

## AN EXAMPLE OF INTEGRAL PEDAGOGY

By Lynne D. Feldman, M.A., J.D.

Based on Ken Wilber's Integral Theory, the practice of Integral Education is developing into a coherent and robust discipline. This paper demonstrates how an instructor can begin to operate within the AQAL (All Quadrants, All Levels, lines, states, stages, and types) framework with the use of one element of the Integral approach, namely quadrants, within a traditional public high school. Although the author has applied the AQAL framework within a high school curriculum, the practice is adaptable to all grades, and throughout one's education.

KEYWORDS: Integral Education, AQAL, quadrants, quadrivium, holon

### **First Sociology Class of the Year**

It is early September 2006, and twenty-six high school seniors enter my classroom for the first time, drifting in from the humid corridors. One girl smiles at me, perhaps to make sure that I have noticed her positive affect. A boy with hair falling over his eyes refuses to make eye contact, and aims quickly for the last row where, he no doubt hopes, he might spend the next 56 minutes trapped in Room 222 unnoticed and undisturbed. I will soon be distributing sociology texts to them, which, along with my curriculum, had to be approved by my board of education prior to the start of the school year. Although I teach at a traditional upper middle class suburban school in commuting distance to New York City that emphasizes math, the sciences, and sports, I have woven an AQAL "map" into this curriculum that should mesh the course content harmoniously with the needs and desires of my students.

On that first day I inquire of these young adults what they are most hoping will be the end result of their ten months with me. They have heard of my reputation as a teacher who presents *relevant* and *real* material, and that I do not brush off the important questions that they have about their lives and their futures. They remind me that when the World Trade Center's twin towers fell in September 2001, they were told that only social studies

teachers would be permitted to talk about the event with them. Although our students lost close relatives that day, or thought that relatives had been lost during those first chaotic hours, they had to wait until their social studies class for “reality” to be permitted into the classroom.

This type of disconnect found so often within certain educational practices, can be viewed as coming from a continuing belief in the compartmentalization and atomistic presentation of subjects, entire domains of knowledge, and “reality” itself. My students want to understand the totality of their lives with clarity, depth, and authenticity, and thus to discover appropriate actions that might flow from such an understanding. Their early thirst to find meaning in and from their lives, they inform me, has been replaced either by the routine memorization of fragments of information, the force-feeding of religious or political dogmas, or standardized instruction intended to turn them into members of our commercialized social system. The presentation of disconnected bits of information nevertheless forms but a partial understanding of the complete picture for which they long. This letdown is often signaled by an exasperated or pragmatic, “Is this going to be on the test?”

What I hear from my classes on that first day echoes beyond the walls of Room 222; there is a deep-seated, often ill-articulated, cry to reinvigorate their education by offering a more comprehensive, coherent, and integrated perspective of life. The present partial understanding that confounds and frustrates my students stems, in part, from the lack of a complete orienting map of reality that would offer them a coherent and plausible reason for fully engaging in the educational system, beyond either the expectation of parents on the one hand, and the demands of preparing for a first-world economy on the other. Granted, other school systems have made improvements in this area, we all have inherited three major strata upon which the numberless theories of education stand. The strata represent broad sweeps of meaning-making from our days as tribes through today’s current understanding of the world in which we live.

Once upon a time, my young charges would have sat amongst the elders of our community who would have guided them on a journey which would have led them to discover a lower level of understanding of art, morals, and science in a fused, non-differentiated fashion. Their education would have involved watching, imitating, and participating in adult activities ranging from hunting and gathering to human sacrifice. Named the *pre-modern* (or traditional) view of the world, this system was characterized by conformist, ethnocentric, hierarchical, and mytho-religious values.

Then came the Enlightenment, a period during which a higher level of understanding of science came to be divorced from, and promoted above, art and morals. This separation of science from both art and morals came about in response to challenges and opportunities offered by changes within the techno-economic base of society, which offered the dignity of positive modernity. The subsequent development of the scientific method and its progeny “produced” knowledge that was no longer considered a capital offense, or an affront to ethnocentric mytho-religious values. Whereas the pre-modern view refused to permit or to acknowledge any findings that rebutted or called into question traditional beliefs, the *modern* worldview permitted information that met certain objective truth-claims. This was a stunning development, made possible in large part by its reliance on a third person examination of reality. Some of the modern era’s greatest gifts to humanity included the freeing of slaves, fairness to previously tormented and tortured “others”, the lengthening of the human life span, and thus a greater reduction of human suffering than ever seen previously.

