

Toward an Integral Education for the Ecozoic Era

A Case Study in Transforming
the Glocal Learning Community of
Holma College of Integral Studies,
Sweden

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This article explores the 2002-2003 change in vision and educational philosophy of a grassroots international college in rural Sweden. The author proceeds with an integral assessment of the strengths and shortcomings of Holma College of Holistic Studies former modes of learning guided by a postmodern epistemology infected with narcissism, hypersubjectivity, and new age thought. Exploring new territory beyond the scope of the former holistic vision, the author articulates an integrally informed vision of education for young adults that offers a shared integral language, a functional life-world ethic, and comprehensive frameworks for transformative learning and development appropriate to our time. With the intent of proposing a model of praxis directly informed by the fields of transformative learning and integral studies, the author outlines and reflects on the first wave of integral education that emerged during the transition year to Holma College of Integral Studies.

Keywords: integral transformative learning; integral education; ecozoic; holistic

Introducing Holma College of Integral Studies

Picture innovative thinkers and visionaries of our time traveling great distances to a tiny experimental college nestled into the picturesque Swedish countryside, giving workshops to about 30 idealistic young adults from a dozen cultures. Imagine a typical misty morning outside the campus—where if you wander, you will find walking trails through local woods bordering fields with sheep grazing right outside the main faculty building. Visualize students rousing themselves from sleep to begin their morning practice of yoga, meditation, or

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running before breakfast, then off to a collegewide dialogue on the integral philosophy, perhaps a silent organic vegetarian lunch, followed by an afternoon of solitary or group projects in sustainable living. Later on, a lively talkative dinner over light music and an evening of liberating dance topped off with a group meditation for planetary peace.

If what social anthropologist Margaret Mead claimed is true, that small groups of concerned citizens become key agents for changing the world, what visionary educational models might support this endeavor? Five years ago, a group of Scandinavian philanthropists and social visionaries gathered in southern rural Sweden to explore this very question. Initially their collective answer grew into Holma College of Holistic Studies (HCHS), a 1-year intensive adult education program in personal and global well-being studies. As the founder and his associates originally recognized, there is a pressing need for alternative forms of higher education to offer a venue for the transformation of young adults. The postmodern university has largely not gone far enough in providing a wisdom-based educational space to serve students' learning or development in a comprehensive fashion that is appropriate to our time. Partly in response to this shortcoming, the seed idea for the project originated from the founder's insight that the modernist epistemological assumptions guiding Western thought will inevitably perpetuate our present world predicament of widespread local and global crisis. That is, unless we can learn about and practice new ways of thinking, knowing, and being in harmony with ourselves, one another, and the planet. During the first few years, on a practical level this founding conviction translated into the former faculty of HCHS implementing experimental varieties of holistic curriculum to complement the smorgasbord of weekly workshops held by visiting lecturers from Scandinavia. The initial aim of the program was a human potential education for the whole person. Workshops were designed to cultivate a variety of kinesthetic, emotional, and spiritual forms of intelligence to counterbalance the traditional emphasis on intellectual intelligence.

HCHS's holistic approach was shaped by a unique blend of postmodern new age ideology and the folk high school tradition known as the Swedish *folkbildning*. The *folkbildning* tradition of nonformal (as opposed to mainstream credential-based) learning originated from the Scandinavian social educational movements of the 19th century. Guided primarily by the work of N. F. S. Grundtvig, founder of the Nordic lifelong learning tradition, his "indirect method" (Christensen, 1991) proposed that students first learn to love life before they set out to reform their society. In practice, the indirect method involves shifting the pedagogical focus away from learning for the purpose of instrumental outcomes (measuring and assessing learning) toward a view of learning as intrinsic process (promoting the experience of learning as a function of well-being).

As this vision matured, faculty and students grew increasingly fascinated by the utopian ideology of the New Age movement and its "new paradigm" ideals for heralding what many were convinced was the beginning of a worldwide consciousness revolution. Inclined to inflating the imaginative hunches and projec-

tions of “mythical-magical consciousness” (Beck, 1996) while ignoring or avoiding the more disruptive forms of glocal change,¹ the former holistic vision sensitized graduates to the importance of the “being dimension” (Fromm, 1976), often to the exclusion of progressive forms of engaged action in the world. During the past 2 years as a student and later on as program coordinator, I have been involved with facilitating the change in vision and program direction to Holma College of Integral Studies (HCIS). This case study attempts to address the significance and implications of the change from a holistic to an integral vision and educational approach, with a particular focus on the microphase and macrophase shifts in learning that have taken place during the initial transition program year.

Beyond Partial Paradigms: A New Forward Universalist View

It is time to claim back the power of the Utopian vision. In the claiming back of the power of a vision of the world we want, as opposed to the world we don't want, adult learning has an important role to play. (Hall, 2002, p. 44)

Originally, the founding members of HCHS presumed that students required a radical change in their worldviews, an undertaking that could be initiated by a 1-year holistic learning journey. During this process, students would set forth on an adventure of self-knowledge that promised to eventually overthrow their “old paradigms” and provide an educational space to experiment with living the “new paradigm.” As former class years approached the close of our previous century, this particular Utopian vision offered a generous pluralistic frame for most students to invest their life and learning ideals into, in turn encouraging them to opt out from the ways of history that have not brought us the world we want.

As is largely self-evident, all utopian visions are rooted in some form of ideology, even if the vision is a postmodern one and claims to exist beyond the patterns and frameworks of ideology. Nevertheless, developmental growth spurts often bring about conditions where existing ideology is no longer “formatively appropriate” (O’Sullivan, 1999) for the needs of individual learners, the greater learning community, or an emerging historical period. In these instances, there is the call for a new vision and for a new way of thinking and practice—perhaps even a new ideology that integrates the postmodern critique of ideology. How then do we claim back the power of the utopian vision without succumbing to the mistakes of previous generations? How to avoid the perennial tendency to condemn the old ideal while gazing with naïve conviction through the lens of the new ideal? How to avoid taking for granted the tacit or hidden assumptions that pattern our perception toward certain predisposed conclusions? In other words, without rigorous and ongoing attention to how our thought processes and collective discourse influence reality, there is a pervasive incoherent tendency to su-

perimpose our ideals on reality. Without sufficient attention and inquiry into our individual and collective cognitive/emotional process, blind spots inevitably grow within individuals and our communities of educational praxis. These blind spots are augmented further when an overall perspective that is adequate to our new situation, our new relationships, and our new knowledge is lacking. Particularly if partial perspectives lauded as universal become dominant, and narcissistic tendencies cloaked as revolutionary are left unquestioned.

