um folgende Aspekte:

- Lernprozesse geschehen zu einem erheblichen Teil als Kontaktprozesse zwischen Personen und ihrer Umwelt, und deren angemessene und kreative Gestaltung entscheidet wesentlich darüber, ob Klienten überhaupt etwas lernen können, und ob dieses Lernen nachhaltig wirkt.
- Erkenntnisse, Wissen und Einsichten lassen sich nicht „vermitteln“ oder gar „beibringen“. Diese entstehen im Austauschprozess selbst - sie werden also jeweils neu in der Situation geschaffen. Damit ist kein Verzicht auf schriftlich oder mündlich überlieferte Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse gemeint, aber auch diese müssen jeweils von uns neu „erfunden“ und integriert werden, sonst können wir sie nur als mehr oder weniger schädliche Fremdkörper „schlucken“.
- Das Kommunikations- und Beziehungsklima wird jeweils mitgelernt, ob wir dies wollen oder nicht, denn es wird mit den Lernereignissen zusammen neurologisch verankert. Wenn wir also etwas unter Angst lernen, lernen wir die Angst mit und aktivieren sie wieder, wenn wir das Gelernte anwenden sollen.<sup>12</sup> Es geht also wesentlich darum, in der Gesprächssituation selbst und auch längerfristig für Sicherheit zu sorgen, und zwar nicht nur für die Klienten, sondern eben auch für den Mentor, denn in Unsicherheit und Angst verliert auch dieser einmal seine Geduld und Kreativität oder sein Engagement.
- Kreatives und nachhaltiges Lernen im Austausch mit anderen geschieht an den Kontaktgrenzen. Mentor und Klient müssen sich jeweils neu an diese Kontaktgrenzen herantasten und sie möglichst nicht allzu häufig überschreiten, da dies Verletzungen mit sich bringen kann. Aber sie sollten auch nicht zu weit von den Kontaktgrenzen entfernt bleiben, da sonst wichtige Potentiale verloren gehen.
- In der Beziehung zwischen Mentor und Klienten etabliert sich sowohl eine Hierarchie, als auch eine Heterarchie. Die Hierarchie ergibt sich aus den unterschiedlichen Rollenfunktionen und dem notwendigen Machtgefälle zwischen dem Mentor als Experten und dem Klienten. Heterarchie heißt hier: die Gesprächspartner begegnen sich als Personen auf gleicher Ebene mit gegenseitigem Respekt.

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<sup>11</sup> Siehe Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr (2004), besonders Kapitel 3.

<sup>12</sup> Hierzu z.B. Spitzer (2002).

## **Intentionaler Dialog und Meta-Kommunikation**

Das Kommunikations- und Beziehungskonzept für diesen Ansatz lässt sich wohl am besten als „intentionaler Dialog“ zusammenfassen:<sup>13</sup> Die Gesprächspartner haben die Intention, sich u.a. im Sinne der o.g. Kriterien zu begegnen, aber sie respektieren es auch, wenn diesem Bemühen Grenzen gesetzt sind und eine kontaktvolle Begegnung nicht möglich ist. Dabei sollte der Mentor natürlich der erste sein, der dieser dialogischen Intention Ausdruck und Gestalt zu geben versucht.

Unerlässlich dabei ist, dass die Möglichkeit zur Meta-Kommunikation verfügbar ist. Auch wenn die Möglichkeiten der Reflexion - und vor allem der Selbst-Reflexion - eingeschränkt sein mögen, so besteht doch fast immer die Möglichkeit, sich über die Art der Kommunikation und Beziehung auszutauschen. Dazu bedarf es meist jedoch der Anleitung. Da zwischenmenschlicher Austausch ein äußerst sensibler und störanfälliger Prozess ist, wie viele Kommunikationsforscher und Systemtheoretiker glaubhaft belegen, gehören Missverständnisse, Verstörungen und Konflikte zum Alltag, auch in Therapie und Beratung. Sofern wir sie thematisieren und immer wieder konstruktiv klären können, tragen sie meist sogar zur Intensivierung der Lernprozesse und der Beziehung bei. Aber eben diese Klärung ist immer wieder notwendig und sollte ganz selbstverständlich zum Austauschprozess gehören.

Wichtig für den Integralen Ansatz scheint es uns auch zu sein, dass sich die Gestaltung der Kommunikation und des Beziehungsgeschehens möglichst an der Normalität orientiert; das heißt, dass sowohl spezieller Sprachjargon („Psycho-Sprache“), ärztlich-therapeutische Fachausdrücke oder Begriffe aus der Systemtheorie etc. wenig oder nur in aufgeklärten Formen verwendet werden und ungewöhnliche Kommunikationsmethoden und Techniken sehr sparsam eingesetzt werden, sofern sie überhaupt notwendig sind. Denn es geht - wie zuvor erläutert - um Nachhaltigkeit: der Gesprächsprozess selbst sollte auch immer als Modell für den Alltag gelten können, wenn auch sicher in modifizierter und weniger intensiver Form, aber doch in der grundsätzlichen Qualität. Auf diese Weise können Erkenntnisse, die dabei gewonnen werden, viel leichter in den Alltag übertragen und integriert werden.

## **3. Problembestimmung und Diagnose**

### **Problemdefinition, Mustersuche und Sinnfindung**

Der Bestimmung des Problems im weitesten Sinn wird in unserem Ansatz eine wichtige Bedeutung beigemessen. Erst wenn klar ist, was den Klienten in welchen Situationen und in welcher Hinsicht berührt, bedroht, Sorgen macht, unter Druck setzt oder zu Entscheidungen nötigt, können wir „der Sache auf den Grund“ gehen, die wiederkehrenden Muster herausarbeiten und nach dem Sinn eben dieser Muster suchen, bevor sich dann in der letzten Phase eines Gesprächs Alternativen und Lösungsansätze oft wie von selbst ergeben (siehe auch Abb. 2). Bei einem vieldimensionalen und vielperspektivischen Ansatz kann es natürlich nicht *die* („richtige“) Problemformulierung geben, sondern wir müssen uns entscheiden, aus welchen Perspektiven wir das Problem vor allem fokussieren wollen: aus einer subjektiven Innenperspektive, aus der Per-

<sup>13</sup> Siehe hierzu Martina Gremmler-Fuhr (2004).

spektive der Verhaltensweisen der Beteiligten, der Wertorientierungen und sozialen Normen oder der faktischen Bedingungen. Prinzipiell können alle Perspektiven berücksichtigt werden, aber eine wird sich vermutlich als wichtiger erweisen als andere. Dies ist meist davon abhängig, wo Klienten am ehesten eigene Handlungsspielräume erkennen können, denn es hat wenig Sinn, Probleme mit viel Aufwand zu präzisieren, an denen ohnehin nichts zu ändern ist, weil größere Kräfte am Werk sind. So lassen sich aufgrund ein und derselben Ausgangssituation dann Probleme auch auf den verschiedensten Konkretisierungsebenen formulieren, also auf individueller, sozialer, institutioneller oder gesellschaftlicher und politischer Ebene. All dies sind (möglichst gemeinsame) Entscheidungsprozesse von Mentor und Klient.