Classifications of the objective realm led to the compartmentalization of knowledge into academic subjects; analysis came to be premised upon the mechanistic belief that understanding of phenomena was best studied in their isolation (Davis, Sumara, Luce-Kapler, 2000). With the invention of the printing press, the advent of mercantilism, and then industrialism, there was a great demand and need for literacy; as more considered such knowledge to be their right, schooling became an institution whereby a teacher instructed the young in what was considered valuable. With the spread of schooling throughout the world, methodological inquiries and debates over the most effective

instructional methods multiplied. This modern worldview resulted in changes in the value structure which now included individualism, egalitarianism, and scientism, which we find prominently reflected in many current, modern school systems.

Nonetheless, this achievement led inexorably to Newtonian science overrunning and marginalizing the other two of the “Big Three”, as art, morals, and science were called. Art and morals found themselves out-gunned by their perceived failure to match the objectivist truth-tests for which science was ideally suited. With collective and individual interiors being thus discounted, modernity robbed humanity of its connection to enchantment, to the ineffable. Science for its own sake could thus be pursued, and thus disconnected, from concern for beauty or morals, which led to deforested landscapes, polluted seas, the threat of nuclear winters, and mass extinctions of flora and fauna.

The instability of knowledge at this higher level without respect for the other two domains affected the development of modern education as well. The resultant disenchantment of the world flowed into the presentation of a fragmented view of partial truths about reality in the classroom.

Among the numerous educational theories stemming from this worldview is the “Analytic-Empirical-Positivist-Quantitative Paradigm” group that takes the mechanistic, deterministic reality of the modern era and emphasizes anything that can be measured by a detached observer (Reeves, 1996). My school, among others, stresses high-stakes testing results, and spends class time preparing students to respond to multiple-choice questions that encourage short-term retention of isolated facts. They are responsive to this approach, since it is linked to their perception that such test scores will ensure entrance to colleges that will eventually result in their economic security. But when asked about the value of the information they have briefly retained, I am told that they are not at all sure *why* they have been required to memorize those specific facts, or how the facts relate to larger issues.

Another group of educational theories, called “Constructivist-Hermeneutic-Interpretivist-Qualitative”, does not see reality as patently observable and measurable. Working within the *post-modern* worldview (below), they are concerned with constructed reality from multiple perspectives informed by such variables as race, sex, and context (Reeves, 1996).

This worldview comes to my students’ attention when they are encouraged to reach their own understandings of such things as literature and poetry. Such freedom from pre-ordained modern interpretations is inherently freeing to them; but once attempted, the instructor is free to tell them that their interpretation is “wrong”, while offering no further commentary on why the students’ version is not legitimate. They receive these responses with outrage and confusion, and we often stop to explore the disconnect between what was requested by the instructor and how it was received.

This most recent thrust to change values to reflect multiculturalism, deconstructionism, and pluralism is called *post-modernism*. In brief, it attempts to delegitimize pre-modern and modern societies’ creation of grand narratives, narratives that have nevertheless previously bound societies together. Whereas the “myth of the given” has been destroyed and multiple perspectives are honored, it has continued to absolutize the *practice* of science and technology while rejecting the creation of an overall framework or *narrative* that might promote effective meaning-making within education. This third theoretical grouping, called “Critical theory-Neomarxist-Postmodern- Praxis” (Reeves, 1996), is not represented among the faculty at my more traditional school.

The fourth grouping, named “Eclectic-Mixed Methods-Pragmatic” (Reeves, 1996), is encouraged by my school; I am permitted to engage in any number of professional development programs and to bring these mixed methods back to my class. I have participated in them and have brought back the “program of the month”. Although at first I considered this to be the more desirable of the approaches, its shortcomings proved to be as limiting as the others. After a number of us on the faculty trained in group learning dynamics, my students began to rebel when they encountered the approach replicated by many of their teachers, whether the implementation made sense within the

context of the lesson or not. Needless to say, within six months the “program of the month” had often been replaced by yet another theoretical construct that we were told could be applied across the board, to all classes, and to all students. Even utilizing different approaches for each section of the curriculum fails to address the basic issue of why we are teaching certain aspects of reality and not others.

