

THE STATE OF THE INTEGRAL ENTERPRISE

Part I: Current Status and Potential Traps

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ABSTRACT Although integral ideas are spreading rapidly, the integral vision remains the province of what sociologists deem a “cognitive minority.” Extending and optimizing Integral Theory’s impact will require many things from practitioners, especially high-quality work and becoming “gnostic intermediaries.” Ways in which integral ideas can enhance practitioners’ own lives are surveyed, and the article then turns to potential traps that await both individuals and integral groups (e.g., egocentric misuse of integral ideas, developmental complacency, spiritual materialism, metapathologies and metadefenses, and failure to engage the mainstream). Antidotes to these traps are suggested so they may be transformed from stopping points into stepping stones.

KEY WORDS: AQAL model; gnostic intermediary; human development; Integral Theory; shadow

In this article I will address some of the key issues at the heart of the integral enterprise.¹ These issues include the state of the movement, the challenges to making inroads in the mainstream, and the contributions integral practitioners might make. To do this I will explore the following ideas:

- The current status of the integral enterprise
- How we can optimize the impact of integral ideas
- Applying integral ideas to one’s own life
- Traps that await us: potential shadows and shortcomings

In part two of this article (see pp. 13-22) I will focus on:

- Crucial ideas to communicate to the culture
- Integral contributions to help our troubled world

Current Status

The integral vision was first described in Ken Wilber’s *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (2000). The vision and ideas have now spread worldwide, and are being applied in an ever-growing range of fields (e.g., ecology, coaching, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and many more). However, integral still remains very much a minority perspective. At the present time, an integral vision is the province of what sociologist Peter Berger called a “cognitive minority” (1963, p. 18). He defined a cognitive minority as “a group of people whose view of the

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world differs significantly from the one generally taken for granted in their society...a group formed around a body of deviant knowledge.”

This raises an important question: Is integral destined to remain the province of a cognitive minority? Possibly, because deep appreciation of its more mature forms requires several unusual understandings and capacities. These include, for example:

- Recognizing adult development stages
- Developing to postconventional, second-tier stages oneself
- Using integral, especially integral-aperspectival, cognition
- Openness to big pictures and complexity

Fortunately, a cognitive minority can constitute a leading edge that attracts larger segments of society.

Optimizing Integral Ideas

Optimizing integral contributions will require that we cultivate our individual and collective learning, maturation, mastery, and effectiveness. Obviously this is a large topic and a lifelong challenge/opportunity that has at least two key requirements: careful work and becoming a *gnostic intermediary*.

Careful Work

Ensuring the positive reception of integral ideas—and to facilitate entry into the mainstream world—requires high-quality work. Rigorous thinking, precise analysis, careful experiments, and successful applications of Integral Theory will be crucial.

Gnostic Intermediaries

The term gnostic intermediaries was used by Carl Jung (1966) to refer to Richard Wilhelm, the translator of the *I Ching*. Jung suggested that Wilhelm embodied the wisdom of the *I Ching* so deeply that he was able to transmit not only its ideas, but also the deeper underlying spirit of Chinese culture. Jung does not seem to have developed the concept further. However, I define a gnostic intermediary as a person who is able to effectively translate and transmit wisdom from one culture or community to another. This translation/transmission can be cross-cultural (e.g., Taoist wisdom to Western culture) or intra-cultural (e.g., Christian contemplative wisdom—much of which is couched in archaic language and concepts—to contemporary Christian communities). What does this require? Well, it seems to require three tasks and three corresponding capacities.

- First, one must imbibe and become the wisdom oneself, because while one can *have* knowledge, one must *be* wise. This, of course, is no small task. In fact, when one talks about profound spiritual wisdom, it can easily take a lifetime.
- The second requirement of gnostic intermediaries is linguistic and conceptual competence. They must understand the language and conceptual system of the people and culture to whom they wish to communicate.
- The third requirement is translational. They must be able to translate the wisdom

from the wisdom-bearing culture into the language and conceptual system of the recipient culture, in such a way as to create an “Aha!” experience of understanding. Of course, this requires recognizing and speaking to the developmental level of the recipients, and better still, speaking in ways that can be appreciated at multiple levels.