Wenn das Problem formuliert ist, kann man sich ein Stück weit davon und von der aktuellen Ausgangssituation distanzieren, ohne den emotionalen Kontakt dazu zu verlieren. In dieser *disidentifizierten* Perspektive (nach Möglichkeit mit Unterstützung einer „dritten Instanz“) können wir dann überfällige Gewohnheiten oder erstarrte Muster erkennen, die sich wiederholen, hochschaukeln, verstärken oder verdrängt werden - um im Untergrund weiter zu wirken. Das Erkennen und Akzeptieren solcher Muster - Verhaltensmuster, Reaktionsmuster, innerer (psychodynamischer) Muster, Beziehungsmuster, gruppenspezifischer Muster usw. - ist ein Kernstück des Ansatzes; denn diesen Mustern kommt eine Schlüsselfunktion sowohl für translativ als auch für transformative Lernprozesse zu. Sie können analog zu den Tiefenstrukturen einer Sprache verstanden werden. Aus diesen Tiefenstrukturen werden immer wieder neue Sätze generiert, und - wenn die Tiefenstrukturen erstarrt und nicht mehr angemessen sind - dann eben auch antiquierte oder unverständliche Sätze. Solche Grundmuster aufzudecken ist oft unangenehm, peinlich und frustrierend, denn es handelt sich beispielsweise um unrealistische Selbst- bzw. Selbst-Abwertungen, Schuldstrukturen, Totschweigen von unangenehmen Tatsachen im eigenen Leben oder in dem einer Institution, um „Schwarze-Peter-Spiele“, Machtdynamiken (ohne dass wirkliche Macht zu verteilen wäre), Delegationen von ungelebten Anteilen an Beziehungspartner (die dann bekämpft werden) und vieles andere. Es bedarf daher der besonderen Unterstützung und der existenziellen Bestätigung durch den Mentor, um solchen Erkenntnissen nicht auszuweichen und sie akzeptieren zu können, denn nur dann können wir sie verändern.

Bevor solche Veränderungs- und Wandlungsprozesse jedoch greifen können, ist es meist erforderlich, dass wir die Probleme mit den ihnen zugrunde liegenden Mustern *verstehen*, dass wir ihren Sinn ergründen. Wir gehen davon aus, dass jede inzwischen noch so abstruse Gewohnheit und jedes noch so zerstörerische Muster einen Sinn ergibt. Häufig liegt dieser Sinn darin, dass es Reaktionen auf schwierige Situationen in der Vergangenheit waren, die sich verfestigt haben.

In dieser dritten Phase des Prozesses geht es also darum, die größeren Zusammenhänge zu ergründen. Diese können historisch begründet sein, sie können in der Funktion, die ein Team in einer größeren Organisationseinheit hat, in einem Tabu oder in einer unmöglichen Aufgabe liegen, die eine soziale Einheit unter Stress setzt usw.

Bei der Suche nach Sinnzusammenhängen können wir rasch an Grenzen stoßen, nicht nur, weil sie etwa für die Klienten peinliche Fakten ans Tageslicht fördern, sondern auch weil die Vertragsbedingungen für die Beratung oder Therapie nicht gegeben und die Kompetenzen des Mentors nicht gewährleistet sind. Aber wir können immer bis an diese Grenzen gehen und ggf. auch gemeinsam neue Grenzziehungen vereinbaren.

Wenn dann einige plausible Sinnzusammenhänge gemeinsam heraus gearbeitet und erkannt worden sind, steht der Entwicklung neuer Perspektiven und Handlungsmöglichkeiten nichts mehr im Wege.

## Diagnostik

Diese Art der Problembestimmung, der Mustersuche und der Sinngebung eignet sich sowohl für Therapie, als auch für Beratung im engeren Sinn. Zwar werden die Arten der Probleme stark variieren, je nachdem, ob wir etwa in einem psychiatrischen oder organisationalen Kontext arbeiten. Und jeweils können auch andere Modelle und Erklärungsansätze herangezogen werden, sei es aus der Psychoanalyse, der Verhaltenstherapie, der Systemischen oder humanistisch-psychologischen Therapie und Beratung oder aus Modellen der Organisationsentwicklung. Entscheidend für diagnostische Vorgänge im Rahmen des Ansatzes sind jedoch die folgenden Prinzipien und Kriterien:

- *Diagnose wird als ein Prozess verstanden, der immer wieder einmal durchgeführt wird.*  
Es gilt also nicht der Grundsatz „erst die Diagnose, dann die Behandlung“, sondern Diagnose ist ein Teil des gemeinsamen Beratungs- und Therapieprozesses. Damit stoßen wir allerdings sehr rasch an die Grenzen etwa eines Gesundheitssystems, in dem „Behandlungen“ nur aufgrund von eindeutigen Diagnosen mit „Krankheitswert“ finanziert werden. Hier müssen wir wohl in vielen Fällen Kompromisse eingehen.
- *Diagnose ist ein gemeinsamer Prozess zwischen Mentor und Klient.*  
Soweit wie irgendwie möglich versucht man, Verständigung zu erzielen, denn nur eine Diagnose, die von beiden Seiten akzeptiert wird, kann den Lern- und Entwicklungsprozess anregen und Richtungen weisen. Auch hier stößt man manchmal an Grenzen, wenn ein Einverständnis nicht oder nur schwer möglich ist und vielleicht sogar die Bereitwilligkeit zur Verständigung fehlt. Dann gibt es nur noch die Möglichkeit, die unterschiedlichen Positionen zu respektieren und die Konsequenzen zu akzeptieren, die beispielsweise in der Beendigung der Zusammenarbeit bestehen können.
- *Diagnosen erfolgen vielperspektivisch, vielschichtig, und sie legen Defizite ebenso offen wie Ressourcen.*  
Weder geht es also beispielsweise bei Einzelpersonen als Klienten nur darum, die Defizite aufzuführen (wie sie etwa in den Kriterienkatalogen von DSM und ICD stehen), noch nur um die Identifikation von Ressourcen, wie sie etwa von lösungsorientierten Ansätzen und der „positiven Psychologie“ favorisiert werden. Wir brauchen sowohl die Ermutigung durch das Bewusstsein vorhandener, aber nicht ausgeschöpfter Kompetenzen, als auch die Erkenntnis, dass Defizite vorliegen oder rigide und destruktive Muster wirksam sind. Diese beiden Aspekte - Defizite und Ressourcen - auszubalancieren, ist eine wichtige Aufgabe des Mentors, zumal viele Klienten dazu neigen, entweder nur das eine oder das andere wahrhaben zu wollen.

Das Entwicklungsspektrum, Erkenntnisse über translative und transformative Lernprozesse, die Möglichkeiten, zu regredieren oder auch wichtige Entwicklungsschritte überspringen zu wollen, all dies sind neben den verbreiteten psychologischen, gruppensystemischen, organisatio-

nalen oder sozialen Modellen wertvolle Hilfen dabei, die Unausgewogenheiten im lebendigen Geschehen zu erkennen, zu benennen und zu akzeptieren, damit wir uns immer wieder auf den Weg machen können - Klient und Mentor gemeinsam und jeder Klient für sich.