So what am I to do in response to their urgent and hopeful request for me to make sense out of their education? No “one size fits all” methodology or philosophy will solve the scrambled and partial nature of what they have thus far received. Rather than having to choose one modern or pre-modern educational approach, or cobbling together bits and pieces from the hundreds of approaches available to me, I utilize an Integral approach to education. This is not an inter-disciplinary approach, nor a trans-disciplinary one; it comes not from a particular school of education, but from the growing understanding of integral education, that flows from some very simple, universal guidelines. “The fact that, for the most part, each approach has stayed in its own cage does not change the fact that reality itself leaps those cages all the time. To grope our way toward an integral approach means that we should attempt to follow reality and make those leaps as well.” (Wilber, 1997)

### **Integral Education and the Quadrants**

“Integral means integrative, inclusive, comprehensive, balanced; the idea is to apply this integral orientation to the various fields of human knowledge and endeavors....[I]t deeply alters our conceptions of psychology and the human mind; of anthropology and human history; of literature and human meaning; of philosophy and the quest for truth...” (Wilber, 1997)

My students are exposed to serious issues in mostly uncensored, unanalyzed, real-time. Although teachers attempt to guide or limit their exposure to real-time information during the school day, my students receive breaking news from reputable and less than reliable sources on their cell phones, which they’ve managed to smuggle into their backpacks.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.interdisciplines.org/interdisciplinarity/papers/5/language/en>

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They are far more computer-proficient than I, and can access websites of all types, often overcoming the barriers we have constructed on our computer system to limit their access. They experience sex and altered states with great energy, and are aware of the latest scientific advances and scandals of political, economic, and Hollywood origins. They and I have the capacity, for the very first time, to access *all* of humanity's information, from the reliable to the fantastic, from pre-modern to modern to postmodern cultures, and from western scientific advances to eastern philosophies. Yet they are unable to distinguish pure myth from established theoretical understanding, and they are mostly unable to synthesize information that has come to them through their numerous but partial and disconnected sources.

From the beginning of their self-sense, from the coalescence of their ego, they have been earnestly attempting to connect with and understand ever deeper levels of reality. What we are about, what life is about, stood as an irrepressible drive for them. Many educational systems and our own culture have short-circuited this attempt, and as my students progressed through our school system, they reported feeling frustrated and defeated. They are aware of much, much more than is ever expressed or contextualized inside the normal classroom. Their apathy, resistance, or artifice speaks to the fact that their education bears less and less relationship to their lives, hopes, and futures.

It is not so much that education is failing, since we are called upon to deliver more and more information; rather, education is delivering a message of more limited value to a world that needs much, much more. We have hit a "legitimation crisis" in education, a paradigm clash. In integral terms, a legitimation crisis occurs when "a new (and real) paradigm enacts and brings forth new data" that clashes with previous worldviews and theories that can only be resolved by a progressive increase in depth of understanding to keep pace with the increase in the depth of the new data being evoked by the new paradigm. (Wilber, 2006)

The information production of today's techno-economic matrix has far outpaced the educational system's ability to bring meaning to the resulting new phenomena. In

essence, a new worldview is upon us, and the post-modern view is no longer sufficiently enveloping of the new phenomena and understandings that have been unleashed. I find it increasingly difficult to legitimize what my students are being asked by officials to absorb from me, and to ask them to embrace the system that is disseminating that material. I feel as though I am asking them to ignore the little man behind the curtain.

My resolution to this legitimation crisis is not to be found in regression, reductionism, or reliance on high-stakes testing; rather, the resolution came when I adapted the AQAL map to the educational process. This map is an elegant, comprehensive, and productive framework that can be adapted to all levels of education. I am able to connect with whatever information my students are working with, and I can assist them in making sense of it. Integral theory's application to education is content-free, which permits me to be expansive in what I introduce.

After years of teaching sociology, I have assembled sizeable amounts of material to share with my students. My curriculum for the coming year fills several three-ring binders; I have another volume dedicated to supplementary readings and exercises; and another file consists of assessments that I might adapt for this year's challenges. These contain *horizontal* knowledge, in that I am *translating* for my students the theories of Comte, Spencer, Freud, Jung, Rogers, and other sociologists and psychologists, and the AQAL map will assist me in this endeavor.

I begin with the quadrants, which are the basic representations of this map; they locate the reality present in you and in me right now. They are natural to my sense of what is happening around me at any given moment, and moment-to-moment. They represent my "being and doing in the world", and chart a comprehensive picture of human potential, drawing from all of the known systems and models of human development.

We can analyze each quadrant of our personal framework from the chart in Figure 1 as I do on my first day of instruction. I draw the quadrants on the board and ask them to do likewise in their notebooks, and I then explain that in a cross-cultural and longitudinal

study of human societies, it was found that there are very few words or linguistic patterns that are common for them all. The exceptions are the lowly pronouns, “I”, “It”, “We”, and “Its”, which engenders heated debate amongst my students to prove me wrong. “But what about ‘you’, ‘he’, ‘they’, and ‘their’?” they protest. Yes, I concede, but these actually fit into the basic perspectives defined below.

