

Political Aspirations for the Special Issue, *Toward Development of Politics and the Political*

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There is no question that in our age there is a good deal of turmoil about the manner in which society is run. Probably at no point in the history of man [sic] has there been so much discussion about the rights and wrongs of the policy makers...[We begin] to suspect that the people who make the major decisions that affect our lives don't know what they are doing...They don't know what they are doing simply because they have no adequate basis to judge the effects of their decisions. To many it must seem that we live in an age of moronic decision making.

—C. West Churchman (1968, p. iv) in *The Systems Approach*

Welcome to *Integral Review's* (IR) special issue on the theme *Toward Development of Politics and the Political*. Not only is this theme political. Beyond the content that shows up in a journal, the act of publishing itself is also political, political behavior we engage consciously at IR. This special issue integrates its political essays with the politics of publishing, the politics of inviting works to publish, and now the politics of writing an editorial. I use this editorial space for three purposes: to share our motivation for doing this special issue, to introduce its contents, and to reflect on such influences as these for integral thinking about politics and the political and what that can mean—I would say, *must* mean—in today's world.

Our stated aim for this special issue was to make a “politically significant contribution to public knowledge and discourse, to illuminate a comprehensive range of considerations that need to be integrated into effective approaches to today's—and the future's—political behaviors and complex political issues, policies, and systems.”¹ This aim is consistent with IR's mission to

publish a transdisciplinary and transcultural range of works that, taken as a whole, model integral ways of perceiving, thinking, researching, and serving the world we live in... In general, they will reflect some holistic understandings of issues in individual and social life, change, and development...[IR] encourages attention to the interactive dynamics among individuals, communities, organizations, societies, and international bodies. It invites attention to categories such as the socio-cultural, political, economic, technological, and environmental...to portray the range of factors that need to be integrated into effective approaches to today's complex issues.²

¹ From the original call for submissions to the special issue.

² Excerpted from <http://integral-review.org> and http://integral-review.org/secondary_to_homepage.asp



Thus, we have the conviction that *integral* ways of perceiving, thinking, researching, and serving the world apply holistic understandings to change and development, and that these are necessary to conceive the factors essential in solutions to complex issues. This conviction drives our commitment to publish *new* thought, research, and praxis. Realizing the potential of new work to help address such turmoil as Churchman declared 40 years ago, the purpose of this special issue is to offer new perspectives on politics and the political.

To accomplish this aim, we invited works drawn from one to many disciplines. We conveyed a broad conception of politics and the political. For example, works could relate politics to forms of power, government, and policy making (one dictionary definition) or, more broadly, governance. They could treat politics as the total complex of relations among people living in society (another dictionary definition). They could emphasize political ecology, political economy, political geography, political psychology, political regression, or political development. Regardless of authors' areas of emphasis, the treatments of politics and the political would be consistent with our normative interest in *developing* political relationships, behaviors, impacts, strategies, assumptions, processes, structures, systems, and formal and informal institutions. We welcomed such examinations at any scale from micro to macro. That meant works could range from the scale of individuals, groups, and nations to international and multinational entities and the global commons of humanity. And indeed, such an array comprises this issue.

The message *to develop* in the political domain comes also from one of the 20th Century's most integral thinkers. A hard-hitting invitation for transforming political thought and action, Bateson's message may be more poignant now than when he first delivered it 40 years ago.

If I am right, the whole of our thinking about what we are and what other people are has got to be restructured. This is not funny, and I do not know how long we have to do it in.... The most important task today is, perhaps, to learn to think in the new way.... The step to realizing—to making habitual—this other way of thinking—so that one naturally thinks that way when one reaches out for a glass of water or cuts down a tree—that step is not an easy one. And quite seriously, I suggest to you that we should trust no policy decisions which emanate from persons who do not yet have that habit.

—Gregory Bateson (1972/2000, pp. 468-469) in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*

How is one to “get” the dots Bateson connects here? What makes reaching for a glass of water comparable to cutting down a tree? And what relates doing such concrete tasks as *those* with the demands of making policy decisions? What *kind* of thinking is Bateson elevating to essential *habit*? As his extensive writing makes clear, he elevates *integral* thinking because in present-day contexts, the time to restructure the whole of our thinking grows only shorter while consequences of *not* doing so grow only greater.

Resonating with Bateson, our motivations to do a special issue looking toward development of politics and the political meant we too looked for integral thinking, “thinking in the new way,” in selecting manuscripts for publication. How were these evaluated for inclusion?