#### **4. Strategien und Methoden**

Am Schluss der Charakterisierung des Praxiskonzepts soll die strategische und methodische Vorgehensweise zusammengefasst werden. Wir haben solche strategischen und methodischen Aspekte schon mehrfach angedeutet und wollen sie hier nun kurz systematisch darstellen.

##### **Dialogorientierter Austausch**

Im Zentrum der Vorgehensweise steht das Gespräch, das sich soweit wie möglich an den Prinzipien und Kriterien des intentionalen Dialogs orientiert. Dies ist, wenn man so will, die Methode der Wahl. Aber solch ein Dialog sollte ja mehr einer Haltung und Einstellung entsprechen, als einem methodisch geplanten Vorgehen, denn die Art der Kommunikation und Beziehungsgestaltung ist immer auch Modell für alltägliche Umgehensweisen. Deshalb würden wir keine Maßstäbe für einen „optimalen“ Dialog oder Kontaktprozess angeben wollen, da dies sonst leicht mit einer Technologie der Gesprächsführung verwechselt werden könnte. Missverständnisse, Irrtümer, Irritationen, Konflikte und gelegentlich auch handfeste Streitigkeiten gehören zu unserem Miteinander dazu und können sehr konstruktiv sein, wenn die Grundprinzipien des intentionalen Dialogs nicht verletzt werden. Immer steht uns ja auch die methodische Möglichkeit der Meta-Kommunikation zur Verfügung.

Die Bedeutung des Dialogs als methodische Orientierung beim Vorgehen ergibt sich auch aus der Erkenntnis, die die Begründer der Gestalttherapie Frederick S. und Laura Perls sowie Paul Goodman (1951) erstmals formulierten: im aktuellen Kommunikations- und Beziehungsgeschehen spiegeln sich die Probleme und Schwierigkeiten des Klienten aus dem Alltag oft auf die eine oder andere Weise wider. Wir sind dann also quasi mitten im Geschehen, das die Probleme im Alltag bereitet, und können es gemeinsam auf ganz lebensnahe Weise untersuchen. Darin liegt ein unschätzbares Potential.

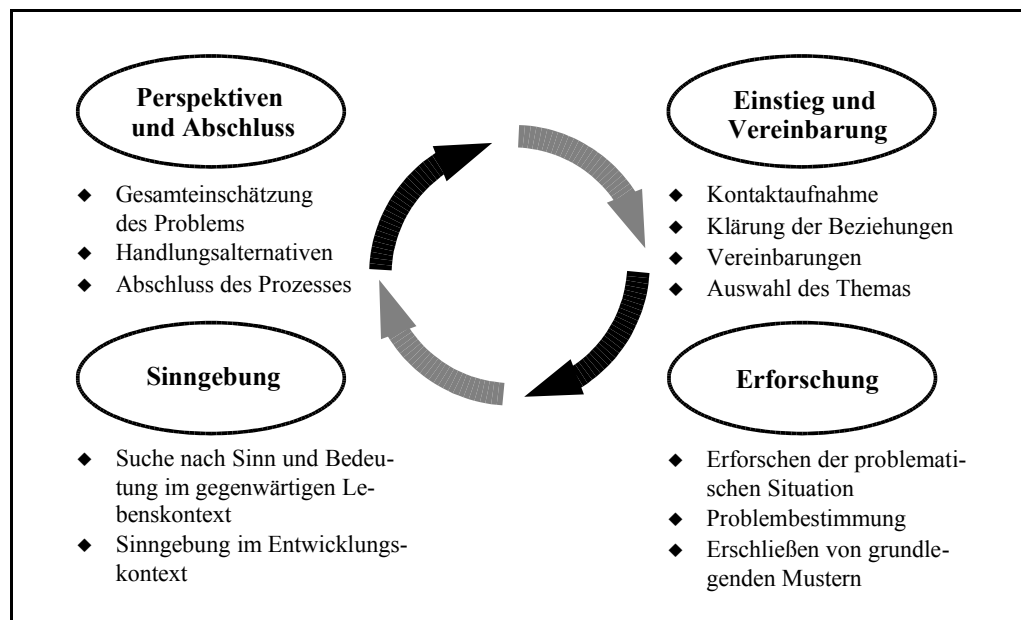
Natürlich können sich auch die Probleme des Mentors im Beratungs- oder Therapiegeschehen widerspiegeln. Deshalb ist es unverzichtbar, dass Mentoren eine Aus- und Weiterbildung genossen haben, in der sie gelernt haben, sich selbst zu reflektieren, ihre eigenen Muster und Macken zu erforschen und darüber hinaus zu lernen, wie man mit diesen Mustern und Macken in Bewegung und in einem kontinuierlichen Lernprozess bleiben kann.

##### **Phasen des Gesprächs**

Wie schon mehrfach angedeutet, konzentrieren sich das Gespräch und die gemeinsamen Aktivitäten nach anfänglichen Klärungen und Vereinbarungen darauf, die Situation gründlich zu erforschen, bevor sie interpretiert wird und neue Perspektiven entwickelt werden (Abb. 2). Eine besondere Herausforderung dabei ist es, die Anliegen und Situationen, die Klienten einbringen, nach der *phänomenologischen Methode* zu untersuchen. Es geht darum, die inneren und äußere

ren Wahrnehmungen in der Situation (wieder) zu realisieren und sie sehr deutlich von Interpretationen zu unterscheiden. Wer etwa ein akademisches Studium absolviert hat, musste lernen, Theorien zu rekonstruieren und mit ihnen zu jonglieren, obwohl sie kaum noch etwas mit Erfahrungen, geschweige denn den eigenen, zu tun hatten. In den meisten wissenschaftlichen Disziplinen herrscht zwar das hehre Prinzip: „Erst die Datensammlung, dann die Interpretation“, dennoch werden Deutungen sehr rasch als Fakten ausgegeben: „Dies ist eine Übertragung, jenes ist eine Verdrängung der Aggressionen“; auch in der Politik glaubt man, über die Motive anderer Menschen, besonders der Gegner, gut Bescheid zu wissen, und gibt sie als Fakten aus. Deshalb ist mit der Unterscheidung von phänomenologischer Bestandsaufnahme und Interpretation eine große Herausforderung verbunden. Aber sie ist auch deshalb so wichtig, weil diese phänomenologische Bestandsaufnahme die empirische<sup>14</sup> Basis für Verständigung darstellt. Über Interpretationen und Erklärungsmodelle lässt sich dann trefflich streiten.