As mentioned previously, the former utopian vision of HCHS was largely informed by the romantic “new paradigm” ideology. Like many postmodern inventions, the “I’ve got the new paradigm paradigm” (Wilber, 2002) fires the human longing for change and growth. However, it typically proceeds without a clear language or coherent theory and praxis, further complicating the later process of successfully implementing the utopian conception into personal and organizational life. In most academic contexts, the concept of paradigm tends to be commonly associated with the groundbreaking scientific research of Thomas Kuhn. Nevertheless, it seems that appropriators of the term largely misunderstand the original meaning of the term (Wilber, 1995). Adherents of the “new paradigm,” whether postmodern or new age, often abide by a hidden reductionistic strategy in relabeling our Western tradition as *old paradigm*. Such an approach, in attempting to bring forth a breathing space for innovation, naively lacks an awareness of how cultural values and knowledge frameworks shift historically. Because the modernist paradigm is largely founded on a “dysfunctional” and “oppressive” set of traditional scientific assumptions, harbingers of the postmodern use of paradigm typically revert to a subtler version of the earlier reductionistic judgment that modernist scientists issued on the traditional religious orders and premodernity. As Ken Wilber noted throughout his extensive writings, the concept of paradigm becomes an important postmodernist weapon of deconstruction to undercut the authority of old facts and claims, which are brought down to the level of mere interpretations. The tendency to subjugate “objective” ways of knowing, in favor of elevating the formerly repressed “subjective” domain brings about a lethal bias where objective forms of factual evidence are treated lightly, ignored, or in many extreme cases, completely disregarded. In this popular usage, the new paradigm is reduced to whatever theory or worldview happens to be the flavor of the season. For HCHS, the former new-paradigm postmodern educational program offered an “anything goes” assortment of “holistic” or “new age” learning practices that in announcing themselves as free from the stronghold of traditional educational methodologies developed a substantial blind spot to the insights and vital knowledge of previous traditions.

As a point of contrast, the integral paradigm aspires to reinfuse the meaning of *paradigm* with Thomas Kuhn’s original emphasis by working with the theory, superstructure, and the exemplars and practices. Over the past transition year, students and faculty have grown to appreciate the mark of a new paradigm within the integral context as “containing more depth than its predecessor and in turn throws the old approaches into a legitimation crisis that can only be resolved by

vertical transformation—an increase in authenticity” (Wilber, 2003). In spite of the gifts of postmodern theory and holistic/new age practices, both tend to endorse a view of history as a series of complete ruptures with no continuity. O’Sullivan (1999) pointed out the significance of making a “fundamental rupture from the western model of schooling” when positing a critical transformative theory. However, whereas making a rupture from one’s previous tradition is initially appropriate, a successful change in an integral context is assessed by the move to a higher, more inclusive worldspace of consciousness and culture. Such a move attempts to embrace the gifts of previous periods and epochs while attempting to limit past failures and shortcomings through the integral dynamic of “transcend and include” (Wilber, 1996). This leaves us with an important question of emphasis: What vital aspects of a given tradition might be worthy of our inclusion? During our Integral Study Circles, students discovered a partial answer in Wilber’s (1995) fifth tenet, which describes how the exclusivity and pathological structures of the previous phases are carefully negated through inquiry and collective awareness, in turn allowing for a deeper and wider embrace of the previous functional structures. In making the transition from a holistic to an integral college, our leadership team discovered the necessity for ongoing inquiry and dialogue to bring about a healthy emergence of an integral educational approach that could recognize the value of former holistic practices.

Unlike the former holistic paradigm emphasis on “the whole,” the integral paradigm recognizes the well-being of the individual set within a greater commitment to the interests of “the all” (Wilber, 1995). It then proceeds to enact this concern through developmental frameworks and a growing comprehensive language of “orientating generalizations” (Wilber, 1977). It is important to note that in practice, references to the whole tend to represent one’s metaphysical commitments or preferences, which exclude what is not encompassed within one’s ideas of wholeness. The integral paradigm proceeds from a dynamic nested cosmological series of nested whole/parts or “holons”² (Wilber, 1995). Unlike the former holistic approach, which attempted to join different wholes and then label them as unique and equally valid as any other whole, the integral worldview introduces “worldcentric frameworks that bring about worldcentric awareness”³ (Wilber, 1999), providing students with a rudimentary basis to differentiate and then integrate the partial truths of different knowledge traditions. As a pragmatic metaphilosophy, the integral approach attempts to offer (a) a shared language to address the specific issues and problems that divide us; (b) a functional life-world ethic that is careful not to reduce, oversimplify, isolate, or fragment our understanding of our place in the world; and (c) multidimensional perspectives and developmental frameworks designed to illuminate our blind spots, oversimplified pictures of reality, and mistaken assumptions drawn from earlier periods of history and the present day.

Characteristic of any dialectic of progress, at Holma College there have been some truly memorable breakdowns and subsequent breakthroughs in changing from a holistic to an integral vision and educational approach. To offer some per-

spective on what this changeover encompassed in theoretical terms, the first stage of integral emergence at HCIS focused primarily on Ken Wilber's articulation of the integral paradigm alongside emerging integral theorists and visionaries.⁴ During this initial stage, I ventured an extensive critique of the formative appropriateness of HCHS's holistic vision and postmodern new age roots while attempting to outline a comprehensive probability space for the emergence of new educational maps and territory. The central components of this process included Wilber's AQAL approach⁵ and Spiral Dynamics Integral among a growing body of learning developmental frameworks that attempt to integrate the whole individual into the nested contexts of the whole Kosmos (Wilber, 2000). In the following section, I will introduce a basic integral perspective to transformative learning to convey how the change from a holistic to integral vision and practice played out within the HCIS learning community during the initial transition year.

