

Special Issue Introduction

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Integral Education

The essays appearing in this special issue of *Integral Review* are selections from the proceedings of the 2010 California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) Founders Symposium on Integral Consciousness. This annual symposium provides a forum for CIIS community members and friends to exchange and deepen their understanding of integral consciousness, its evolution, and its relationship to the current planetary challenges and transformational processes. Each year the Symposium covers one or two major themes, as well as several other themes pertinent to the integral world view and its interface with academic disciplines. One of the major themes of 2010 was integral education.

Contributions to this issue are by a cross-section of CIIS community members including administrative leaders: President Joseph Subbiondo and Academic Vice President, Judie Wexler; three faculty members: Matthew Bronson, Ian Grand, and Kaisa Puhhaka; two alumni: Anne Adams and Christian de Quincey; and two current students: Maureen Dolan and Adrian Villasenor-Gallarza. There is also an essay by Lynda Lester, an active practitioner of integral yoga who was a guest presenter. The topics range the full gamut from integral philosophy, ontology, epistemology, methodology to pedagogy.

The editor's introductory article gives a summary of the founding vision, as well as ontological and epistemological principles of the integral framework expounded by Haridas Chaudhuri, founder of CIIS and his key collaborators.

Joseph Subbiondo gives a brief account of the history of CIIS and its predecessor institution, the American Academy of Asian Studies, focusing on several key founding figures of both institutions. He argues that the role played by these unique institutions of higher learning has been crucial in the cultural life of San Francisco Bay Area, and now continues to promote an integral, whole-person approach to higher education.

Judie Wexler, who has lead and facilitated the faculty discussions on integral education at CIIS in the last nine years, explores the concept of integral education as a way to prepare students for the complex, rapidly changing global environment in which they will be living and working. She contends that education must help students focus both internally and externally if they are to be effectively prepared. The experience of CIIS is used as a case study to discuss key dimensions of integral education.

Matthew Bronson showcases an integral approach to education through the lens of a trans-disciplinary graduate-level class on "Sexuality and Language." The class brought together students from six separate academic programs and drew from a wide array of performative and



arts-based modes of inquiry to create a deep context through which to unpack the complex relationships between language and sexuality.

Ian Grand draws on some key principles of integral philosophy, embodied spirituality, and transformative action in the world, to make a case for a creative emergence in this historical time of new possibilities of being and becoming. He stresses that the conditions, practices and tools of the historical era in which we live shape us as we shape them and writes that what becomes important in practice is to learn tools and perspectives that expand our ability to participate in the making of the world.

Kaisa Puhakka explores the tension between two movements in human evolution—shifting and settling—where shifting breaks out of existing structures and conceptual moorings and settling solidifies the movement of evolution into structures. Both are seen as essential aspects of the evolutionary process, but a bias for settling is noted among living creatures. She argues that for humans shifting arouses anxiety whereas settling promises security. She calls for a correction of this bias in the educational process to help realign human consciousness and culture with the rest of nature and cosmos.

Maureen Dolan examines some of the main topics in the works of Sri Aurobindo and Haridas Chaudhuri regarding the philosophical bases for an integral understanding. She describes concrete ways to introduce the integral paradigm into practice in the U.S. through an example of a particular undergraduate course she teaches at DePaul University in Chicago titled: *Body, Mind, Spirit: Yoga and Meditation*. Her introduction includes a brief description of the cultural milieu of 21st century American realities, identifying some of the conditions which can serve as impetuses to integral thought and action.

Anne Adams explores the critical role education plays in the attitudes and behaviors in our everyday experiences and introduces Integral education as a catalyst for transformation, moving our emphasis in education from gathering knowledge to growing consciousness through a paradigm shift which would fundamentally alter where our attention is focused—from having and doing to being.

Adrian Villasenor-Galarza addresses the need to incorporate often ignored perspectives and formulations derived from the “deep south” into the field of integral education as currently practiced at CIIS. The deep south—the metaphorical conglomerate of wisdom ascribed to the global south and associated epistemologies—is used as a broad framework from which he proposes, through the exploration of shamanic practices and symbols, the creation of an organizing vertical metaphor, a North–South axis of dialogue.

Christian de Quincey argues that the details of evolution or the structures of the brain are irrelevant to the study of consciousness. He maintains that science informs us only about the physical world whereas consciousness is non-physical and, therefore, there are no ontological leaps possible. He explores how we may account for the fact that consciousness exists in an otherwise physical universe.

Lynda Lester believes that the chasm between spirit and matter is bridgeable as predictable by Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy, which states that the entire universe is a manifestation of consciousness. She argues that science has changed our view of matter as solid and objective, to a view that is more complex and which includes the possibility that consciousness has a part in manifesting reality. She makes a case that some of Mother Mirra Alfassa's experiences in bringing supramental consciousness into her body bear similarities to the discoveries of quantum physics.

These writings provide an opportunity for the reader to become familiar with an example of how integral philosophy, epistemology, and pedagogy are currently understood and practiced at a pioneering institution of higher learning that aims to embody and practice a holistic world view in its overall approach to education. Despite the clarity of the founding vision, the actual processes of articulation and praxis of a whole-person approach to education are still in their infancy and are a perpetual experimental work-in-progress.

In the integral view, human beings are considered to be transitional beings and not a final product of evolution. It is hoped that this continual process of reflection on learning and praxis will facilitate the goal of educating and integrating the total person: attainment of wholeness of individual personality, and the collective fulfillment of human purpose on Earth.

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