Bevor wir zur Sinnfindung kommen, empfiehlt es sich, die Tiefenstrukturen zu erschließen, also die Muster herauszufiltern. Man kann sich darüber streiten, ob dies nicht schon ein interpretativer Schritt sei. Wir zählen die Erschließung von Mustern jedoch noch zur Bestandsaufnahme, denn dabei bündeln wir die empirischen Daten und fügen sie zu Mustern zusammen. Dabei ist allerdings auch oft einige Fantasie erforderlich, die durch kreative Methoden angeregt werden kann. Damit wären wir dann beim Übergang zur eigentlichen Interpretationsphase, in



**Abb. 2:** Gesprächszyklus für integrale Beratung

<sup>14</sup> „Empirisch“ ist hier im eigentlichen Sinn gemeint, nämlich als „erfahrungsbezogen“.

der wir Erklärungen suchen für die „Muster, die verbinden“,<sup>15</sup> um dadurch den tieferen Sinn zu finden und zu erfinden.

Den Abschluss bilden dann die Entwicklung von Einstellungs- und Handlungsalternativen sowie die abschließende Reflexion und Beendigung des gemeinsamen Beratungs-/Therapieprozesses.

Natürlich wird diese Phasenfolge in der Praxis nicht strikt eingehalten, es geht vor und zurück, und manchmal sind mehrere Schleifen notwendig, bis man zu einem befriedigenden Ergebnis gelangt. Aber dieses am Kontaktzyklus der Gestalttherapie angelehnte Modell ist eine sehr gute Orientierung für diesen vielschichtigen, komplexen und manchmal auch verwirrenden Prozess.

### Methodeneinsatz

Abschließend sollen einige uns wichtig erscheinende Gesichtspunkte zum Umgang mit Methoden und Techniken noch einmal hervorgehoben werden:

Prinzipiell können alle Methoden, die für dieses professionelle Feld entwickelt wurden, zur Verwendung kommen. Allerdings gelten die grundlegenden Prinzipien des Dialogischen, der Entwicklungsorientierung, der Vielperspektivität und Vielschichtigkeit. Von daher ergeben sich einige Kriterien und Gefahrenhinweise für den Einsatz von Methoden:

- Methoden sollten so verwendet werden, dass sie sich nicht *zwischen* den Kontakt von Klienten und Mentor stellen. Entscheidend ist der unmittelbare Austausch, den man leicht vermeiden oder fremdsteuern kann, wenn man durch Methoden Strukturen setzt, die die normalen Sensibilitäten und zwischenmenschlichen Umgangsformen außer Kraft setzen. Beispielsweise ist es sehr problematisch, wenn eine Nähe und Intimität hergestellt wird, die der Beziehung und Situation eigentlich nicht angemessen ist. Aber gerade solche Methoden haben eine hohe Verführungsqualität.
- Methoden sollen eigenständige und nachhaltige Lern- und Entwicklungsprozesse der Klienten unterstützen. Alltagsnahe Methoden erleichtert die Integration, exotische erschweren sie oft.
- Viele experientielle und konfrontative Methoden<sup>16</sup> können Turbulenzen und tief gehende Erschütterungen auslösen, sowohl bei einzelnen, als auch in sozialen Einheiten. Sie sind daher mit größter Vorsicht zu verwenden und nur unter kompetenter Anleitung. Wenn Klienten zu heftig mit eigenen Erfahrungen, Gefühlen und „Wahrheiten“ konfrontiert werden, insbesondere, wenn dabei auch noch traumatische Erfahrungen berührt werden, können Re-Traumatisierungen und Dissoziationen die Folge sein.
- Methoden sollten als *Experimente* im Sinne des Gestalt-Ansatzes verstanden werden: die Klienten erproben etwas, nicht um es zu können, sondern um neue Erfahrungen zu sammeln. Bei jedem Schritt dieses Experiments wird daher die Aufmerksamkeit auf die gegenwärtigen Erfahrungen gelenkt, und dem entsprechend werden sie modifiziert. Sobald etwa größere Ängste entstehen und Grenzen gespürt werden, sind diese erst gründlich zu erkunden, bevor

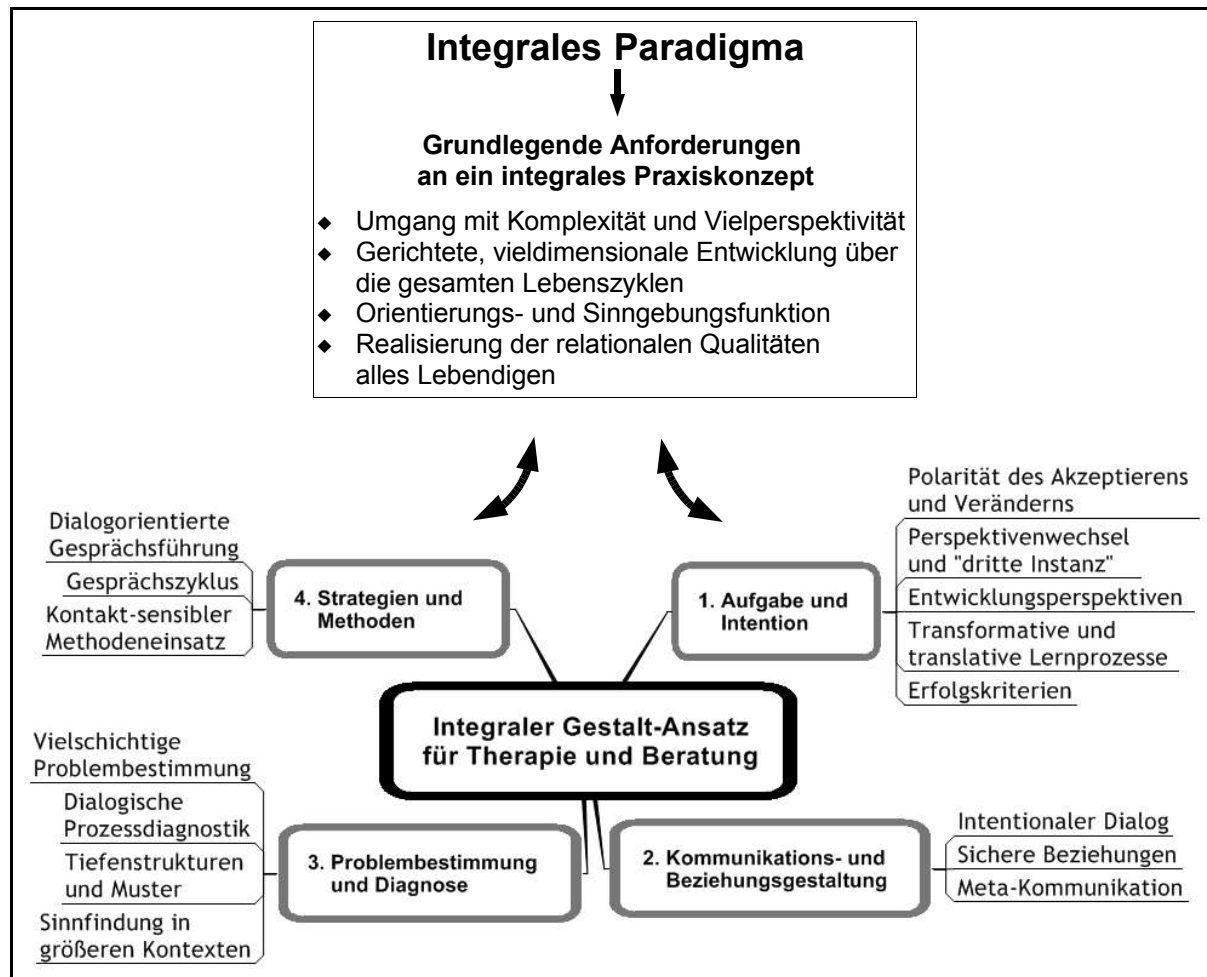
<sup>15</sup> Dies war der Begriff von Gregory Bateson, dem großen Anthropologen des 20. Jahrhunderts und „Vaters“ der Systemtheorie.