The higher reaches of the integral vision draw on the accumulated wisdom of the world’s spiritual traditions. Appreciating and communicating this postconventional (or better, transconventional) spiritual wisdom requires that integral practitioners be “adequate” to it (Schumacher, 1977). I will discuss the concept of adequacy further below.

Applying Integral Ideas

It is one thing to apply integral ideas to the world; it is another to apply them to ourselves. How can this be done?

1. *Study.* Becoming familiar with integral ideas is essential for effective application of the integral vision to both life and work. Study allows one to see and think more integrally, and to use and apply integral frameworks more effectively. Of course, mastery is a lifelong process.
2. *Inspiration.* Studying integral ideas can inspire us. This inspiration will take multiple forms, and find its unique expression in each of us. However, one kind may be crucial for all of us. This is the inspiration first to work to mature towards the higher states and stages that the integral vision describes, and second to serve this same maturation in others.
3. *Growth disciplines.* Another general kind of inspiration is to adopt growth disciplines. We can usefully draw from an array of practices, including psychotherapy, relationship and group work, somatic practices, service, and of course spiritual/contemplative disciplines. Possible practices include the full array of traditional disciplines, contemporary therapies, and Integral Life Practice (Wilber et al., 2008).
4. *Self-assessment.* We can also use Integral Theory to foster self-assessment. For example, we can use integral ideas as an Integral Operating System (IOS) to recognize the quadrant and perspective we are looking from, and to help recognize perspectives and possibilities we have been overlooking.
5. *Developmental assessment.* Another possibility, at least theoretically, is to use the integral map to assess our own level of development. For example, it is sometimes suggested that we can use the integral psychograph to map our own developmental levels on various developmental lines. However, this is a slippery claim because self-assessment is difficult, the shadow subtle, and self-deception impressive. We all have erroneous self-images, potent defenses, and numerous blind spots, and these make self-assessment challenging.
6. *Growth-oriented relationships.* We need honest feedback from other people (second-person perspectives) to compensate for our own blind spots. After all, it

is far easier to see other people's limitations than our own, and 2000 years ago Jesus famously asked, "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3). Therefore, relationships aimed at recognizing and releasing psychological, spiritual, and developmental limitations are invaluable. There is no substitute for dialogue and feedback.

Of course, there are many ways to obtain feedback. These include authentic relationships, as well as formal disciplines such as psychotherapy, counseling, and coaching. However, perhaps the supreme methods for obtaining second-person feedback and coaching are intimate relationships and marriage. At their best, intimate relationships can be superb antidotes to self-deception and self-importance. Intimate partners see and suffer from our foibles more than anyone else, which is why one of the best tests of enlightenment may be that of the psychiatrist Arthur Deikman who suggests, "Ask the spouse."

Romantic relationships are not alone in offering feedback and learning opportunities. In fact, any relationship between people committed to honest dialogue and mutual learning can be psychologically and spiritually enhancing. One of the most effective ways to transform a relationship into a powerful facilitator of growth is to make an explicit agreement to use the relationship for mutual learning and awakening. Once the agreement is made, you have given each other permission to tell the truth, give feedback, and do whatever best serves mutual learning, healing, growth, and awakening. At their best, spiritual communities are based on such agreements. Usually, these agreements are implicit, but can become more powerful if made explicit. The spiritual discipline that focuses most centrally and elegantly on peer relationships as the key to healing and liberation is the curiously titled but spiritually profound, *A Course in Miracles* (Anonymous, 2007).

Growth-oriented relationships and commitments can also be extended beyond explicitly spiritual communities. William Torbert (2004), for example, has done this in creating communities of inquiry in schools, business, and friendship circles. I suspect that if integrally informed people come together to form couples, groups, and communities based on explicitly growth-oriented relationships, then the benefits to everyone will be enormous.