Integral Transformative Learning

Beyond the looking glass, in a monastery, through the gate of purgatory, or under the tutelage of a master, there is a liminal place in which education can transform individuals, organizations, and societies. There one can get an education distinct from that acquired on the traditional path taken from infancy to majority. An education that is transformative redirects and reenergizes those who pause to reflect on what their lives have been and take on new purposes and perspectives. The transformation begins when a person withdraws from the world of established goals to unlearn, reorient, and choose a fresh path. (McWhinney & Marcos, 2003, p. 16)

Harvard professor of adult learning and development Robert Kegan (1982; Kegan et al., 2001) claimed that the two greatest yearnings in human experience are to be included and to experience a healthy sense of agency. To this pairing, I will add a third yearning—the need for transcendence or the intrinsic pull toward transformation. Over the past 5 years, the desire for personal and collective transformation has undoubtedly been the strongest common attractor in bringing students to Holma College. Like the fragmented wheel in Shel Silverstein's book *The Missing Piece*, each year students roll into the college seeking something that promises completion or wholeness, only to discover an entirely unexpected piece. Traditionally, the path of personal and spiritual development was not open to seekers until midlife, where it became customary to withdraw from society into the monastic lineages of the various world wisdom traditions. The more contemporary institutional expressions of this perennial existential drive, at least within the field of adult education, tend to be supported by privately funded transformative learning initiatives such as Schumacher College (England), California Institute of Integral Studies (United States), Omega Institute (United States), Findhorn Foundation College (Scotland), and HCIS (Sweden).



Figure 1: Holma College of Integral Studies Symbol

During the transition year, the HCIS leadership team, students, and I applied an integral perspective to learning about the pre-given and co-emergent conditions for transformative learning to take place. Previous “mental models” (Senge, 1994) of transformative learning at HCHS largely existed in an antihierarchical “flatland” (Wilber, 1996) social context, with a moderate postmodern suspicion of supposed “rational frameworks” claiming any metaperspective or developmental enfoldment of personal and collective capacities. With the move to an integral approach, we introduced models supporting the assumption that our personal and social worldviews are embedded “actualization hierarchies” (Eisler, 1987) that like Russian dolls “are marked by systems within systems within systems within systems” (Beck, 1996, p. 47). Within an integral theoretical context, depending on where one’s center of gravity is situated on the memic spiral of development, most students entered the college unconsciously embedded in a unique combination of either traditional, modernist, or postmodernist worldviews. By acknowledging the meme color that corresponds to the increasingly complex dimensions of values and worldviews that inform each student’s individual consciousness, we arrived at a new set of distinctions to articulate the process of individual and collective change. In turn, this invited a new language to navigate the “worldview” and “values” developmental lines⁶ of integral transformative learning territory.

Micro Dimensions of Transformative Learning

In considering the micro or psychological dimensions of the transformative process in the learner, at the outset, I differentiate between *ego processes* (capabilities) on one hand and *self-embeddedness* on the other hand (Jordan, 2000). The first category consists of functions, tools, or abilities that students rely on in their learning. Self-embeddedness, the second category, comprises those aspects of consciousness that characterize what the self is in terms of the nested cores of meaning and identification. For the purposes of illustrating how the transformative process unfolds developmentally within students, I will focus on the latter distinction within the framework of Spiral Dynamics Integral.

Returning to the word *form*, which lies at the heart of the term *transformation*, we discover a clue about what is changing. From the perspective of developmental psychology, the core form that transforms is the self-structure in which the learner is embedded. As the learner's self develops a new stage of consciousness, one's existing self-structure undergoes a gradual or dramatic reconstruction into a wider and more encompassing self-structure. A key objective of a transformative developmental initiative is to provide an educational context that both catalyzes and supports students toward developing increasingly comprehensive worldviews and values that broaden their self-sense and scope of identifications with one another, humankind, and ultimately the planet. The theoretical language of Spiral Dynamics Integral positions human accolades of consciousness within a model that traces our evolutionary development back to 100,000 years ago with the first appearance of the "beige meme"⁷ up to the emergence of early "second tier memes"⁸ of our present day.

Transformation within the context of Spiral Dynamics Integral acknowledges that our self-structure contains a center of gravity within a particular meme. At any given stage or meme, there is a personal and collective dimension of values and organizing principles that we chiefly identify with. Then a catalyst is invited into the self-system, either through the trigger of a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) or a "negentropic experience"⁹ (Kegan, 1994); as a pedagogical imperative, at Holma College we experimented with integral strategies (awareness, behavioral, and social practices) to help students disidentify with their former stage to develop a receptivity to the new one. Often this involved finding constructive ways to disengage the defensive ego with awareness practices by inviting students to recognize and ultimately let go of inhibiting egoic patterns, fears, and self-contractions. In turn, by inviting the subtle processes of "meta-awareness"¹⁰ (Jordan, 2000), most students gradually learned to identify with the transformative process rather than to a fixed personality form. To shift from identifying with static representations of the self to the self as a dynamic process, Kegan stressed the need to bring about the right blend of challenge and support. This in turn helps facilitate the emergence of higher orders of consciousness within the learner by moving more and more of what was "subject"¹¹ to what is "object."¹² As individual development unfolds, more complex forms of

interior experience become “objects” of awareness (sensations, feelings, impulses to act, and also, thoughts, worldviews, and systems of thought). Put in more experiential terms, I am no longer my feelings, I have my feelings; I am no longer my thoughts, rather I observe my thoughts and with practice become less identified with my thoughts.