These four aspects of the four basic perspectives that can be taken in any event, can be summarized as singular-interior, singular-exterior, collective-interior, and collective-exterior, and can be depicted as four interrelated maps that deal with the most elemental aspects of sensing ourselves and our world. The data exist in all four quadrants, and they are always-already related. Although this might lead one to assume that we are talking about a unitary system signaling us of some absolute Truth, we come to see that by creating the simple grid/map depicted below, we can arrive at the differentiated yet unified realities present in me and in each of my students.

One more critical question invariably gets posed during this discussion: Will utilization of this methodology, this map, permit us to be able to prove which religion is True, which view of abortion is Correct? Not really, I inform them, since *things just are*. But I assure them that they will be able to discern gradations and distinctions which befuddled them previously.

Perspectives & Quadrants

Upper Left “I” Singular-interior	Upper Right “It” Singular-exterior
Lower Left “We” Collective-interior	Lower Right “Its” Collective-exterior

Fig. 1. Quadrants overlaid with human perspectives as pronouns, and holon designation.

## Upper Left: “I”

The Upper Left quadrant (UL) represents the perspective which is within me, subjectively experienced by me, and not readily discernable by others: “I see a white light when I meditate”. This “I” perspective is a singular-interior state of reality, and is changeable moment-to-moment, but real to me, nonetheless. I, along with the 1400 students and 130 faculty and staff at our school, have a felt sense of “I-ness”. In the UL quadrant I write, “I feel nervous now...” and then complete the sentence with “...my knees are shaky on my first day in class”. My students giggle and squirm in their seats, as they realize that I have not only caught my own internal emotional state, but theirs as well. I ask them to write a similar statement into their notebooks.

When we begin to try to define the “singular-interior” that gave rise to this feeling, I ask them how they would know whether my statement or theirs is actually *true* or not, and how I and they receive that signal. I ask the entire class to test their own statements for the same validity, and location of the feeling’s origin. Most of them presume that feelings are strictly biological occurrences. It doesn’t faze me that they do not immediately respond with reference to their interior states of *consciousness*, since these are not really dealt with in today’s schools. “The reputed unreliability of feelings...have contributed to a profound devaluation of the lived experience.” (Fell, Russell, Stewart, 1994)

With a lively discussion of where emotions and thoughts come from, I have introduced them to the individual, interior, intentional, introspective, and subjective aspects of their and my existence. This will broadly connect with the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, Plato’s classic divisions of the Big Three, and I begin with an examination of beauty. “How do we approach looking at a piece of art, music, or sculpture?” I ask, upon showing them Marcel Duchamps’ “Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2”. After having them rate its aesthetic quality, or “beauty”, they share their responses. Of course I get a full spectrum of answers, including Kyle’s comment that it looks like the artist was intoxicated while painting it, and I then challenge them to tell me whose analysis is the

“correct one”. Being self-centered, narcissistic (*ergo* normal) teenagers, they each respond that their personal opinion is correct, regardless of the diversity of reactions.

I explain that each of us assesses one another’s personal responses in light of the *truth-claim* for each quadrant, and that the singular-interior (UL) truth-claim is whether a person’s reporting of his interior states, his feelings or beliefs, can be trusted, are sincere, and whether that person can be believed. I then write “truthfulness, sincerity” under the UL quadrant’s column, and ask Katie whether she would trust Kyle’s judgment of the painting. “No”, she responds, “although I would believe that he knew about being intoxicated!” With that pithy rebuke, I move on.

I pay close attention to the interior of each of my students during the course, and my assignments often ask them to describe their contemplative, critical, or experiential phenomena. In regard to contemplative phenomena, I make liberal use of guided meditations while teaching about Freud’s and Jung’s conceptions of the unconscious, and whenever it fits into my presentation. Although any form of contemplative exercise might seem too far afield from traditional pedagogical methodologies, meditation is being increasingly utilized in education as a stress-reduction or anger management tool. Harvard Medical School is weaving meditation into its training as a serious component, and American professional educational groups have been formed to assess the benefits of mindfulness and meditation in general on the student process. (Gravons, 2005) Indeed, meditative experiences are *the* most popular aspects of my course, and each year I am asked to introduce them sooner. Although I believe that such stress reduction or interior exploratory exercises are critical to the psychic health of our teens, I would never recommend that an inexperienced instructor utilize any type of contemplative experience.

My students get regular doses of experiential education from me as well, which are common in the arts or lab science courses but less frequently found within social studies classes. The addition of such endeavors that bring out interior phenomenological reportings are priceless, and among the most memorable for the students.