Potential Shadows and Shortcomings

The integral model contains both horizontal and vertical dimensions. Horizontal dimensions include personality types and the four quadrants. Vertical dimensions include developmental lines and their levels (enduring stage structures) and state-stages (the developmental sequence of transitory altered states). These vertical dimensions hold crucial implications both for understanding integral ideas and for the potential traps that may await us.

One of my concerns is that as integral ideas become popular, the integral model may be collapsed into a kind of theoretical flatland. Why? Because the horizontal dimensions of quadrants and types can be apprehended by people who do not mature to postconventional cognition and experience. Therefore, these horizontal dimensions may become the focal point of popular thinking and applications. This can be done while largely ignoring or misunderstanding the higher reaches of vertical dimensions such as spiritual experiences and stages. I therefore suspect that most of the major traps that await us will be developmental.

There are two kinds of developmental traps: *general* and *stage-specific*. By general traps, I mean those that are common across multiple stages. By stage-specific traps, I mean those that are largely specific to one or a few developmental stages. Each perspective and developmental stage probably has its own specific pitfalls, and a major task in coming years will be to map these and create a cartography of specific traps. Each of us could probably create our own list of traps, but the following may be especially important:

General Traps of Multiple Stages

Devaluing One's Previous Stage. There seems to be an automatic developmental tendency to devalue one's previous perspective and stage, as well as those people and institutions still centered in it. This is probably most obvious in adolescents. However, integral practitioners are not immune. For integral practitioners, a common trap is devaluing the previous stages of individualistic ego development and the green meme of value development, as well as those people and institutions that espouse them. This raises an intriguing question: "What are the optimal attitudes to cultivate and hold towards people at different developmental stages?" Perhaps they are the following:

- Care and compassion for those at earlier stages, because these are the people we may be privileged to help and serve.
- Love for those at the same stage, because these are our peers, our community, and our *sangha*.
- Gratitude to those at later stages, because these are our teachers, role models, and way finders.

Egocentric Misuse of One's New Stage or Perspective. This is the tendency to misuse a new stage or perspective in order to bolster one's ego and esteem. At the least this produces a sense of specialness. At worst, it spawns inflation and grandiosity centered on ideas such as, "I am an integralist" (i.e., using integral ideas to strengthen one's ego rather than to transcend one's ego). At spiritual levels, this becomes "spiritual materialism"—the tendency to use spiritual insights and experiences for egocentric purposes (Trungpa, 1975). In my experience, this trap is very hard to avoid. Many a time I have had valuable insights or experiences, and in the next moment found myself fantasizing about how I could use them for fame and recognition. Condemnation of the process and one's self is no help. Rather, compassion for one's own humanness, and the necessary limitations that go with it, are useful healing responses.

Overestimating One's New Stage or Perspective. Whereas the "myth of the given" assumes that there is a world simply awaiting our discovery, more sophisticated philosophies recognize that perception is a creation. What is crucial to recognize is that all perceptions reflect perspectives, and all perspectives are partial and selective. Each perspective both reveals and conceals, clarifies and distorts. However, perspectives and perceptions do not clearly reveal their own limitations. Therefore, it is easy to fall into the trap of overestimating one's new perspectives and developmental stages. In general, this takes the form of what might be called "perspectival overreach" or "perspectival reductionism." Here we seek to overapply the novel perspective or idea, overinterpret phenomena with it, and reduce all phenomena to its purview. At its worst, this becomes the assumption that one has found "The Truth," instead of a truth. The story of Isaac Newton provides a useful antidote:

Newton is widely regarded as the greatest scientist who ever lived. In 1665, at the age of 23, he was a student at Cambridge University when an epidemic of plague closed the campus. Newton fled to his family's farm. Working alone, in a mere 18 months, he revolutionized four distinct fields of science. He revolutionized mathematics with his discovery of calculus, overturned optics by discovering the spectrum of light, transformed physics with initial insights into gravity, and rebirthed astronomy with his initial understanding of planetary motion.