“Integral”³

Baseline Integral Criterion of IR

Here at IR, one of our baseline “integral” criteria is that works published exhibit some developmental or evolutionary awareness. This can and does look very different, depending on the nature and scale of an author’s endeavor. And that is because nature and scale of an author’s work involves different ways of focusing attention, driven by the author’s unique purposes. The deployment of developmental or evolutionary awareness in this special issue, for example, takes a multitude of forms when authors do one and sometimes more of the following:

1. Advocate for developmentally different dynamics including additional perspectives in a particular context to transform them.
2. Analyze different dynamics in a particular context so they can be understood developmentally.
3. Examine events or conditions to contrast “what is” with what needs to be developed (or was developed, or is in the process of developing).
4. Propose a method, policy, or action for developing something that one judges needs to develop for greater justice and/or effectiveness.
5. Report on a case or method that reflected developmental concerns either in the case/method itself or the report, or both.
6. Theorize or demonstrate a way to reframe assumptions, concepts, and/or approaches so their replacements contribute to more developed thought, research, or praxis (and praxis includes policy).

Such developmental and evolutionary purposes as these characterize probably all the works published in IR to date. Purpose shapes the *nature* of whatever humans produce. This brief discussion of how developmental awareness can show up is a platform for the following look at the concept of integral, where I suggest that different *scales* of attention make “what’s integral” show up differently.

Contested Term

It was about six years ago, when we were first considering how to entitle this journal, that I was not in favor of using the term *integral* anywhere in connection with it. My reasons were simple: already in 2004, the term integral was contested, with diverse meanings and projections slapped on it from various directions. To position the journal and its publisher in those unclear waters seemed to me, at the time, likely to divert energies that should be invested in the publishing mission itself. It would save time and energy to steer clear of those waters. Of course, as it turned out, we did not steer clear of them at all, but rather directly into them. We (the original editorial committee of ARINA, Inc., IR’s publisher) decided the journal’s main title could and should be *Integral Review* and that we would figure out how to tango with the politics and meaning-making around “integral” as we went along. And, that we have done.

³ Editors at IR can use the term *integral* in different ways. This writing reflects my perspective.

Thus, in conceiving how to approach this editorial, I was surprised to find myself feeling compelled to speak to the meaning of *integral* for this special issue. Prediction confirmed: it is time- and energy-intensive to deal with the extremely multifaceted challenge of using, communicating, and teaching about particular uses of *integral*. That is because there are already so many meanings and projections associated with it.

For some, “integral” refers to an individual scale of personal or spiritual consciousness or the kinds of individual practices one performs. For some, it may refer to Ken Wilber and/or AQAL, for some it may refer to identifying multiple perspectives, for others it may be different yet again, and for yet others it may be “all of the above, and more.” So be it!

The complexity of this multifaceted challenge signals to me that it is indeed time to develop a new paradigm for assessing “integral”—one that rises above such limitations as indicated above and many others besides. And one of those limitations is the time and communication dimension. I propose it is time to implement more content-free applications of “integral” by using it in the high-level fashion its core definition has always really suggested. We can elevate our use of the concept by elevating how we think *about* and *with* the concept and using *methods* that support that meta level use. Then we do not have to abandon the useful concept because its surrounding waters have become so murky. We can give the term *integral* a fresh start in a new generation of applications, which would perhaps be accessible enough that Churchman’s, Bateson’s, and others’ concerns for more integral thinking and policy would be closer to being addressed and transdisciplinarity would potentially have new modes of cross-cutting analysis. That is my current thesis.

Assigning Meaning to “Integral”

For many years, my meaning for “integral” has been in the dictionary sense of *essential to completeness*. This definition can be problematic, because as we know from a developmental perspective, what might be considered integral, essential and/or complete is different when done at different levels of complexity. We cannot assume a given concept means the same thing to everyone. This in turn confronts us with another fact of social life: language is inherently limited in conveying concepts (which is why I am discussing them here at all). When these facts of life are integrated, we can predict that *virtually every abstract concept can and will mean something different to people with different concerns related to it and to people reasoning at different levels of complexity about those concerns*. A developmental perspective generates this essential principle.

Is such a principle a propulsion into relativism around what integral “means” (or, for that matter, what any other concept means)? Not at all. Rather, it should propel us in three constructive directions.

- It should remind us that such abstract concepts are *only* concepts, not to be reified *as if* they “are” a specific or concrete “thing.”
- It should ground us in the essentialness of developmental awareness.
- It should divest us of certain assumptions and thus free us not only to be precise about criteria for considering what’s integral—essential to completeness—but also to be clear about the contexts of and scales at which we apply various criteria.