In one such exercise representative of variables that can affect personality, I divide the class by birth order into “First-borns”, “Onlies”, “Middles”, and “Youngest”. I tell them to enjoy themselves while they stand outside in the hall in their groupings; unobtrusively, I place a sheet of instructions on the floor by each group, blank-side up, and await to see which group notices my action, reaches for the paper, and follows the instructions, which tells them to sit on the floor and write about their experiences originating from that specific birth order. Invariably, the vigilant First-borns or Onlies react first, followed some minutes later by the Middles. The Youngest children continue their socializing, vocally and exuberantly, until I have to call their attention to the instructions for the rest of the assignment.

Other more typical UL quadrant assignments that could be adapted by any instructor would include reports of personal experiences; descriptions of insights; imaginal writings; and critical reflections. This is not novel pedagogical advice, but it must not be forgotten in any classroom.

### **Upper Right: IT**

All of my charges can now report a felt-sense of “I-ness”. I then ask them where they think that feeling comes from, and although they are newcomers to analyzing concepts such as consciousness, they are good at exploring the concrete aspects of the human body, since all are either at the Concrete Operational stage, or have incorporated it while moving onto Formal Operational cognition. On my map in the Upper Right quadrant I now write, “IT, exterior, individual, behavior”.

#### Upper Quadrants

<b><u>Upper Left</u></b>	<b><u>Upper Right</u></b>
I: Why I Do....	IT: What I Do....
Interior	Exterior
Individual	Individual
Feelings, beliefs	Behaviors
Assumptions	Biological Functions

Emotions Truthfulness, Sincerity I feel nervous now.....	Physical states True ...my legs are shaking on my first day of class.
Lower Left	Lower Right

Fig. 2. Individual Interior and Exterior Quadrants

How might I know that I am feeling ill at ease on our first day of class? I share with them that my stomach feels jittery, my palms are sweaty, I feel a lump in my throat, and my knees feel wobbly. And how will anyone know if I am telling the *truth* about that? I then write “True” in the upper right, along with “individual-exterior” and “It”. We begin to discuss what aspect of our “selves” we regard through surface interaction and examination, and the answers readily come: we can look at atoms, molecules, skeletons, our brains, a lie detector, and our behaviors with those entities. The students readily identify that much of what they are asked to value and master is located in this UR quadrant, the scientific, physical, rational, and empirical world of form.

Helpful questioning such as, “is it true that each one of you has a heart?”, “is this data pleasing to you?”, and “is it true that each one of you right now feels depressed because you don’t think that being here is a beautiful experience?” punctuates the distinction between the subjective interior and the objective exterior of our singular selves, although they gleefully respond that yes, they are all indeed uneasy on this first day of school.

I then discuss how the UL quadrant of the individual-interior and the UR quadrant of the individual-exterior are related yet distinct, and the students can rapidly decipher how their interior states of consciousness are often discernable through physical manifestations. Butterflies in the stomach, nausea, tension headaches or even hives are common indications that the mind and body are inextricably interrelated, with correlates mapped in the upper quadrants. My students also notice that the UL deals with

judgments, truthfulness that is in the eye of the beholder, which thus places judgments on top of, or a continuation of, validity claims.

### **Lower Left: “WE”**

My next topic is similar to breaking through the “third wall” in theater. I am going to open them up to the culture within which they live. This will be examined in the Lower Left, the collective-interior. Plato’s understanding of the “Good,” the third in his Big Three aspects of life, will occupy the lower quadrants and most of my course.

In the Lower Left quadrant we will assess how they live within an interior, communal/collective culture/world-space. Culture refers to all of the *interior* meanings and values and identities that we share with those of similar communities, whether it is a tribal community or a national community or a world community.

In addition, I will explore with my students that a “We” inhabits room 222, which encompasses the shared values and collective worldview of people beyond the walls of our classroom. I explain the existence of nonmaterial and material cultural artifacts, and send the class in teams of four throughout the school to capture five aspects of our school’s culture. We then collate the results and come up with the top five selections. I am sensitive to the upper middle-class values within which most of these students live, so I am not surprised that the most frequently chosen artifact is a \$200US designer purse, followed by a sports jersey, a disciplinary form, a college brochure, and a chart of our rotating block schedule. From this exercise we can then extrapolate the values of the community and how they can be understood as enhancing and protecting the community values, the “Good” that their parents feel should be passed along to them.

The school’s culture is embedded in the larger culture of upper middle-class values, and we investigate how similar the school’s culture is to that of the larger community. My students are well aware of how aspects of our school culture have been created to please and impress the larger community culture. They acknowledge a mesh between the students’ understanding of justness and that of the external community, the validity of which we have checked through discussions.