<sup>16</sup> Ausführlicher hierzu: R. Fuhr (2001).

man nächste Schritte tut. Denn Widerstände werden als Energien betrachtet, die in eine andere Richtung gehen, als die Beteiligten dies vielleicht geplant hatten. Diese Widerstände können uns den Weg zu wichtigen und tiefen Einsichten weisen. Es handelt sich dabei also um viel zu wertvolle Phänomene, als dass man Widerstände „durchbrechen“ oder „überwinden“ sollte.

## Fazit

Fassen wir die wichtigsten Aspekte des Integralen Ansatzes als Landkarte zusammen (Abb. 3): Diese Art der Therapie und Beratung gehört sicher nicht zum Mainstream im professionellen Feld, schon gar nicht, wenn die allgemeine Maxime in Richtung rascher Effizienz, spektakulärer Methoden und Erlebnisqualitäten und messbarer Qualitätsmerkmale geht. Sicher gibt es eine Reihe von konzeptionellen Ansätzen, die in die Richtung des hier dargestellten Ansatzes



**Abbildung 3:** Übersicht über die Komponenten des Integralen Gestalt-Ansatz für Therapie und Beratung



weisen wie etwa die personenzentrierte Gesprächsführung eines Carl R. Rogers (in der ursprünglichen, von ihm entwickelten Form - 1983), oder die Gestalttherapie in ihren Weiterentwicklungen,<sup>17</sup> oder das Konzept von Thomas Jordan (2002). Es bedarf also einiges an Pioniergeist, um im Sinne des Integralen Ansatzes arbeiten zu können. Dem entsprechend gibt es bisher auch kaum Ausbildungen dafür (eine Konzeption für solch eine Ausbildung darzustellen, wäre ein eigener Artikel). Meist müssen Aus- und Weiterbildungen individuell bei einzelnen Trainern zusammengesucht oder in Eigenstudien realisiert werden. Aber das könnte ein kreativer Weg zu neuen Ufern sein, der aufregend und vielleicht sogar sehr nachhaltig wirksam werden kann. Dazu braucht man dann eine große Portion an Geduld, Toleranz, und Risikobereitschaft. Es wäre daher hilfreich, wenn sich mehr von denjenigen, die in dieser Richtung arbeiten wollen, zusammenfinden und sich gegenseitig unterstützen könnten

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*Martina Gremmler-Fuhr, M.A., is a Gestalt therapist and trainer for the Integral Gestalt approach. She works as a freelance psychotherapist and supervisor and directs together with her husband the Gestalt-Zentrum Göttingen. She has finished her doctoral dissertation on the development of relationships in adult age and has published many books and articles on Gestalt therapy, the Integral Gestalt Approach, and on personality development, many of them together with her husband.*

*Reinhard Fuhr, Dr. phil. From 1975-2004 he was teaching and doing research at the department of education, University of Göttingen. He is a Gestalt therapist and trainer for the Integral Gestalt approach, author and co-author of many books and articles on Gestalt therapy, the Integral Gestalt Approach, counselling and living learning as well as personality development. Besides being the editor-in-chief of Integral Review he is an associate editor of Gestalt Review.*

*Gestalt-Zentrum Göttingen  
Max-Born-Ring 65  
D-37077 Göttingen  
Germany  
Email: [kontakt@gestaltzentrum.de](mailto:kontakt@gestaltzentrum.de)  
Internet: [www.gestaltzentrum.de](http://www.gestaltzentrum.de)*

# **Ein Integraler Gestalt-Ansatz für Therapie und Beratung**

## **[An Integral Gestalt Approach for Psychotherapy and Counselling]**

Reinhard Fuhr und Martina Gremmler-Fuhr

### **Summary**

In this text we present our concept of psychotherapy and counseling in the frame the integral paradigm as we understand it. We briefly explain four requirements for a professional concept of this kind: the elaboration of complexity and multi-perspectivity, intentional development within an holarchical spectrum, offering orientation and meaning making structures, and realizing the relational quality of life as well as enacting intentional dialogues. We then discuss the differences and commonalities of the terms “psychotherapy,” “counseling” and “education” or “continuous training,” and we argue that they form a continuum with a major common basis as well as specialized competencies and strategies required. Even “teaching” increasingly requires a great amount of counseling by teachers and trainers nowadays, if they want to take into account what recent research on learning processes has proved. Our practical concept for the Integral Gestalt Approach which we have developed and evaluated over many years in quite different professional fields, from university seminars to health institutions, is then explored under four sets of questions or categories:

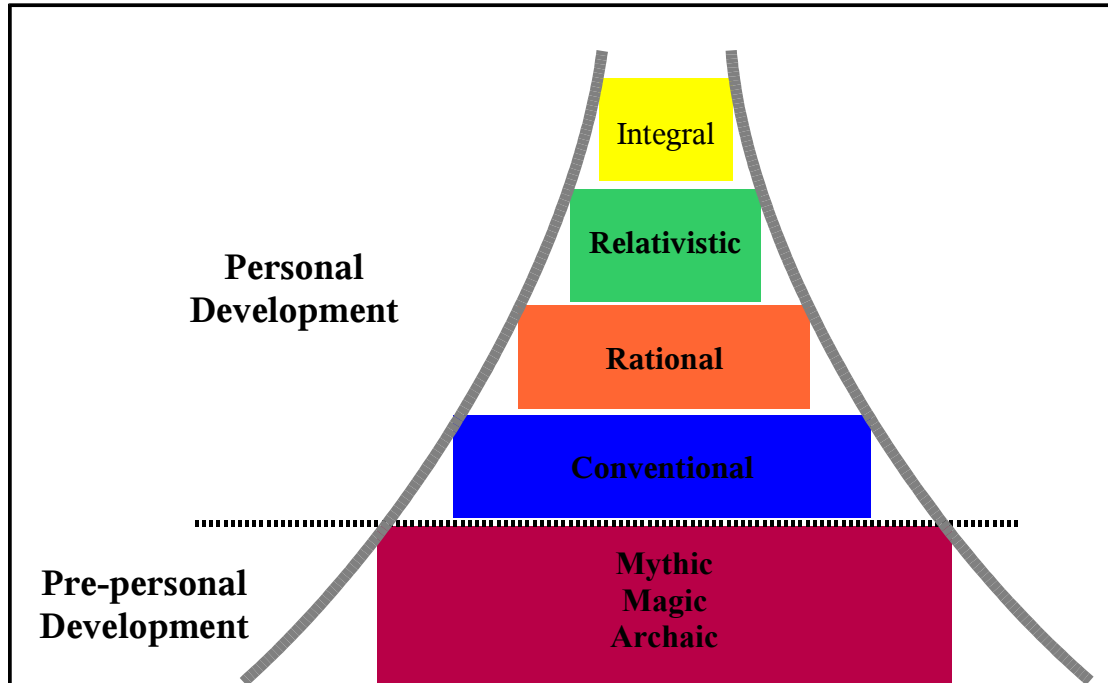
1. *Intentions and tasks*: The main task of the approach is considered to be the handling of the polarity between accepting whatever is on one hand, and supporting development processes along the specter of development on another hand. A major challenge here is to discover an “inner witness” or a “third position” that is able to empathetically acknowledge whatever is, without being entangled. Utilizing a developmental model of a holarchy with five levels, or paradigms, from pre-personal to conventional to rational to relativistic to integral has been very helpful in accomplishing this. We distinguish between translative and transformative learning processes which may be initiated – translative meaning an increase in competencies, transformative meaning a change of paradigms in one or more dimensions of individual or social development. The main criteria for success of the praxis is considered to be whether rigidified patterns or frozen structures can be turned to become fluid again, thus enabling clients to be involved in new and sustainable processes of learning and self-organization.

