

First Reflection of Integral Life Practice

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Before registration, limited information about this class "Integral Psychology and Spirituality" caused a feeling excitement . Partial knowledge suggested it leaned towards an upward spiritual direction on the map of human development rather than the more recognized downward soul route. Once the reading assignments began, the enthusiasm within me was quickly displaced by disillusionment. Looking at why my "State" of excitement so quickly changed to one of disappointment has been beneficial, lighting my big dark shadow a little more. Humans often fall into the trap of solving their neediness by depending on things outside of them, I had done the same, expecting the class to bring me that instant connection to spirit that lurks outside my waking state. The lessons so far have covered very familiar territory for me, providing no new material or great insight. These very early stages of an "Integral Life Practice" (ILP) have felt like trying on coat that all ready hangs in my wardrobe, I already know it fits and putting it on takes effort with little surprise or reward. At first I had a problem with this, but reading some of Ken Wilber's own words in his book "Integral Psychology" has helped. However, at this early stage I still hold onto some nagging reservations.

During a road trip this summer my Global Positioning System, faithfully, and without diversion, took me from A to B. The worry of getting lost had disappeared, but it was replaced by a loss itself and within four hours a solid visual map was open next to me. I desired to know my final destination, how far it was, what towns I would pass, how many rivers I would cross during my journey. My initial annoyance from doing ILP was the atomistic way it attempted to break down my instinctive holistic integrated view. It wanted me to look at a "GPS" view of my life, one step at a time, obstructing my bigger picture. Early on in ILP we were asked to treat the "Integral Frame Work" as a revisable map and not fixed territory, Wilber now connects this for me. In his book he notes that, we human beings are condemned to creating big pictures with "ever more details constantly altering the big picture and vice

versa" (Wilber, 2000, p. 2). Integral practice breaks down my familiar perceptive shape into sections, making me look at each in detail. The practice dissects a place I recognize into, Quadrants, Levels, Lines, Types and States. None of these are new territory either, but I had never considered how they might fit together to create a "crucial skeleton on which most other systems hang" (Wilber, 2000, p. 21). Even though a subjective self-portrait is limited and terribly partial, the execution of it will give me an objective apparatus to mold. This will enable me to not only articulate my "Great Hierarchy" of being and knowing, but offers a more structured way to change my bigger picture and vice versa.

No objections arise with the ideas incorporated in the practice, and the foundations of ILP appear sound. However, there is something missing in the execution for me, so far it has provided few stepping stones on my journey from dust to Deity. I am in agreement with Wilber when he says "higher development occurs when temporary states become permanent traits" (Wilber, 2000, p. 15). Unlike my past practices in Ritual, Reiki and the "Power of Now", which gifted temporary states with ease, my early practice here is not showing any immediate results. For a mainstream audience the practice brings critical learning's of non judgment, love, multi-perspectives and the many layers of awareness that will aid navigation through the waves and steams of the River of Life. ILP, in its integral desire, attempts to bridge the gap of academic levels. It places cognition as a separate developmental line, leaving the altitude of growth nonjudgmental. In so doing ILP risks its own drowning, it looks a little top-heavy with theory to float in the middle and not structured well enough to sustain any tidal wave from academia, this of course is a partial view from the level I currently float at!

There is a clear light at the top of the "integral mountain", but we are nowhere near there according to ILP. In the terms of a higher civilization we appear to be the builders of a grand united cathedral. Toiling every day we experience only fleeting moments of wonder, knowing we will never see the final structure in all its glory. Though the intention offers a both/and destination of a clear mind,

healthy body, open heart and commitment to a higher purpose, "a discovery of an infinite Self that has no self and no shadow" (Wilber & Patten & Leonard & Morelli, 2008, p. 66), the practice makes the mammoth trek ahead look daunting.

The world has become one of disagreement and growing numbers are being compelled to work out their own relationship to existence. The mood today is an alchemic one of finding pure essences to re-configure into new forms, an atmosphere of deconstruction and integration. The evolving brain has had to make up an image of its own reality, chew it up, then put it back together again, and people are drawing on a wide range of spiritual resources to find their own truth. Wilber's truth was found in the prime matter of perennial philosophy and he is mixing it in a "Great Nest" with modern thought. ILP feels like the very latest and most integrated resource, a radiant spirit that transcends and includes absolutely everything. According to "Dialectic" understanding (George W.F. Hegel's 1770 – 1831), ILP likely just crests another wave on our long evolution, completing itself through the process of opposites transcending into a higher synthesis. With planetary destruction looming and not able to go back, we are now seeing a fusion of Science and Spirituality into a higher synthesis. ILP offers a modern inclusive practice reflecting the current wave of desire for integration that has arisen in opposition to our witnessed segregation. Of course I am sure, ILP takes all this into account, its theory negates it being part of that theory. Unfortunately, in its desire for the ultimate integral practice it has employed yet another "New Language" automatically segregating itself, and just adding to the many choices out there.

ILP admits it is "No Quick Fix", it's all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states and all types (AQAL) framework proposes to map the Kosmos itself, offering up a cure for the current information overload. My own feeling is that a theory that includes everything leads to a naturally over complicated idea, and this one is derived out of our current masculine scientific dominant culture. I look forward to future revisions.

References

Wilber , K & Patten T, & Leonard, A & Morelli, M. (2008). *Integral Life Practice*. Boston: Integral Books.

Wilber, K. (2000). *Integral Psychology*. Boston: Shambhala.