On returning to Cambridge, Newton showed his newfound handiwork to his professor, Isaac Barrow. Barrow thereafter did something that has likely never happened before in the entire history of academia, and likely will never happen again. He resigned his chair in favor of Newton. Of course, Newton was urged to publish his findings, and did in fact write a paper on optics. To his dismay, this resulted in 12 letters of response. Consequently, he vowed never to publish again, saying he had "sacrificed my peace, a matter of real substance" (Ferris, 1988, p. 18). Despite his resistance, he was urged to publish his further work. At age 45 he produced the extraordinary *Principia Mathematica*, of which it is said "by common consent, the *Principia* is the greatest scientific book ever written" (Hacker, 1991, p. 319). Yet at the end of his life Newton concluded:

I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy, playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me. (Brewster, 2001, p. 412).

Likewise, the biographer of the remarkable 20th century Indian philosopher-sage, Sri Aurobindo, explained the difficulty of communicating Aurobindo's path and perspective as follows:

This is why it is so difficult to explain the path to one who has not tried; he will see only his point of view of today or rather the loss of his point of view. And yet, if we only knew how each loss of one's viewpoint is a progress and how life changes when one passes from the stage of the closed truth to the stage of the open truth—a truth like life itself, too great to be trapped by points of view, because it embraces every point of view and sees the utility of each thing at every stage of an infinite development; a truth great enough to deny itself and pass endlessly into a higher truth. (Satprem, 1968, p. 122)

In short, all perspectives and perceptions are partial, and all the insights and understandings they offer are provisional.

Elective Segregation: Failure to Engage the Mainstream. One of the gifts of our mobile technological culture is the ability to be and communicate with like-minded people. It is also one of the contemporary cultural traps. The danger is that in being able to find like-minded people, we can fall into a kind of elective segregation, in which we communicate almost exclusively with those who share our views. What sociologists find is that this selective communication tends to reinforce people's more extreme viewpoints, whereas mixing and communicating with more diverse populations tends to moderate extreme views.

Talking with fellow believers is fun, stimulating, and easy. And, of course, it can be valuable. But to the extent we *only* talk with fellow believers—in this case, with fellow integral practitioners—then we are at risk. We are less likely to connect with divergent viewpoints and mainstream disciplines. Without extensive communication with the mainstream, integral ideas will not be challenged and honed by criticism (and neither will we) and will not permeate the mainstream culture nor produce the changes that are so desperately needed.

Transpersonal Traps

Elevationism and Spiritual Bypass. *Elevationism* refers to the inappropriate interpreting or categorizing of a phenomenon in terms of a level or stage higher than the one to which it belongs. When this occurs with clinical difficulties, then problems and pathologies are interpreted (or rationalized) as higher level (often spiritual) processes. For example, depression may be interpreted as the recognition of existential dissatisfaction or Buddhist *dukkha*, while anxiety may be viewed as existential angst or yogic kundalini. While it may be appealing to fancy one is suffering from rarified spiritual issues, this can get in the way of seeking and accepting appropriate help (including medication, where appropriate). And to complicate matters, basic pathology and spiritual issues can coexist. In such cases, spiritually, transpersonally, and integrally informed counselors—who are well grounded in conventional skills—can be invaluable. *Spiritual bypass* is the use of spirituality to deny or avoid psychological issues. For example, a person who is uncomfortable with intimacy may avoid relationships while rationalizing this as seeking solitude in order to live a more spiritual life.

Settling for Merely Intellectual Understanding. Spiritual traditions emphasize that their most important goals are to help people experience and stabilize higher states and stages. Unfortunately, it is much easier to read and talk about transpersonal states and stages than it is to directly experience them. However, without direct experience, transpersonal insights and ideas remain what Immanuel Kant called “empty concepts.” The extent to which we can truly understand and appreciate transpersonal concepts depends on the extent we have had the experiences to which the concepts refer.