2. *Communication and mentor-client relationship*: Great emphasis is given to the realization of “intentional dialogues” and the establishment of safe and reliable mentor-client relationships, as these are considered to be the most favorable conditions for challenging learning processes, especially as, according to new research findings, relational qualities are learned along with the contents of any learning process.

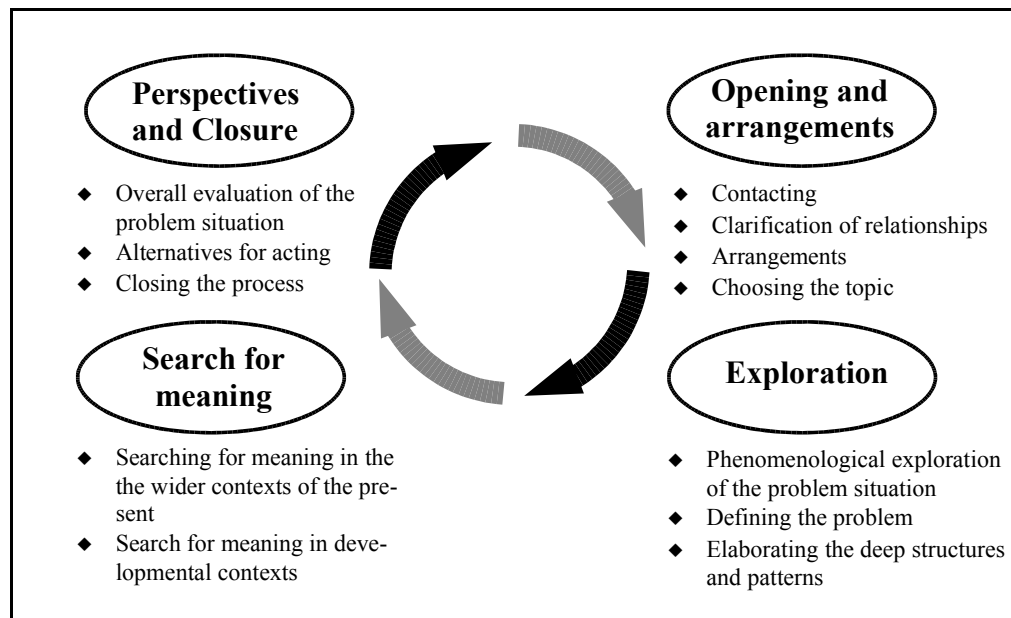
3. *Problem definition and diagnostics*: Problems can be defined on the basis of phenomenological exploration from many perspectives and at many levels of abstraction. Underneath these problems we may look for deep structures like repetitive dysfunctional patterns which then are investigated for their original meanings in wider contexts like personal history, social and organizational environment etc. Diagnostics are applied in the shape of recurrent mutual evaluation processes (in comparison to the staunch norm of “diagnosis before treatment”). Phenomena and deep structures are clearly differentiated from interpretations and explanations; traditional diagnostic models may be used by carefully adapting them to this integral approach.

4. *Strategies and methods*: Intensive contact processes guided by a four-phase model with a priority on exploration and self-reflection before the search for new perspectives and alternative solutions is considered to be the central method. Additional methods are designed in a way that they are close to normal live experiences in order to support the transfer of sustainable learning processes. Although trainings for this integral approach can build on a few established approaches to therapy and counseling, pioneering work is necessary as such an integral approach is still marginal. Therefore intensifying the networking of these pioneers is recommended.