Another aspect involves the creation of a LL within the student body itself, and governs what the students perceive to be norms involving such things as sexual relations (“You do not hook-up with your friend’s ex-girl or ex-boyfriend unless you have permission to do so from your friend”), random drug testing (“Whatever is done on the weekends should have no impact on our school experience”), and dress codes (“If the prevailing styles for sale in the chain stores conflict with the dress code, then the dress code should be altered.”). This honest and open sharing is an important step for my class, and I encourage them to create collaborative inquiries into their own interior communal world spaces. Throughout the year I will assign essays for this purpose so that they learn to identify where they stand, and from where that position might have originated. It engages them in evaluations of “goodness”, ethical decisions on such topics as abortion, capital punishment, and more personal decisions.

**Lower Right: “ITS”**

Finally we are ready for the Lower Right (LR) quadrant. This exterior, material, and institutional form of the collective is the easiest to teach students. “ ‘Social’ refers to all of the exterior, material, institutional *forms* of the community, from its techno-economic base to its architectural styles to its written codes to its population size, to name a few”. (Wilber, 2000).

Our chart now looks something like this:

<p><b><u>Upper Left</u></b>  I: Why I Do....  Interior  Individual  Feelings, beliefs  Assumptions  Emotions  Truthfulness, Sincerity</p>	<p><b><u>Upper Right</u></b>  IT: What I Do....  Exterior  Individual  Behaviors  Biological Functions  Physical states  True</p>
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I feel.....	.....shaky in my legs.
<p><b><u>Lower Left</u></b></p> <p>WE: Why We Do...</p> <p>Cultural beliefs</p> <p>Norms</p> <p>Worldviews</p> <p>School culture</p> <p>Friendships</p> <p>Peer Pressure</p>	<p><b><u>Lower Right</u></b></p> <p>ITS: What We Do....</p> <p>Social, political, economic....</p> <p>Structures</p> <p>Processes</p> <p>Systems</p> <p>Environments</p> <p>Sexual relations</p>

Fig. 3. All Four Quadrants Filled In

Thus we have arrived at that which is decreed by our community to be “good” for us all, as decided by our collective interiors, and those social forms that have been constructed to put that “good” into effect in the collective exterior, which will decree it to be “the social truth”, otherwise referred to as morals, or the “right” decision. We talk about the disagreements within our culture over what that “good” might be, and how it informs rules promoting sexual and illegal drug abstinence, outlawing same-sex marriage, the determination of a legal drinking age, and other significant issues down to the disciplinary policy at our high school.

Although one could say that both morals and ethics originate in the LL, they are not anchored there. The “Its” truth claim concretizes the “We” ethical judgment. This can be demonstrated by drawing lines from each cultural value to the specific system that enforces it. In our example about my unease on the first day of class, I write that our school’s cultural value includes the belief that we need to keep the first day of class to a limited duration to avoid the inevitable stress to both faculty and students. I then draw a line to the LR quadrant, where I write the policy of having periods of 20 minutes each that first day. And what is the *truth* claim for this quadrant? We begin to explore the

*functional cultural fit* of the policy, and they come to agree that the policy on the first day of school has a fine functional fit.

I ask them next to list each negative sanction in our school's rule book, and have them trace backwards to see what school cultural "good" is being reinforced by sanctioning its violation. Issues such as the school dress code do not win functional fit analyses, and the students set about to create "better" alternative policies.

As a summative exercise, I have the students draw their own four quadrant map, which I explain represents them as a "holon," or whole/part. It is not a difficult conceptual leap for high school students to discern that we are all *whole* people who are also *parts* of larger entities, and that our constituent *parts* are also *wholes*, in and of themselves. The four quadrants are thus a map of us as a holon, or a whole/part, and of how we emerge holarchically, in orders of increasing holism or wholeness. "Since each holon is embraced in a larger holon, holons themselves exist in nested hierarchies---or *holarchies*----such as atoms to molecules to cells to organisms to ecosystems." (Wilber, 2000) This permits me to explore the relationships between levels of holons and how they interact, thus opening up discussions about such matters as their place within the global environment. We read about how their individual consumption and disposal habits are nested within increasingly higher levels of social holons that get smaller in number, until they can see that they are nested within one global environment.

I let them play with this for a while and as an assignment I ask, "What might fit into each quadrant in your life today, and at what corresponding level of complexity?" We go through their courses, their activities, their behaviors and feelings, and I encourage them to see connections among the various levels of nested holons according to corresponding levels of complexity. Many are appreciative of this insight when they are asked to research a paper. They now understand the difference between the LR finding that the enactment of gun possession laws is correlated with lower homicide rates (is this a right or wrong interpretation of the data?), and the LL determination as to whether such enactment would be an ethical or a good/bad thing for a particular culture. In the LL, we

do not look at whether the proposition is “true or false”, but rather at the quality and appropriateness of the proposition.