From the analytic perspective used here, what might be considered essential and/or complete will also depend on such additional factors as

- the complexity of a phenomenon,
- the information available,
- the complexity of the perception(s) of the phenomenon and the information, and
- the resulting complexity of the assessment(s) task itself, and
- methods and capacities to perform the assessment.

If there are so many crucial variables in the task of deciding what is essential to completeness, how can we put this particular definition of integral to good use?

In my analysis, clarifying the *nature and scale of an endeavor* is an important starting point. It affords a cross-cutting route into figuring out if and how an endeavor reflects an integral approach that is suitable *in and for the endeavor’s context*. Such a cross-cutting method begins with clarifying the nature of an endeavor and its scale. Once we have clarity about those variables, then we can analyze with lenses aimed both *at* and *beyond* the endeavor’s specific content. Only then, I would say, are we positioned to consider the appropriateness or sufficiency of the endeavor’s *depth*, certainly a criterion for completeness regardless of subject matter. Because systems of complex relations are nested within a multitude of other systems—and this recognition is a key one in considering the depth of integral analysis—scales are not mutually exclusive; multiple scales may be interrelated and/or integrated within one written work (e.g., see in this issue, Anderson, Atlee, Couto, Quilligan).

This discussion has introduced (though not completed) the notion that “integral” is an abstract concept that cannot be reified and will forever be contested if one insists it be given content-dependent applications. There *is* a way out of the contest. Rather than apply a pre-conceived notion of what might be integral, the “essential to completeness” angle affords reframing. Instead of trying to map an abstract, contested concept onto an endeavor as an evaluation method, we can focus our attention on the endeavor itself and ask, “Completeness of what, for what purpose?” This anchors us immediately in the endeavor’s context and scale. In other words, rather than take “integral” as a starting point, we can take the endeavor as the starting point and then consider what is “essential to completeness” about the endeavor. *The endeavor’s scale should set the scope for our assessment*. This means we need to adjust our lens to the endeavor and evaluate it *given its nature and scale*: align our evaluative units of analysis with the scale of the endeavor. Units of analysis will differ, depending on the variables to be analyzed.

For example, variables treated in this special issue range from the scale of constructs (e.g., *power, legitimacy, becoming-responsible, integral politics*), to the scale of attitudes toward

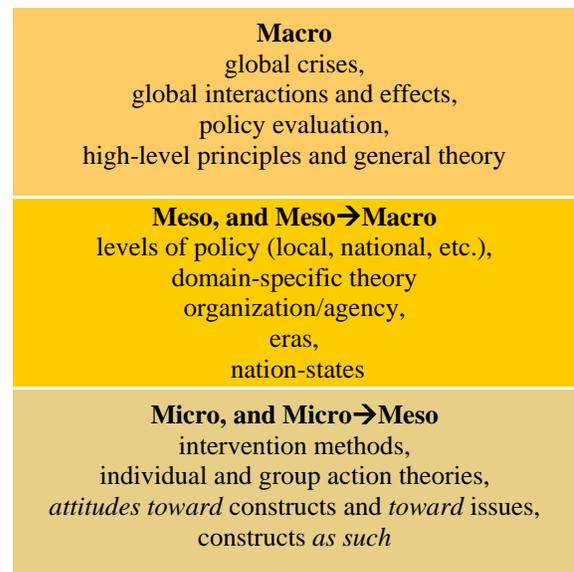


Figure 1. Examples of scales of endeavor.

constructs and toward issues, to the scale of theories, to the scale of individual and group action, to the scale of intervention methods, to the scale of nations, to the scale of eras, to the scale of policy, to the scale of global interactions, to the scale of methods to evaluate policy, and to the scale of global crises. Many of these may be interrelated and integrated within one author's work, resulting in multiple variables *of* different scales synthesized *at* another, higher scale.

These general ideas can be applied in a preliminary way right here. Figure 1 is a broad indicator of various scales addressed by authors in this issue. This approach to indicating the nature and scale of a given endeavor continues as I introduce the works by these authors.

In this Special Issue

Authors address their subjects at a variety of scales from the individual to global, and certain themes overlap and weave through these treatments. As devices for organizing this overview, I cluster articles by certain kinds of similarities in their nature and/or by shared themes. The vital caveat is that in no case can any of these articles be reduced to such simple categories: each offers more complexity than categorical schemes can convey.