Understanding the dynamic of moving from subject to object helped accelerate students’ cognitive capacities to make the proverbial leap across the “second tier”¹³ developmental chasm that lies between the “green meme”¹⁴ and “yellow meme”¹⁵ (Beck, 1996). Considering the prime directive of the integral transformative ideal in greater detail, at HCIS the developmental goals surrounding the green meme (Beck, 1996) are roughly outlined in the following trichotomy¹⁶: Students at pregreen are exposed to healthy green ideals and values, students at green are encouraged to disidentify with their green center of gravity and consider AQAL possibilities for further development, and finally, those students at early second tier are encouraged to view the entire spectrum of first-tier memes as essential dimensions to the overall health of our personal and societal development.¹⁷

To increase the likelihood of the disorientating dilemma leading to fruitful consequences, as a part of our integral curriculum we explored the importance of bringing about the conditions for “integrating circumstances” (Clark & Wilson, 1991) in students’ lives. The measure of the effectiveness of integrating circumstances depends largely on the quality of the “holding environment”¹⁸ (Winnicott, 1965). Kegan (1982) viewed the holding environment as intrinsic not only to infancy but to the greater upward course of human evolution. According to Kegan, we all pass through a succession of holding environments that are formative in shaping our development both as “individuals” and “embedduals”. To help students develop their capacities for providing a holding environment, we introduced Kegan’s three functions of “holding on, letting go and remaining in place” (Kegan et al., 2001) in conversation. The first gesture of holding on is expressed by supporting the present self-structure and personhood of a fellow student as they work through something challenging or new. The second gesture involves letting go and is demonstrated by appropriately challenging the perspectives and self-structures that one’s fellow student wishes to outgrow. Finally, the gesture of remaining in place involves the repeated attempt to provide a consistent space of unconditional awareness without judgment, which helps students integrate these changes. The challenge of serving the student’s development within course lectures and the greater living community was always present. Retrospectively, I understand how each gesture is significant in a learner-centered educational context to provide students with the skills to prevent a breakdown in their capacity to live with the developmental tensions of the transformative learning process.

In the next two sections of this article, I will explore how an integral approach to transformative learning informed the HCIS student curriculum and pedagogy during the 2002-2003 program.

Integral Transformative Practice (ITP)

Introduced nearly 30 years ago, Jack Mezirow's step-based model of the cognitive-rational dimension of transformative learning has recently inspired scholarly writing concerning how the diverse and often competing perspectives of transformative learning theory can fruitfully coexist (Cranton & Roy, 2003). In Mezirow's (2000) paradigm, learners orientate from their "frames of reference" and engage in critical reflection when there is a breakdown in personal meaning. However, because Mezirow tends to conceptualize these frames as predominantly cognitive maps within a postmodern epistemology of pluralistic relativism, it becomes a bewildering challenge to address the respective dimensions of a given transformative learning experience (i.e., kinesthetic, emotional, imaginative, transpersonal, etc.) in practice.

From an integral learning context, the cognitive line of development is recontextualized alongside two dozen other vital developmental lines.¹⁹ In educational circles, these developmental lines are referred to as *intelligences* in a manner made well known by Howard Gardner (e.g., kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, emotional intelligence, cognitive intelligence, etc.). Picking up where Gardner left off, Wilber (2003) outlined these lines as a key dimension of his integral AQAL system (all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, and all types). Unpacking the significance of "levels and lines" simply means that a student can be at a fairly high level of development in some lines (i.e., cognitive), at a medium level of development in other lines (i.e., interpersonal), and at a fairly low level in yet others (i.e., moral). This makes intuitive sense as we all know students or teachers who are highly intelligent but not very ethical or people who are highly advanced in some skills and not as developed in others.

From this brief analysis, it is clear that an integral perspective of transformative learning theory looks markedly different from conventional partial-perspectives. Rather than conceptualizing the different intelligences in competing frameworks, the respective lines of development are honored as existing at different stages of realization within a particular student. For instance, the role of reason and emotions in transformative learning are no longer conceptualized as conflicting approaches (Grabov, 1997) but rather are reframed as forms of intelligence that develop somewhat interdependently in stages.

Committed to meeting the learning needs of students, we implemented the Integral Transformative Practice (ITP)²⁰ as an integral technology to help students become more conscious of how they are developing their different intelligences as well as other integral capacities. Introduced as an integral framework, most students gravitated to the ITP as a practical means to consciously direct and shape their learning and development in accordance with other integral and holistic models. As a registry or balance sheet outlining the personal tools and practices students favored, the basic idea of integral transformative practice is simple: The more aspects of our being that we simultaneously exercise, the

more likely that transformation will occur through the activation of “multiple catalysts” (Swimme, 2003) on different levels of one’s body, mind, soul, spirit in self, culture, and nature. Collectively, the ITP helped students move away from narcissistically interpreting or translating their transformative learning experiences in personal terms alone by connecting them with the different collective dimensions of their experience in the community and the world.

Holma Dialogue Project

Alongside the ITP, our college-wide Holma Dialogue Project (HDP) served as a vital practice space in helping students bring about the collective conditions for transformative learning. Inspired by the MIT Dialogue Project, the HDP soon grew into an open learning site for students and staff to build theoretical and practical knowledge of how to initiate and sustain reflective and generative forms of dialogue.²¹ Focusing on issues from different disciplines and our learning community, within the Holma Dialogue Project students explored new methods of collaborative inquiry and knowledge creation. By incorporating personal and social change as mutually constitutive of each other, the students engaged with one another through an emancipatory pedagogical form that not only brought about transformative changes in the learners but within the group and our greater learning community as a whole.