### **Quadrivium**

We are now ready to examine the various schools of sociology, their founders and their stars, and to see what emphasis each school and theoretician gave to their understanding of humanity. This provides the students with an opportunity to discover a *quadrivium*, where, instead of locating their own personal and collective being-in-the-world, they will attempt to position another within the four quadrants. This is not a reductionistic exercise. Without denigrating the contributions of any one sociologist or school of sociology, I am indicating their philosophical views or centers of developmental gravity, and pointing out what aspects of reality are lacking in their respective theories.

I ask where Marx would fit into our framework. With his emphasis on the primacy of the techno-economic base in the LR-quadrant, students can readily locate his perspective as favoring the exterior-collective. I then ask the students to discuss why Marxist-Leninist ideologies were failures. The answer comes readily: these two ignored the impact of the other quadrants on human life. I then break students into groups to discuss what partial areas of moment-to-moment being in the world Comte (LR quadrant), Weber (LL quadrant), Piaget (UL quadrant), Freud and Jung (UL quadrant), and Skinner (UR quadrant) emphasized. I can then go forward to discuss the functionalist (LR quadrant), conflict (LR quadrant), and symbolic interactionist (LL quadrant) schools of sociology using the same four quadrants. By the end of this first week, my students have the essential understandings of the functionality of the quadrants within the AQAL framework. Throughout the year, we will examine the relationships between religion and science, class and race, sex and gender, and political beliefs by first understanding their positions within the quadrants.

There is often a rush by educators to find the “quick-fix”, the “one size fits all” approach to “success in the classroom”, however this elusive and confusing conclusion might be defined. Integral education requires that an integral educator be in the room with the students. Although the exchange of the information that I wish to share with my students comes through me from the LR curriculum, where might we find the nexus where WE exchange the stream of communicative signifiers that represent dialogical education? I recall that in my first year of teaching, fresh from Columbia University with a Master’s degree in Public Law and Government, I held forth brilliantly before my tortured students on the origins of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s substantive and procedural due process interpretations by successive Supreme Courts. At the time I had yet to learn that there indeed must be a nexus where a WE is created between me and my students, where the signifiers I wanted to share could enter into their heads and stay there.

Any experienced teacher can laugh at my rookie mistake, but the integral educator understands that only by presenting information into an appropriate “we-space” can I create with them a mandala through which shared signifiers will flow through each quadrant, and which will thus resonate with them in such a manner that they will hold my stream of signifiers in an embodied manner.

As an integral educator, I am committed to self-inquiry for my own growth and the resultant benefits to my students. I must become aware of my own level of honesty, sincerity, truthfulness and trustworthiness, which are the yardsticks by which I present myself to my students; this, in other words, is *my* truth claim. I keep myself centered on being present with my students, alert to the gross, subtle, and causal energy that is being communicated by each one. This is an important exercise and one where I, like other teachers, can demonstrate unconscious misinterpretations of why I am doing certain actions. One way that I keep track of these interior states that permits me to self-reflect is to keep a journal, far more insightful than any cursory or detailed lesson plan. It enables me to chart my responses in all four quadrants on a routine basis, and thus to reaffirm or to revise my lessons after a complete assessment of the “I”, “It”, and “We” repercussions.

When I am teaching in Room 222, I am engaging with my students from a LR quadrant perspective as I choose which part of the text, supplemental reading, experiential exercise, or metaphor would be the most efficacious means by which to translate my lesson. During the class I might write on the blackboard, talk with my students, share web sites on the computer, and otherwise interact with them. By this exchange of signifiers I am assisting my students to collectively understand my words, which we can discuss by using LL quadrant truth-claims.

I cannot forget my own UR singular-exterior, where I can assess the sensorimotor and physical correlates of my UL quadrant. Since my students are fascinated by the entire aspect of body language, I will at times ask them which interior state of consciousness of mine that they can interpret from behaviors and postures that I intentionally affect, such as clenched fists, arms akimbo, or sitting amongst them on a desktop. Yet I might also be unaware that my headache or cramping leg is causing me to be harsher in my discipline than usual, and they have learned to call attention to that, as well as to hand motions that I am not aware I have repeated, or that when I say, “that’s interesting”, it usually means that I find the idea useless.