Theory and Paradigm Development

Power: Unpacking, Reframing, Scaling

One way or another, perennial political topics of power and legitimacy weave through this entire issue, with quite a few authors offering complex renderings at contrasting and overlapping scales. In the hands of Phillip Guddemi, Richard A. Couto, and William R. Torbert, for example, an examination of *power* ranges from the most basic level of examining power as a construct, to a principled theory that reframes power and terrorism, to development of principles for the power of balance. The several participants in the rare kind of conversation modelled by Phillip Guddemi in his *A Multi-Party Imaginary Dialogue about Power and Cybernetics*—rare to our political detriment—question and deliberate the very construct of power, give it deep looks from dynamic relation angles, and come to a cybernetic reframing of power with implications for developing political wisdom. In *The Politics of Terrorism: Power, Legitimacy, and Violence*, Couto theorizes a new paradigm for understanding the politics of power and terrorism. In the course of doing so, he begins at the scale of first person experience and examines settings and interpretations, shifts to the scales of constructs, definitions, and theory where he reframes legitimate power and direct and indirect violence and terrorism, and develops this paradigm—which leads inevitably to his proposing a specific kind of reform of domestic and international policy toward terrorism as redefined here.

In excerpts of Torbert's 1991 classic, *The Power of Balance: Transforming Self, Society, and Scientific Inquiry* are essentials of his developmental action inquiry paradigm. As both political theory and action science, it describes a form of political power that encourages inquiry, even of its own foundations. He proposes new political principles of inquiry and quality—and what their elevation as principles means for society, academic disciplines, and practice. The emerging general theory of inquiry and its first, second, and third person practices span all scales.

Through these contributions and others introduced below, integral approaches to conceiving, using, and analyzing power, and to reforming policy and structures of power show up at micro to macro scales, a spectrum of potential influence on politics and the political.

“Integral Politics”? Defining, Proposing

Using distinctly different approaches to posit the need for, and then define, something called “integral politics,” Daniel Gustav Anderson and Tom Atlee nonetheless share complementary premises (e.g., becoming-responsible and conscious evolution, respectively) in arguing for integral political behavior originating at grassroots, micro scales and evolving at all scales. In “*Sweet Science: A Proposal for Integral Macropolitics*,” Anderson critically reviews two Wilber-integral models for their ontological assumptions and directionality and queries implications for politics founded on them. He develops his theoretical foundation from an opposite direction, elucidating it via drawing out Blake’s model in *The Four Zoas*, and contrasts its integral foundations with other models. Anderson analyzes at the scales of ontology, theory, and individual and collective behaviors. Atlee proposes his definition and dynamics of *Integral Politics as Process*, and explicates the ramifications across many domains of public life and behavior. Like Anderson, Atlee too has a conception of wholeness and organic coherence. In their analyses and discussions, both authors depict or at least meaningfully implicate micro, meso, and macro political scales, theorizing the dynamic behaviors associated with the kind of practical, principled integral politics they propose.

Organized Non-Partisan Political Interactions: Designing, Conducting, Learning

Interactive group efforts toward development of politics and the political reveal a variety of ways to integrate (implicit or explicit) theory and practice. The vista of multifaceted practice unfolds across six essays anchored in practical experience, two of these in the *Integral Review*-tradition of Russ Volckmann interviews with seasoned practitioners. Because these works discuss mostly in-person endeavors with individuals, they include the scales of self and groups, and therefore of social-perspective-sharing, a capacity long posited as characteristic of integral interpersonal design and practice.

Jake Chapman reports on *Lessons from a Pluralist Approach to a Wicked Policy Issue*, identifying archetypal voices commonly heard in his public policy work in the UK and making the case for a systems approach in public policy at the local level. Ken White analyzed findings from a series of action research with Generations Salon groups in the US, theorized about them, and now shares a different kind of archetypal analysis and introduces his three-dimensional model for practical, processual implications for why generational eras of US citizens can, and should, develop *Politics in a New Key: Breaking the Cycle of U.S. Politics with a Generational/Developmental Approach*. These contributions illustrate that archetypal patterns crisscross other scales of analysis, while affording their own individual- or time-transcendent scales.

Russ Volckmann sought interviews that draw attention to the scale of design principles and processes, seeking integral lenses on *Design and Sustainability* with Michael Ben-Eli and civic

engagement politics or *3D Democracy* with Jan Inglis. As Volckmann observes, theirs involve political acts often taken outside the realm of formal politics. By contrast, Elke Fein and Hans-Peter Studer report from the field in *Integral Politics: A Swiss Perspective*, recount the history of their NGO's several years of efforts, and announce the late 2010 planned launching of a political party, "Integrale Politik (ip)." Their report shares the meso scales of ip's processual and organizational development.