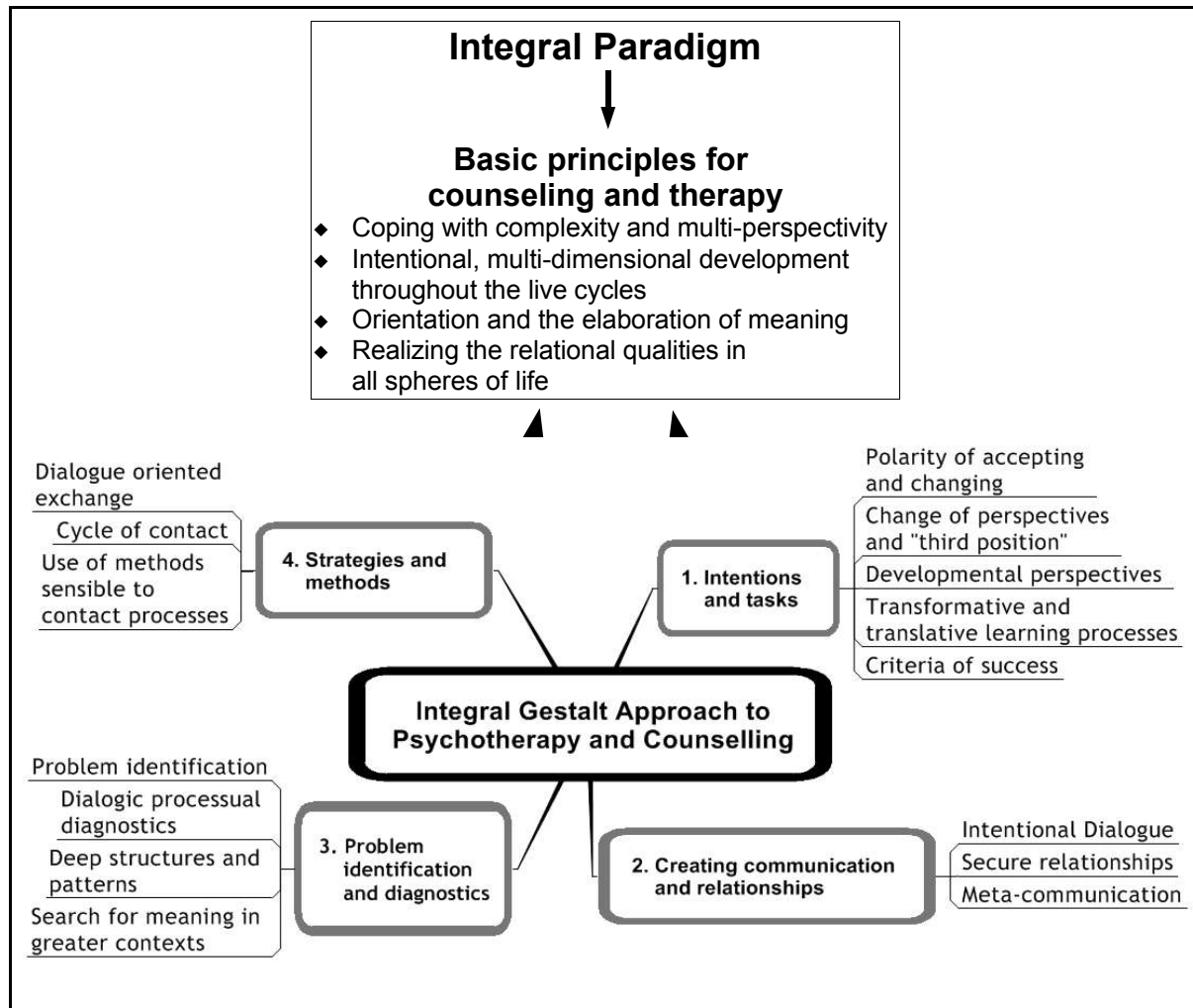
## Figures for the text



**Fig. 1:** Five stages or paradigms of development



**Figure 2:** Cycle of contact in counseling and therapy



**Figure 3:** Survey on the Integral Gestalt approach to therapy and counseling

## Book Reviews

### **Laszlo, E. (2004). *Science and the Akashic Field: An Integral Theory of Everything*. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International**

Ervin Laszlo may be well known to many readers as a far sighted author; he was a founding member of the Club of Rome, founded the Club of Budapest, was affiliated with many Universities around the world, was nominated for the Nobel prize and he published many interdisciplinary books on questions of utmost relevance to those who are engaged in the realization and further development of the integral paradigm. And yet this is an unusual book.

*Science and the Akashic Field* is a most challenging attempt to summarize the foundations of a “theory of everything” on a solid *scientific* basis. His attempt stands in contrast, as Laszlo explicitly maintains, to Wilber's *Theory of everything* – as “... he does not offer such a theory” - which is, as we will see, not quite fair (p. 2). Laszlo builds his claim on his 40 years of interdisciplinary research as a professor of philosophy, systems theory and futures studies. At the core of his theory of everything is the *connectivity hypothesis*. In simple terms it means: in our universe (and in all other universes) everything is connected with everything in the information-conserving and information-conveying cosmic field of the quantum vacuum. This vacuum fills most of the universe (not matter!), and the vacuum preserves all information ever generated without any need of time and space or a medium. Therefore the total sum of information is immediately available everywhere and at any time if it can be “received” and decoded by resonance. Of course, Laszlos says, amoebas have more resonance with other amoebas than with human beings and vice versa. But in principle the experience of all predecessors can be used by every form of life and evolutionary challenge. This also means that evolution is *not* essentially based on trial and error, as the probability that life could have come to existence only in this way would virtually be zero.

Laszlo calls this quantum vacuum with all universal information the Akashic field or A-field, according to the Indian philosophy's concept of the Akashic Chronicle and along with thousands of years of the knowledge of sages, particularly in the East. This A-field cannot be observed, but its effects can be observed, measured and evaluated by scientific methods; and Laszlo quotes quite a number of examples and proofs of these effects from cosmology to quantum physics, biology and consciousness development. Most of it is written in a way that even someone like me who is not very familiar with quantum physics, the leading edge of biology research and the details of complexity theories, can somehow understand. It is still not quite easy food.

The consequences of this basic hypothesis are far reaching:

- Consciousness and matter are just two aspects (interior versus exterior) of one and the same existential ground of everything (here and at a few other places Laszlo comes to quite similar conclusions as Wilber in spite of his initial devaluation of him). There is a free floating primary consciousness and unstructured energy field which continuously evolves and generates the manifold forms of our universe (among innumerable other universes).
- Nothing we experience and think is lost, it is available for all times, and others can built on it if they link with it through resonance with the corresponding wave functions.
- The root of our knowledge is not conserved in our brain or mind but in the A-field where everything is available (a thought that also turns up in Sheldrake's theory of morphic fields –

another challenging theory which is usually ignored or depreciated by traditional science - and is not mentioned by Laszlo either).

- Evolution is “directed:” from the original primary consciousness and unstructured energy field to continuously more complexity and coherence; i.e. evolution is neither wanton nor determined and produces its own unfolding.

This theory may throw new light on many problems and phenomena of our lives, as Laszlo explains in an exemplary way: the brain – mind problem, the question of immortality (only the contents of our consciousness are immortal, nothing else), para-psychological phenomena and altered states of consciousness etc.

This book takes up many threads that show the way towards an integral paradigm, and to an encompassing and interdisciplinary theory at a very abstract and yet substantial level. Laszlo connects these strands in what I would interpret as a kind of legacy in the shape of a coherent and awe inspiring whole. Of course there remain many questions and gaps in his theory of everything - or rather: many very fascinating questions can be generated on this basis.

One of the most important questions for me would focus on what this could mean for learning, transformation and social change. For example, it has been obvious for a long time now that we cannot fill the minds of students (and those of people in general) with new ideas and knowledge like an empty bucket. Instead, incorporating Laszlo's idea, we have to produce the best conditions for resonance with and realization of the knowledge readily available in the A-field. This would be of utmost relevance to all educational endeavours from school teaching to community development; we would have to motivate ourselves and others to produce new knowledge of our own and link it with our experience on the basis of what is available; and we could dispose of most of our training programs and methods that aim at “transporting” knowledge into the heads of learners. Many alternative and humanistic pedagogic approaches from Paolo Freire to Ruth Cohn or Confluent Education and the insights of new neurological research findings which all tend towards similar conclusions could be incorporated with Laszlo's theory. How this could be done in a way that promises to be much more meaningful and effective than traditional as well as modern “technical” approaches to learning would indeed be a huge field of research and further studies.

And of course strong resistance will also be provoked by this theory of everything, and we will have to find ways of handling it. When asking a distinguished and rather open-minded neuroscientist whom I know personally, whether he could tell me anything about the assumption that the roots of our knowledge may not be stored in the brain functions and in our minds but rather in a readily available field of knowledge in the quantum vacuum to which we may establish resonance, his reply was short: “This sounds like a rather abstruse theory and of little use for me!” I will still continue to discuss this topic with him, as my resonance with Laszlo's theory of everything was a different one indeed.