As part of my own integral practice, I self-assess to ascertain where, when teaching, I need to be more intentional. I am aware that I too am often operating from a set of unexamined beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning, about knowledge, and about the purpose of education itself. (Yero, 2000) At times that might mean checking in with them to assure myself that I am clearly aligning my lessons to their levels of understanding; at others, it means checking myself to assure that I am the adult in the room, and am providing a safe and orderly learning environment. In this way I can examine my beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning, while still honoring the fact that my context plays a large role in my own meaning-making. My aim is not to become the “perfect” teacher, but to become more self-aware so that I remain present to each of my 130 students.

## **The Integral Toolbox**

“As educators we cannot think of ourselves as just ‘operating in’ educational settings, planning, theorizing, leading, learning, teaching and then leaving the cultures of which we are a part. Educational practices informed by and respectful of the complex worlds of schools/community are not just ‘interventions’ but instances of complicity in which educators unfold with cultures-in-the-making through dynamic individual and collective interactions.” (Hocking, Haskell, Linds, 2001) Thus I am under the injunction that all four quadrants are not independent of one another; indeed they tetra-evolve. The four quadrants honor segments of perspectives, research, and philosophies, but each one taken alone will inevitably lead to disappointment, studied ignorance, or frustration due to unanswered questions, and, in my classroom, the continued disenchantment and dismissal of education by my students.

With the AQAL model, the four categories can be utilized in the educational “tool box” in an honorable, unified manner that permits them to inform and complement, rather than dismiss or savage, each other. “What kind of practices might be the harbinger of the integral revolution at the leading edge? Each cultural worldview (in the LL) is accompanied by a series of paradigms or social practices (in the LR), and these practices or injunctions generate, enact, and bring forth the types of experiences that are held to be true, good, right, or--in general--valid, believable, and legitimate (which are then codified in the reigning worldview, which in turn legitimates the practices supporting the worldview, which governs the thoughts and behavior of those who are members of that particular culture or subculture: tetra-legitimacy).” (Wilber, 2006) Integral education contains the map from which our schools can create this necessary tetra-legitimacy, by providing a comprehensive understanding of all of the educational theories, philosophies, and approaches that have entered our awareness.

An Integral Educational toolbox enables every aspect of learning, from birth throughout one’s life, to be brought into and engage in respectful communion with one another, without having to sacrifice the respectful agency that they deserve for their relative

authenticity. The **content** of learning would enable the embrace of inter- and trans-disciplinary educational systems in the LR quadrant, with a new “lateral vigor” while still honoring the “vertical rigor” typical within the disciplines. No longer being isolated within artificially compartmentalized knowledge, all learners would be freed within a content-free framework to deal robustly with the severe interdependent challenges we acknowledge are in our present and near future. The **context** of learning would at last reunite values, ethics, morals, aesthetics, science—the dream of the Axial Age reborn within this Second Axial/Integral Age. The subjects reserved and restricted to the UR quadrant such as chemistry, biology, and physics, would be freed to deal with their attendant effects on the environment and on the earth’s life forms. The **process** of learning would emphasize active, experiential and collaborative learning as well as concrete problem-solving in real-world situations. (“Education for Sustainability”, 2005)

### Conclusion

We have cause to celebrate the inheritance of generations of educators, past and present, and there is no need to jettison any effective tool or educational philosophy. In light of the beautifully complex universe that greets us, we must also rejoice that we have found the perspectives that connect, this AQAL framework that permits the elements to hang together coherently. Perform the injunction: use the framework, apply it to phenomena, and “recognize and articulate the integral features as they arise *from within the phenomena*. At this point, we can *stand above* the formalized AQAL framework and the spontaneous recognition of the integral patterns in phenomena. We witness a kind of conversation between them.” (Wilber, 2006)

We as educational theorists and practitioners can begin to simultaneously track the various educational phenomena in each quadrant, and note their actual interrelationships and correlations, as I have done in simplified form. These activities within the quadrants may appear quite different, but as we intuit, they also “*intrinsically* touch each other in profound ways. Let us note the ways in which they touch, and thus attempt *theoretically* to elucidate this wonderfully rich and interwoven tapestry.” (Wilber, 2006) And thus any inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary approach or other eclecticism

that fails to see the goodness, truth, and beauty in the interrelatedness of the four quadrants will fail us and our learners.

Not without substantial effort will knowledge today be organized into a coherent whole that does not propagate the disasters of fragmentation. It replicates at an astonishing rate, and we as educators must keep abreast of its emergence. Our learners can now dip into the pool however and whenever they choose. They demand legitimacy, in the context, content, and process by which we present this knowledge. They are searching for new meaning from what we provide. They deserve no less.