Providing a bridge between the micro and macro contexts of transformative learning, in the 2002-2003 HDP, students explored the metaphor of dialogue as a “social meditation” (Senge & Wheatley, 2001). Because HCIS tended to attract students with an interest in spirituality, most began the program as novice meditators from different wisdom lineages, primarily Buddhist. In many respects, the collective familiarity with mindfulness-based forms of meditation practice helped students make the transition to practicing some of the basic principles of generative dialogue (i.e., suspension of judgment, inquiry into tacit assumptions, deep listening, etc.). Over the course of the program, individual and group rituals of meditation practice became an effective means for helping students loosen their identification with pervasive thought reflexes and conditioned patterns of interaction, in turn opening up new possibilities for collective intelligence. From learning to listen to each others’ words as well as the tacit nonverbal communication that accompanies our words—in this primal sensing, waiting, and opening, students often experienced a way of communicating that felt like a single bodymind (Bohm, 1996). Unlike “groupthink” (Irving, 1972),²² in many respects we found this particular quality of meeting inspires creativity and transformative learning insofar as students can sustain a collective awareness through further inquiry, in turn avoiding the temptation to bask in the highs of a peak group experience. At the very least, occasions in making direct existential contact with each other and the larger field of collective intelligence became a form of healing. These peak experiences also developed a kind of heart-centered tolerance, safety,

or acceptance of the messy stages of dialogue when students revert to more discussion and debate-based modes of conversation.

Macro Dimensions of Transformative Learning

Panning a panoramic perspective along the diversely populated shores of adult education in Western culture, it seems that the postmodernist wave has left a significant imprint. The early deconstructive variety with its dogmatic relativism, fragmenting skepticism, courting of conflict, and general cynical tone was necessary, at least initially, to break away from the stronghold of the modernist tradition (Callicott, 1994; Wilber, 2003). Nevertheless, in its extreme varieties, the deconstructive forms of postmodernism have failed to bring about a larger integrating context and in its place resurrected a dogmatic skepticism toward any intellectual system or paradigm attempting to outline the whole of reality.

Panning further along the present shores of adult education, the later “reconstructive” or “constructive” (Slattery, 1995) varieties of the pluralistic postmodern wave have notably kept a cleaner beach. On this beach, you will find a wide holistic variety of educational practices (Miller, 1996) and the emerging integral paradigm. As is customary practice in academia, the macro educational context serves the development of the micro context; theories and practice within the field influence local forms of knowledge creation.

In terms of articulating the macro dimension for 21st-century educational theory, there is a pressing need to transcend the anthropocentric framework of interpretation of our present epoch by contemplating our collective evolutionary destiny from the vantage point of the history of planet Earth. Framed by O’Sullivan (1999) as a personal and cultural movement from the “terminal cenozoic to the sustainable ecozoic,” we are invited to consider a breadth and depth shift in the greater historical context in which we make meaning. Decentering the human focus from the “self” and “in group” appreciations to the emergence of the sustainable ecozoic signifies a larger embrace of both the human and more than human family of our ultimate home planet. In striving to provide a transformative educational space for students to realize a viable mode of human presence on the Earth, integral participation within a larger shared vision that humankind can support is increasingly becoming a vital necessity.

Initially envisioned by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme (1994), the ecozoic era is embodied in the generative possibilities of our present historical period, where the integral functioning of the human enterprise of learning is considered within a planetary context. At HCIS, we redirected the scope of this integral functioning within our learning community to include the immediate individual and social contexts that we are embedded. Paradoxically, in becoming transparent to our immediate context, we learn to push past our anthropocentric blind spot that cannot see the whole contexts we are ultimately situated in. In this way, the ecozoic calls on the guiding image of concerned individuals and groups observing

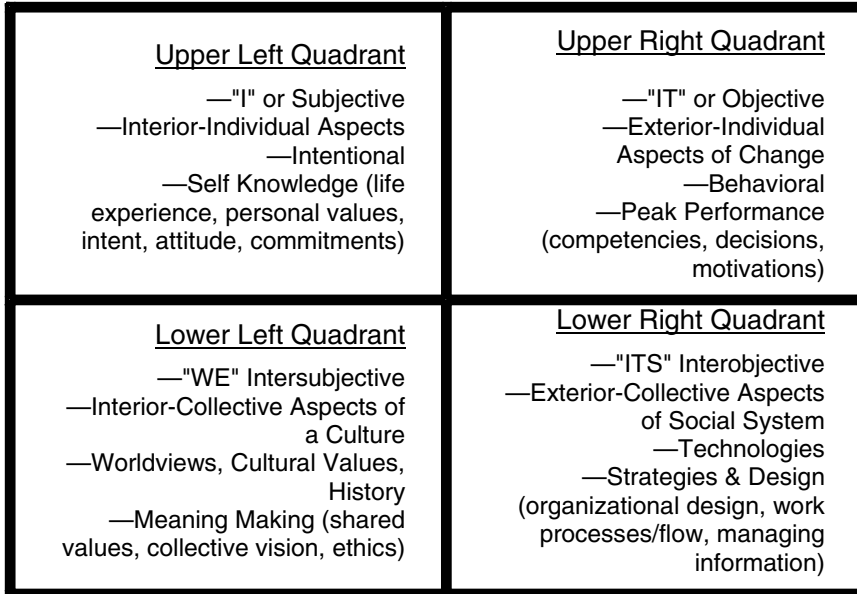


Figure 2: The Four Quadrants
SOURCE: Wilber (2003).

our whole Earth community suspended in a sea of dark space within the larger kosmos as we attend to personal and regional issues.

Through our college-wide dialogues, students and faculty arrived at the insight that the emphasis on restoring the cosmological sense of the human must integrate the personal and collective interior dimensions that were formerly left out from the modernist scientific use of the term *cosmology*. Invested with modernist assumptions, *cosmos* tends to refer to the hard physical reality of the greater universe. Wilber's (1995) term *kosmos* on the other hand embraces a key emphasis of the traditional and prescientific worldviews that acknowledges not only matter but also the subtle correlative forms of mind, soul, and spirit in and of the world. Unlike the traditional religious or scientific meanings of *cosmos*, the integral version of *kosmos* moves us into nested, distinctive contexts from the personal to the interpersonal, local and ultimate aspects of the universe as the always present backdrop to each moment, as conceptually illustrated by Houston Smith's (1992) insightful diagram that unites different levels of reality with different levels of selfhood (Figure 2).