*Reinhard Fuhr*



**Ferrer, J. N. (2002). *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory. A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press**

People will want to dismiss this important book by Jorge Ferrer. Because Ferrer writes by carrying us through his thought *process*, there are many easy ways to dismiss it. In the beginning, he embroils himself in the familiar epistemology-ontology nightmare of postmodernism; and not surprisingly, despite his numerous “turns” to integrate the partiality of the one by moving toward the other, he fails to extricate this philosophical *Excaliber*. In the meantime, he builds a strong critique of the Cartesian moorings of other transpersonal models, by highlighting Wilber’s and faulting it for the same problem: having built an ontological model based on a priori principles, and failing to negotiate the subject-object divide.

The SDi people<sup>1</sup> will (and have) dismissed Ferrer’s book as a kind of last gasp attempt to salvage the pluralist perspective – the singular square on the board game of a current transpersonal culture of critique that says “do not pass Green.”<sup>2</sup>

In objection to the perennialist’s notion of an absolute structure of transpersonal development, Ferrer introduces a “participatory” component of spirituality: “... transpersonal phenomena are participatory events that involve ways of knowing that are presential, enactive, and transformative.”

Ferrer claims his participatory model repairs two important fault-lines of the perennialist versions of how we “know” namely, the Myth of the Given (one cannot know “things as they are”), and the Myth of the Framework (the spectrum of spiritual experiences cannot be described by any one set of a priori (deep) structures). By incorporating the three features of the participatory model, we come to see instead that; 1) we *participate in* the ways things are (presential),<sup>3</sup> 2) we each constitute a unique set of human development through our *participatory situation with/in the world* (enactive),<sup>4</sup> and 3) participatory knowing is transformative.<sup>5</sup>

Ferrer’s intentionally transparent exposé into a more pluralistic version of transpersonal theory was for me a pleasure to read. His writing engaged me, as if we were having one of those endless conversations that go through the night. And then, as if the dawn had come around, and roused us from the seriousness of our philosophical sleep, Ferrer stretches out his pluralistic thought, to “relax into a spiritual universalism.” In the last chapter, which reads like a coda, he writes:

In this book, I have introduced a participatory spiritual pluralism as a more adequate metaphysical framework than the perennialism typical of most transpersonal works. ... I should stress here that I do not believe that either pluralism or universalism per se are spiritually superior or more evolved. And it is now time to make explicit the kind of spiritual universalism implicit in the participatory vision.

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<sup>1</sup> “Spiral Dynamics-Integral” community who have incorporated Don Beck’s version of Spiral Dynamics (itself a digest version of the work of Clare Graves’ research on human development) into Wilber’s AQAL (All-Quadrants, All-Levels) model of integral theory.

<sup>2</sup> Consider, for example, Ken Wilber’s comment to Daryl Paulson’s about the book (quoted in Paulson’s review at <http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/watch/ferrer/index.cfm/>).

<sup>3</sup> Participatory knowing is knowing by presence or by identity ... in a transpersonal event, knowing occurs by virtue of being (p. 122).

<sup>4</sup> Participatory knowing ... is an enaction, the bringing forth of a world or domain of distinctions ... p. 123

<sup>5</sup> ... a transpersonal event brings forth the transformation of self and world ... and in turn draws forth the self through its transformative process in order to make possible this participation. p. 123

There is a way, I believe, in which we can legitimately talk about a shared spiritual power, one reality, one world, or one truth.

... my sense is that *the dialectic between universalism and pluralism, between the One and the Many, displays what may well be the deepest dynamics of the self-disclosing of Spirit.*<sup>6</sup>

“Ahhh,” I sighed, as I reached out and stretched with him, “why didn’t you just say so in the first place?” I hope Ferrer is planning a sequel – picking up in the next book where he’s left us with this one.

*Bonnita Roy*

**Frick, D. (2004). *Robert K. Greenleaf. A Life of Servant Leadership.* San Francisco: Berrett Koehler**

I picked up a biography recently, tired of books on leadership, developmental theories, integral theories and the like that have been the staple of my reading diet for too long now. At the same time, I didn’t stray too far from my usual interests. Last year, I read Robert Greenleaf’s *Servant Leadership*, and was inspired by his vision of being a servant first, and then from that orientation of service choosing to lead. His thoughts on the subject appeared to have as integral a perspective on life and leadership as anyone I had come across. My interest thus piqued, I was curious to gain insights into this perspective from understanding the life behind them.

Don Frick’s approach to biography veers from the standard account of the noteworthy life. He gives the reader a glimpse into the man behind the philosophy of servant leadership that has inspired many through vignettes that often focus as much on the context of Greenleaf’s life as the events. The reader is taken through many tangents that serve to illuminate small aspects of the picture. Tales of Eugene Debs, the socialist presidential candidate and union activist, of Theodore Vail’s presidency at the communications giant American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T), (where Greenleaf worked for over thirty five years), the Quaker movement in America during World War Two, and a host of other fascinating sidelights all illuminate the context in which Greenleaf’s thinking developed.

Frick does provide descriptions of interesting events and activities in Greenleaf’s life. His rapid rise within AT&T, his influence on a wide range of ventures; such as the reorganization of IBM under Thomas Watson Jr, the early formation of T-groups and the development of personnel assessment and training. The cast of characters Greenleaf met with and learned from reads like a who’s who of the times. His influence on the formal leadership at AT&T through a succession of Chief Executive Officers was enormous. His seminal influence on many projects that he consulted on, and his founding of the Center for Applied Ethics (later the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership) serve to further magnify the impact of the quality of his thinking and presence.

Impressive and fascinating as all of this is in itself, it is only the gateway Frick provides to invite the reader into glimpses of the depths of Greenleaf’s being. What drew me on in this narrative was the way Frick enabled me to feel like I was on the inside, temporarily able to perceive the world like Greenleaf. And what did I perceive in those moments? I saw life as a

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continuous inquiry into wholeness. Greenleaf described his philosophy as a “hole in the hedge” approach to life. Whenever he encountered anything of interest, he would slip through the hole in the hedge of everyday life and perceptions, and explore how some new person or idea could reveal another component of the deeper wholeness.

From this deeper encounter with Greenleaf the man, his seminal thinking on leadership came to life for me. I could now see the notion of the servant as leader, being a servant first who then chooses to lead, as an outgrowth of how Greenleaf lived his own life. This journal’s lead article and Kai Hellbusch’s contribution discuss Jean Gebser’s opening of the field of integral thinking. There he is quoted as characterizing the difficulties in representing integral by saying that “this world[view] goes *beyond our conceptualization*.” In the writings of Robert Greenleaf, and the description of his life that stood as a testament to this writing, there is a clear presence of a wholeness beyond our capacity for conceptualization. Frick’s biography manages to provide glimpses of this wholeness as it took form in Greenleaf’s life, and in this way appears to me to be as good an example of what it is to be integral as any I have encountered.

*Jonathan Reams*