These limitations on understanding transpersonal experiences, especially advanced ones, without direct personal experience can be conceived of in several ways. They can be considered in terms of *state-specific* knowledge and *cross-state* transfer (Tart, 2001): developmentally, as stage-specific understanding; epistemologically, as the necessity of opening the “eye of contemplation” (Wilber, 1996); and linguistically, as the difficulty of understanding the signifier (word or term) without having experienced the relevant signified experience (Wilber, 2001). Without such direct experience, the deeper meaning of these concepts—or what philosophers call “higher grades of significance”—will escape us. But what is most problematic is this: We will not recognize that their real meaning and significance are escaping us. Perhaps the best way of illustrating this is with a story:

Imagine an animal finding a novel object. This object is dark and light, has an unfamiliar smell, and tastes terrible. Needless to say, the animal spits it out in disgust. Now imagine that a woman from an illiterate tribe discovers the object. It is very curious indeed—it opens and closes, is soft and flexible, and has squiggly marks on it. Being a smart woman, she soon makes a wonderful discovery: the object is superb for starting fires. Now imagine that a Western child finds the object. He immediately recognizes it as a book. However, because he cannot read, he has no clue what it says. Then the same object is picked up by a contemporary adult. She begins reading it, but quickly throws it away because she cannot understand it, and it makes bizarre

claims about nature of reality. Then the book is picked up by a physicist. He opens it and is awed when he recognizes that it describes a profound new understanding of quantum physics. Finally, the book is found by a woman who is both a physicist and contemplative. She also appreciates the brilliant quantum physics and delights in the new understandings it offers, while simultaneously recognizing the limited ability of all words and concepts to grasp the fundamental nature of reality.

This simple story offers several crucial insights. First, each animal, child and person was correct in their perception. It was non-nutritious, it was useful for starting fires, it was a book—everyone’s perception and understanding were correct. However, their perception and understanding were also partial, and contained no information that the object held deeper meanings (higher grades of significance) waiting to be understood. The crucial point is that we can completely overlook higher grades of significance, yet be completely unaware that we are missing them. In his widely influential critique of scientific materialism, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, the British economist E. F. Schumacher (1977) described this dilemma:

When the level of the knower is not adequate to the level [or grade of significance] of the object of knowledge, the result is not factual error but something much more serious; an inadequate and impoverished view of reality. (p. 42).

The challenging implication is this: without direct spiritual, transpersonal experience, we may be like the child or ordinary adult looking at the book. We may read about spiritual concepts, we may hear of transpersonal ideas, and we may even appreciate some of the beauty of the higher reaches of the integral model. However, without direct experience of the requisite higher states and stages, their full significance escapes us. And trickiest of all, we will not realize that they are escaping us. Intellectual apprehension alone is not enough in the transpersonal and spiritual domains. Intellectual understanding is important, but is also insufficient.

Just how important this issue is can be judged from the warnings of both Muhammad and the Buddha. Both of them used animal metaphors to describe religious scholars who do not engage in spiritual disciplines. The Buddha described such people as herders of another person’s cattle, while Muhammad likened a mere scholar to an ass carrying a load of books. So how do we foster direct transpersonal experiences and spiritual insights, and thereby make ourselves better able to appreciate the spiritual heights of Integral Theory? Answer: by engaging in spiritual practices and related practices as fully as we can. This is a key requirement for anyone who aspires to truly understand and communicate the integral vision.

Complacency and Stagnation: The Failure to Keep Growing. Developmental complacency is settling for the comforts of one’s current stage of development rather than continuing to develop. The cost is stagnation. In general, at each higher state and stage, pains tend to decrease, pleasures to increase, powers become more potent, and seductions become sweeter. Needless to say, the temptations of complacency can increase with development. At any stage we can “cash in our winnings” and use our newfound abilities and gifts for personal and material gains. Problems arise, however, when one uses abilities *primarily* for ego gratification, rather than for further ego transcendence and for service to others. This is an ancient trap which is vividly portrayed in Buddhism as the “god realm.” Here the “gods” luxuriate in sensory pleasures that come from their previous good deeds, but forget all sense of higher purpose. We can see contemporary examples of this ancient myth among people who acquire wealth, luxuriate in it, and fall into an existential and spiritual stupor.

Yoga describes these traps as the seduction of the *siddhis*. *Siddhis* are the extraordinary powers that can result from spiritual disciplines, and while they can be very beneficial, they can also be very seductive. The guiding principle of yoga is “*moksha* before *siddhi*,” where *moksha* means enlightenment or liberation. The principle is that one should seek liberation before seeking *siddhis*. Why? First, because liberation is far more important. Second, because spiritual maturity provides a partial safeguard against the seductions and misuse of the *siddhis*, and hopefully guarantees that, if *siddhis* are acquired, they will be used wisely and well.