An Ecozoic Education for Comprehensive Integrity

How do we love all the children of all the species for all time—not just our children, but all the children and all the species? (William McDonough)

At HCIS, the ecozoic emphasis initially involved reconnecting with our former folk high school lineage of learning to love life in all forms first, then extending this love out from the personal to more universal horizons. Waking up to the realization of how most students are longing for an intrinsic experience of “impersonal love” (Cohen, 2002) or forms of love characterized by an altruism that is not dictated by self-interest alone, it becomes necessary to rekindle a basic understanding of how to live together in harmony, how to think together through collective awareness, how to reconnect with a sense of place and the earth, and from this existential ground, allow a fundamental faith in life to reemerge and extend itself in all directions within and without.

Returning to the subject of cosmology as a focus point of educating for the ecozoic, we begin to rediscover what was basic to universities of the premodern period. As ecotheologian Mathew Fox (2001) elaborated, “The university was invented in the 12th century. At that time there was a big influx of cosmology, where the west was rediscovering the cosmos. What university meant was a ‘place to find your place in the universe.’”

Similarly, HCIS strives to honor this ancient educational imperative of rediscovering our place, purpose, and sense of direction within the greater kosmos. Endeavoring to raise to the challenge of serving as a nondogmatic comprehensive life-world vision, the integral approach finds an appropriate referent in the positive guiding image of individuals and groups on Earth aspiring to pursue those good, true, and beautiful actions that serve the realization of a wholesome future for the benefit of all. Extending our horizons of concern beyond the local and global marketplace, the ecozoic has helped students of HCIS cultivate a transpersonal context to nourish their “ultimate concerns for ultimate things” (Tillich, 2000).

By contemplating the abuse of the Earth as a “one time endowment” (Berry & Swimme, 1994), HCIS students work with the “disorientating dilemmas” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) of the “dynamics of denial, despair and grief” (O’Sullivan, 2002) that inevitably surface whenever we confront the legacy of the cenozoic period. By partnering the ecozoic vision up with the integral paradigm, the dream body of the ecozoic finds a chassis to drive it, offering more than a “narrative of projected idealism” (O’Sullivan, 1999), which tends to characterize HCHS’s former holistic approach. Concerning the integral approach, the ecozoic vision offers students both empirically and imaginatively sound frameworks to experience for themselves the majesty of the universe as a “multivalent mystery” (Swimme, 2001). For instance, during our Canticle to the Cosmos film festival, featuring a 12-hour lecture on the story of the universe as told by mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme, students are invited to discover a new conceptual and experiential sense of home within the 15-billion-year-old universal context we all presently stand amidst. From our field projects with other ecozoic visionaries including Henryk Skolimowski²³ and Ritta Warnstrom,²⁴ students recover a sense of local and regional rapport with the forces of evolution that shape our endangered planet, in turn helping them develop the often latent sensibility of pro-

found wonder and connection with our “earth as our original sanctuary” (Skolimowski, 1981).

Over the course of the program, students are invited to discover firsthand their “great work”²⁵ (Berry, 2000) through inclusive terms of relationship with one another, the planet, and ultimately the universe. As integral hands birth this initiation, we give careful attention to limiting yet appreciating the former scientific paradigms that prevented this individual and collective transformation from taking place. For many students, this has helped them outgrow their inherited reductionistic stories about the universe as a strictly physical reality with predictable laws. Combined with Amit Goswami’s course on quantum physics,²⁶ we invite students to make discontinuous leaps toward becoming engaged participants in building a lived integral cosmological understanding of the universe where their reason and intuition are free to intermingle on complementary terms. In recognizing the dynamic interplay on all levels of life, we in turn forge the functional possibility of an integral cosmology that strives to embrace humanity as a species with an immanent and transcendent “telos” or purpose, not a teleology or finalism that states an overriding purpose to action in general. In learning to celebrate the special cultural contributions of each region through an integral ethic, we move love out of its narcissistic ethnocentric bound context back into the world as the “primary allurements or attractions of each part of the universe for every other part” (Swimme, 2001, p. 50).

An Integrally Informed Approach to Learning

During the course of the HCIS program, students develop what we decided is best characterized as an “integrally informed” education (Wilber, 2003). Such an aim does not involve getting students to integrate all existing forms of knowledge within an eclectic framework, which simply asserts that everything is connected to everything else, as in the former holistic approach. Rather, the integral framework strives to expand its heuristic scope through an AQAL approach (all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, and all types) within the four quadrants or dimensions (intentional, behavioral, social, and cultural) that more specifically indicate how everything is connected to everything else.

For most students, the process of becoming integrally informed involves cultivating an embodied awareness of the integral approach in their personal projects and the self-designed curriculum of their integral learning portfolios. Implemented with the changeover to HCIS, the integral learning portfolios helped students develop a coherent picture of themselves as learners over the course of the year. Overall, the learning portfolio became process intensive while empowering students to self-assess or otherwise improve their learning on a long-term basis.

Moving toward an integrally informed approach helped students develop a coherent set of tools, frameworks, and practices to be “the change they wish to see

in the world" (Gandhi, 1983). For instance, the former holistic orientation of transcendence tended to lead students to disassociate from whatever past content of knowledge or experience they were leaving behind (personal or Western history) to develop their personhood. Inevitably, forms of world or "spiritual bypassing" (Welwood, 2000) brought about imbalances in students' learning and personal development where one learns to justify evading personal difficulties in daily life by subtly escaping through spiritual means of inner transcendence. Again, the basic integral orientation of transcend and include introduces an ethic of rigorous participation and caring that is rooted in the insight that the sphere of problems or dilemmas in our life are necessary trials to engage with through integral "aperspectival" (Gebser, 1986) means. The aperspectival process involves selectively constructing AQAL cognitive representations of the situation as a whole while bringing about the conditions for a "unitive experience" (Jordan, 2000) that involves not psychologically splitting off from the parts or positions that one is averse to. Tendencies to dissociate from the psychological dissonance of worldly struggles are curbed with the insight that dissonance can help students become more aware of their positions, "when I'm shocked at another's position I have the opportunity to see my own position in greater clarity. Our ally is disturbance" (Wheatley, 2002, p. 34). Integral transformative development requires a respectful contact with the dissonance and suffering in the physical forms of our bodies, communities, local surroundings, and greater Earth. In the desire for communion with life as it presents itself, therein lays a choice: to embrace the possibility of meeting the pain and pleasure of present reality as it is or to avoid the pain and navigate toward pleasure. Fruitful encounters with the painful and pleasurable dimensions of life begin by reframing these disorientating dilemmas as triggers for initiating the integral transformative process.