The foregoing endeavors include the scale of design of activist and/or participatory processes and interventions and those designs' relationship to public process and political structures, dynamic political cycles over short and long periods, issues that need to be addressed, and the evolutionary effects on, and of, culture and society at various scales.

Theory-Based Analysis

Elke Fein presents her project analyzing political discourse in Russia, in *Adult Development Theory and Political Analysis: An Integral Account of Social And Political Change in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia*. She conducts her analysis by comparing and building on various kinds of systems: historical conditions in past and present, effects of those conditions, and how political discourse is conducted. By interpreting conditions, behaviors, and discourse through the lens of political and adult developmental theories, she models an integral approach to synthesizing theory and application in supporting her argument's claims.

Meta / Analysis of Analysis

In *The Superbubble behind "The Great Moderation:" How The Brandt Report Foresaw Today's Global Economic Crisis*, James Bernard Quilligan's political economic framing reintroduces the Brandt Commission's work on its 30th anniversary. The scope of international monetary policy is more inclusive of other 21st Century concerns than meets the eye; for example, Brandt emphasized that sustainable development could not reach intended goals until the global monetary structure ceased to undermine the very changes upon which sustainability depends. Quilligan analyzes key types of structural imbalances as he compares conditions before and since the Brandt analysis. He identifies the large-scale sovereign, currency, and purchasing powers currently structured into the global system and supports the Brandt argument for reform of international monetary policy. Reform there will in turn reform the global political balance of power—if long-term structural roots of the global economic crisis are to be transformed.

To consider, much less actively address, restructuring relationships at the global level invites examination of assumptions about globalization or assumptions guiding analyses around the concept of "culture." Such tasks may both become easier and become more challenging after reading Meg Spohn Bertoni's *The U.S. Imperial Jugger-not: Saturation Points and Cultural Globalization*. Easier in the sense of being liberated from a handful of erroneous assumptions about the effects of globalization processes; more challenging in the sense of seeing nonlinear relationships among very large systems. Spohn Bertoni's project should set straight some common misconceptions about globalization and culture, and support more meta level views of global system dynamics, including her use of nonlinear dynamics concepts to expose the nature of the movement and saturation points of cultural globalization.

Such attributions of simple causation such as Spohn Bertoni puts to rest would be less likely to get traction if more meta level, systemic thinking characterised 20th-21st Century life and thought. Steven E. Wallis, in his *Towards the Development of More Robust Policy Models*, applies what he calls neo-integral thinking and metatheoretical methodologies to conduct critical comparisons of logic models. He proposes a deceptively simple quantitative test of robustness for policy designs' logic models, for learning and reflection in policy model building, and assessment of a model's sufficiency: how much complexity does it indicate was considered, by the way the model builds in the interrelationships of factors? Wallis proposes "neo-integral" thinking and methods should be applied to the creation of more mature policy models by encompassing greater complexity and a careful understanding of interrelationships.

Toward Development of Politics and the Political

To begin this piece with the Churchman and Bateson invocations from our past could introduce our motivations for publishing this issue, could highlight dismay at policy- and decision-making, could underscore continued urgency to set our planetary course aright, and could possibly reinforce attachments to the sidelines of theoretical armchairs and post-game or post-election 20/20 vision. These would be politics as usual, yes?

Yet our purpose here is to help our world develop beyond backward-looking politics as usual. The service of our present and future lies in the Eternal Now. The contemporary voices published here should give us hope. Why?

- Because they are doing pathfinding of the kind so essential to transforming 21st Century conditions.
- Because they are modeling pathfinding processes and directions that follow from them.
- Because such pathfinding and direction-setting make it clear there are countless roles for integral consciousness, thinking, and practice in developing politics and the political, writ large.
- Because there are tangible actions, projects, analyses, deliberations, policies, conferences, and reframings of directions to embark on *now* and they can and should take many forms at all scales. Why?
- Because systemic change depends on getting politics and the political developing and to get *that* development humming at all scales.
- Integral thinking and approaches are essential to structuring systemic change, and can be supported by a new paradigm for understanding and applying integral criteria.

We express our deep gratitude to each of the authors published here for their generosity in sharing their work, and special thanks to Thomas Jordan who helped with editing this issue. We hope this collection plays its intended role in fostering development of politics and the political.

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