The Drive to Development

One of the most profound, important, and recurrent findings of spiritual disciplines, contemporary psychotherapy, and psychedelic research is that the mind contains an inherent developmental drive towards growth. Given appropriate conditions and practices, the mind tends to be self-healing, self-actualizing, self-transcending, and self-liberating (Maslow, 1971; Walsh & Grob, 2005). This drive has been given many names. Abraham Maslow described it as *self-actualization*; Carl Jung as the *individuation urge*. Stanislav Grof describes *holotropism*, which is the growth orientation towards wholeness. Ken Wilber uses the term *Eros*, while the Dzogchen tradition has long spoken of *self-liberation*. These concepts are not identical, but they do overlap. Together they point to a crucial capacity and dynamic of mind: a developmental drive towards finding and fulfilling the mind’s potentials.

Metapathologies

Maslow made the key point that the failure to fulfill an innate drive of any kind can result in pathology, and that the failure to fulfill the drive to grow is no exception. He went further to describe an array of “metapathologies”—subtle forms of suffering that come at higher developmental levels such as alienation, anomie, and existential malaise (the loss of meaning and purpose). Maslow suggested that the best place to begin mapping metapathologies would be through a survey of spiritual disciplines, and Wilber continued this mapping in *Transformations of Consciousness* (Wilber et al., 1986). The tricky thing about metapathologies that result from failures of growth is that they usually go unrecognized since our culture has no understanding of them. Moreover, psychologists are only just beginning to plumb the higher reaches of maturity, and sophisticated spiritual ideas are little known.

As a result, metapathologies may well run rampant in contemporary affluent cultures. However, they are probably usually misunderstood and misdiagnosed. Therefore, they are likely to be mistreated by distraction, sedation, or yet another plunge into lower order gratifications in the never-ending hope that this time, *finally*, these substitute gratifications will provide full and permanent satisfaction. One of the most important and painful questions of our time is, “How much of the psychological and spiritual suffering in contemporary affluent cultures is due to unrecognized failures of growth?”

Metadefenses

Although the mind has an innate *Eros*, or drive towards growth and wholeness, it also has active defenses against it. Moreover, these defenses extend into transpersonal and spiritual states and stages. I learned this from my own experience years ago while listening to a talk by Ram Dass, one of the earliest pioneers to investigate Eastern spiritual disciplines and to introduce them to the West. I went to hear him give a talk on

the yogic chakra system, which at that time was almost completely new to me. As he described the fourth chakra, I thought, “Hmm, that’s interesting!” As he described the fifth, I thought, “Oh, wow!” And yet when he finished, I could not remember what he had just said. Then he began to describe the sixth chakra. The next thing I remember was being woken up by the snores of the person next to me. Looking around at the audience of several hundred people I discovered that a significant number of them, like me, had fallen asleep. This was surely not because Ram Dass was dull; he was a superb speaker.

It took me several days to understand the significance of that experience. Until then I had assumed growth to higher states simply involved making novel, previously unknown discoveries. But my falling asleep suggested that it meant overcoming defenses. To defend against something, however, you must at least partly recognize and understand it. So at some level, I recognized aspects of the higher states Ram Dass described, and also recognized that they represented a threat to my current identity and belief system. This implies that perhaps we actively defend against knowing and growing to higher states and stages. We suffer, it seems, from what might be called a “terror of transcendence.” Of course, I was not the first person to come to this kind of conclusion. Later, I would learn that Robert Desoille described what he called the “repression of the sublime,” while Andreas Angyal described the “evasion of growth.” Maslow went as far as to coin a new term, “the Jonah complex”—the fear of one’s own greatness. He pointed out that “...we fear our best as well as our worst even though in different ways...” (1971, p. 35). Maslow also warned that “if you deliberately plan to be less than you are capable of being, then I warn you that you will probably be unhappy all the days of your life” (1971, p. 36).