As mentioned previously, an integrally informed ethic has also led to a collective questioning of the former founding principle that we focus on ourselves first if our intent is to change the world. Initially it was an appropriate insight for the early postmodernists who sought healing from the pervasive dualistic split between self and world. However, for the later constructive postmodernist or integral student, this insight does not place enough emphasis on the participatory nature of change (Ferrer, 2002) between self and world and tends to emphasize the narcissistic self that cleverly adopts a conceptual scheme where self-focused change strategies are adopted in place of world-focused ones. In turn, this brings about a shadow side where individuals become caught in the muddy interiors of their existential situation and meanwhile the world is neglected.

Cultivating an integrally informed perspective within the domain of personal development encouraged students to move away from associating spiritual pursuits only with what is personal, pleasurable, or fun and engaging with the full spectrum of reality as necessary for realizing total transformation for the whole person in the whole kosmos. The shift from "experientialism" (Ferrer, 2002) involves moving from a hyperreliance on intrasubjective views to a more expansive "participatory view" (Ferrer, 2002) of different interrelating dimensions of real-

ity. The move to embracing participatory notions of how we construct reality, especially through the experience of community-wide generative dialogues, has helped students pay more attention to the diversity of “multiple catalysts” (Swimme, 2002) that trigger the transformative process, including situations where “transformative learning occurs without the intervention of adult educators, or an intentional educational project” (Schugurensky, 2002, p. 60).

Venturing an integrally informed approach to both the college and students’ visions led to a noticeable change in the archetypal visionary images informing students’ life-world paths during the transition year. In striving to work with the challenges that accompany the transformative path, the integral approach expanded the visionary context of HCHS’s former shared vision for “personal and global well-being studies” to one of “personal and global change studies.” As a holistic college, former students strongly identified with making the transition from a “having orientation to a being one” (Fromm, 1976). The emphasis on being (reflection) to the exclusion of doing (action) in its extreme forms gave rise to students dismissing intellectual forms of knowledge creation in the interests of body, emotional, and spiritual ways of knowing. During my first semester as a student, I noticed a pervasive devaluation of intellectual ways of knowing through a kind of “elevationism” (Visser, 2003) that promotes the nonrational or irrational as spiritual. In response to this pattern of learning, later as the coordinator I saw the need to encourage an integral portfolio of ways of knowing where intellectual forms are enriched and strengthened by the “softer ways of knowing” (Claxton, 1999) and vice versa. During the holistic phase, rather than approach the question of how to bring about an integrated culture partially through higher forms of cognitive emergence, students and staff held to the ideal of striving to realize a collective felt sense of harmony and well-being above all virtues.

During the course of the Holma Dialogue Project, we made the distinction that communion from an integral perspective demands that students simultaneously open the metaphorical eyes of their body, mind, and spirit for authentic communion to take place. To shut the eye of the mind as a precondition for opening the eye of spirit risks certain imbalances and going on a kind of blind faith or trust. With time, such a practice tends to develop a self that is no longer concerned about semantic distinctions and grows accustomed to being immersed in a warm bath of mindless gravy. Not surprisingly, the former anti-intellectual bias and rampant emotionalism tended to place an undue stress on students’ emotional lives. Instead of fostering more awareness, empathy, trustworthiness, what Daniel Goldman (1997) described as “emotional intelligence”, students attempted to rid themselves of their “inner critics” or their repressed “cognitive line” (Beck, 1996). Nevertheless, with the emergence of the integral approach, we reintegrated and appropriately limited the place for intellectual ways of knowing.

With the change to an integral vision, students’ guiding visionary images moved away from nonengaged forms of being back toward embracing more integrated forms of doing, infused with the interior promptings of being in the name of growing. Initially inspired by the concept of the “cultural creatives” (Ray,

2001), HCIS students became increasingly interested in investing their ultimate concerns in real-time forms of “right livelihood” (Schumacher, 1989) projects that connected them back to realizing their greater visions in the world. Through the course of our Holma Dialogue Project, we noticed a gradual shift in guiding metaphors between the years, with more talk about becoming change agents (Senge, 1994), life-affirming leaders (Wheatley, 2002), global citizens (Sahtouris, 2000), and so forth.

Cultivating an integrally informed approach in students’ lives helped many graduates integrate the promptings of their interior life with forms of visionary action.²⁷ Applying the integral language and philosophy to their projects, students gained a broader scope of functional possibilities in confronting previous problems, which in turn developed skills at working with and resolving conflicts through training in dialogue and the listening circle. An interest in exploring transformative ways of learning in a multicultural environment grew with the new integral language, theories, and practices. An increased awareness of one’s self and capacity for perspective taking also emerged. Substantial forms of engaged spiritual practice developed over the course of the year, where many students either developed or were aware of the vital importance of a “stable unitive experience”²⁸ (Jordan, 2000) that fostered a commitment to the well-being of others. Over time, the ideological conflicts between students adhering to the former holistic vision in opposition to the emerging integral one gradually gave way to “meta-paradigmatic” (Jordan, 2000) reflection and humbling awareness of how our own perspectives contain inherent biases. Students also grew to appreciate the limits of a utopian vision and increased their sensitivity to the need for awareness and forms of meta-awareness when applying these visions to daily life.

In closing, through my comprehensive involvement with bringing about this integral change initiative, I have grown to appreciate the numerous obstacles that threaten the successful emergence of an integral vision. Without the help of these ennobling obstacles in our work as educators, where would the opportunity for breakthrough or lasting transformation present itself? Surely, these obstacles are in disguise, the crude ore of our learning to develop a more skillful and comprehensive depth embrace of one another, humanity, and our Earth. As a departing reflection, I hope this case study will serve as a rough template in pointing out the particular issues, risks, and benefits of integrating the theory and practice outlined by Wilber, Beck, Swimme, O’Sullivan, and other emerging integral thinkers. I am grateful for the Learning and the World We Want conference (University of Victoria) and directed reading graduate course with Edmund O’Sullivan (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto) in providing me with the opportunity and inspiration to write this article. May this work invite a refreshing breath of utopian air in the reader, and in turn may this wind find its way back into rekindling the fires of passion that guide you in your daily working life profession.

Notes

1. The word *glocal* signifies the interconnectedness between the local and global dimensions of our world.

2. A *holon* is an entity that is simultaneously a whole and a part of some other whole. Holons within holons within holons means that the world is without foundation in either wholes or parts. Wilber (2003) elaborated, “Wholeness is a dangerous concept, in that it is always available to be pushed into ideological ends. . . . It is for this reason that I refer to the universe not as the ‘whole’ but as the ‘All’” (Wilber, 2003).

3. Based on insights from developmental psychology, it can be shown that personal growth from an egocentric point of view to sociocentric to worldcentric is crucial for sustainable personal and collective development. The liberal postmodern stance, which informs the holistic paradigm, posits the importance of worldcentric perspectives yet often regresses to interpretations that are infected by subjectivism, relativism, or narcissism (Wilber, 2003).

4. Brian Swimme (2001, 2002, 2003), Thomas Berry (2000; Berry & Swimme, 1994), Don Beck (1996), Robert Kegan (1982, 1984; Kegan et al., 2001), Edmund O’Sullivan (1999, 2002).

5. In the language of the integral philosophy, this comprehensive approach is summarized as AQAL (pronounced ah quil), “all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states and all types” (Wilber, 2003).

6. See the section Integral Transformative Practice that follows for further elucidation on developmental lines.

7. The first-tier memes (beige, purple, red, blue, orange, and green) cluster together our subsistence- or survival-level concerns. Spiral Dynamics Integral charts the beige level as the first level of existence that is uniquely human with reliance on instinctive intelligences and a more heightened sensory system (Beck, 1996).

8. Second-tier memes (yellow and turquoise) are characterized by the new capacity of human consciousness to work from multiple perspectives that retain a nonexclusive identification with the vital concerns and values of the first-tier memes.

9. Negentropy broadly characterizes those experiences that lead an individual or organization to develop increasing orders of complexity. Unlike entropy, which is the tendency for systems to run down, the general tendency of negentropic experience is for systems to “run up” (Kegan et al., 2001).

10. Thomas Jordan (2000) elaborated on meta-awareness:

Meta-awareness means awareness of the sensorimotor schematas, emotions, desires and thoughts that tumble through our being. Instead of being had by one’s habitual behavioral patterns, emotions, desires and thoughts, meta-awareness means that there is a locus of witnessing in consciousness that can make the behaviors, emotions, desires and thoughts objects of attention. (Jordan, 2000)

11. The elements we are tied, fused, or imbedded in are the elements we are subject to.

12. The elements of our knowing or experience that we can reflect on are the elements we are object to.

13. Second-tier or integral consciousness is endowed with the capacities of multiple-perspective taking, flexibility in understanding the necessary role that all the first-tier memes play, thinking in terms of the overall spiral of existence (not merely in terms of any one level), and making it possible to move from pluralism to integralism (Wilber, 2003).

14. The green meme is the domain of the sensitive self and is characterized by an emphasis on subjectivity, multicultural diversity, and networking. Green concepts include deep ecology, postmodernism, humanistic psychology, human rights, political correctness, and human bonding.

15. The yellow meme is integrative in nature. As a newly emerging meme, it is found in visionaries who seek integral ways of conducting business, medicine, politics, and spirituality on both individual and collective levels.

16. 70% of the world's population is at pregreen, 10% at green, and 1.2% at second tier (Beck, 1996).

17. This description offers a very basic outline of the developmental possibilities open to students at late first tier, early second tier. Depending on the student's unique life-world situation, these guidelines are open to modification and reinterpretation.

18. We defined a holding environment as a nurturing milieu that permits students to experience safety and support while encountering difficult states. A sound holding environment is necessary to facilitate transformative work.

19. Among the two dozen or so developmental lines are cognition, morals, affects/emotion, motivation/needs, ideas of good, psychosexuality, kinesthetic, intelligence, self-identity (ego), role taking, logic-mathematical, relational capacity, worldviews, values, musical skill, altruism, communicative competence, creativity, modes of space and time perception, and meditative stages (Wilber, 2003).

20. In the 1970s at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, Michael Murphy and George Leonard (1995) introduced the Integral Transformative Practice (ITP) as a 9-month training program for individuals wanting to develop their overall potential.

21. Scharmer (2002) defined *generative dialogue* as the final stage of moving from politeness to breakdown, through reflective dialogue, and finally into sensing and unfolding new knowledge in the group.

22. Common characteristics of groupthink may involve illusions of invulnerability, rationalization of negative information, stereotyping of out-groups, and self-censorship (Irving, 1972).

23. Greek founder of ecophilosophy and course lecturer at Holma College of Integral Studies (HCIS).

24. Finnish shaman priest and ecotherapist workshop leader at HCIS.

25. Berry refers to the great work as the ecozoic task of rethinking our work from the point of view of the Earth and more than human species.

26. Indian theoretical physicist whose work on monistic idealism is helping bring together traditional religion and contemporary science. Goswami has lectured at Holma College since its inception.

27. Several graduates are presently involved with cofounding and collaboratively leading a retreat center in India, an educational center in Nepal, a learning community in Sweden, and an ecovillage in Sweden. Contact olen@planet-save.com for more information.

28. A unitive experience is essentially the dissolution of the sense of separateness of the self and a feeling of at-oneness with something. This something can be a lover, nature, humanity, the planet Earth, an archetype, and so on. Unitive experiences can be brief peak experiences, they can be extended over a limited time (e.g., during a retreat), or be more or less a permanent state, always available as an experience for an individual.

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