So overcoming complacency and avoiding stagnation require two things: the first requirement is that we not settle for the seductions that come with growth, and the second is that we recognize and overcome active metadefenses against growth. Complacency can be a doubly seductive trap with nondual teachings. These traditions emphasize, for example, the nonduality of samsara and nirvana and also “always already”: the realization that we always already are that which we seek. These teachings can be interpreted as implying that no spiritual practice or work is necessary. This is a tricky trap that results in movements such as “beat Zen” or “talking Advaita,” both of which use nondual arguments to justify not practicing traditional spiritual disciplines (Samraj, 2006). However, traditional spiritual disciplines regard listening to talks as only a preliminary step. For example, in Vedanta, *sravana* (listening to spiritual ideas) is traditionally followed by *manana* (reflection on the ideas) and then *nididhyasana* (meditation on the ideas) (Samraj, 2006). This is similar to the sequence in Christian contemplation of *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (reflection), and *contemplatio* (direct intuitive apprehension). Moreover, a close look at the texts of both Zen and Advaita Vedanta makes clear that they both assume the need for rigorous, multidimensional disciplines.

If you have fully realized that samsara and nirvana are one, and you continually rest in ever-present awareness throughout day and night, then by all means continue to rest in that awareness. However, if, like me, these nondual perspectives are only occasional recognitions, then there is a need for practice. Of course, that practice can be infused by an appreciation of nonduality. The Dzogchen tradition of Tibetan Buddhism summarizes this well with its recommendation to “climb up from below while swooping down from above.”

Of course, complacency and stagnation are not problems for individuals alone. They can be potential traps for whole communities. Spiritual communities at their best can be catalysts of mutual growth. However, as

too many blaring headlines point out, they can also be seedbeds of destructive tendencies, and can encourage mutual self-congratulation and resulting complacency.

Possible Antidotes to Stagnation

- *Awareness*, specifically awareness of the recurrent seduction of complacency. Awareness is healing, and the awareness that complacency will likely remain a recurrent seduction throughout (spiritual) life may provide a partial safeguard.
- *Growth-oriented relationships*. Relationships dedicated to growth can constitute one of the best bulwarks against stagnation. Such relationships can consist of couples, groups, or communities.
- *Teachers*. Teachers offer a further antidote. Those who have progressed further on the path, and are available to share their discoveries and warn against pitfalls, can be invaluable. Of course, this is not to say that relationships with teachers, as with relationships of any kind, are immune to traps. However, it is to say that, at their best, relationships with teachers can be wonderfully beneficial. “Let your house be a meeting place for the wise,” advises Jewish wisdom. In the words of the Buddha, “The wise man tells you/ Where you have fallen/ And where you yet may fall—... Find friends who love the truth” (Byrom, 1993, p. 31).
- *Regular, sustained practice*. This may be one of the most important of all antidotes. I have seen some very impressive friends and colleagues fall into traps of stagnation, depression, and addiction. One of the common factors seemed to be that they had given up their daily spiritual practice. Yet continuity of practice is one of the most recurrent refrains across spiritual traditions, as for example, in the advice of the Koran, “Be constant in prayer” (Cleary, 1993, p. 9).

Conclusion

I have emphasized the dangers or traps on the integral path. However, traps can also have their benefits. Traps can be stopping points or stepping stones, depending on whether they remain unrecognized and denied, or are recognized and faced. If unrecognized, these traps may constitute aspects of our individual and collective integral shadows. Then they will exact their toll, and result in pathology, stagnation, and ineffectiveness. If recognized, however, these same traps become opportunities for learning, healing, and growth. As the Kulār-nava tantra states, “By what [people] fall by that they rise” (Satprem, 1968, p.78). Recognizing these traps, and making sure we use them to rise, will be a recurring challenge personally and for the integral movement as a whole.

NOTES

¹ I have tried to preserve the conversational nature of my keynote presentation at the Integral Theory Conference (August 7-10, 2008, Pleasant Hill, CA), upon which this article is based. Details and citations have been added where appropriate.

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