

## A Leadership Opportunity

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### **A “Letter” of Intervention and Invitation to Ken, Don, and the Integral Community**

From Sara Ross

Dear fellow travelers,

The classical image is a huge, beautiful bird, with powerful wings, rising up from the ashes of something that has died. This image appears when I think about this collection of folks networked by Ken Wilber’s writing and Integral Institute (I-I) and Don Beck’s Spiral Dynamics (SD) work. The invisible connective tissue linking us to one another is the spirit to be, become, and accomplish more for ourselves, others, and the planet. Each of us may describe it differently, yet this dynamic commonality is our link. This interconnected community is the potential for a new phoenix rising.

My naked desire in sharing this paper is to light a fire, a fire large enough to create the deep pile of ashes the phoenix needs in order to rise. If an inner attraction stirs at this image, what might each of us have that we are willing to toss in that fire? What kinds of ashes are needed? Over time, I have come to this conclusion: if enough of us can identify one or two strong convictions we have about any aspect of this community, and are willing to let go of their underlying assumptions, we can supply a raging fire.

This intervention results from my observations of blockages that prevent us from being and becoming an integral community, blockages that rest on shaky assumptions. What do we need an integral community for? I hope a response forms in readers by the end of this paper, as each asks if their desire for being, becoming, and accomplishing more would be supported by the strong wings of a new phoenix. I can imagine a networked integral learning, research and practice community, built on a sturdy set of new assumptions, that does and shares substantive work while stretching everyone in appropriate ways that lead to further holistic development in self, others, and methodologies. Getting there from

here is the challenge. In this paper I cover the following territory needed to clear the blockages and create new directions.

- The interrelated blockages are the un-integral culture we have created, confusions about identifying stages of development and the hubris that characterizes much of the confusion, and misconceptions about the nature of stage transitions.
- Ironically, its embeddedness in the SD worldview has rendered integral theory impotent to employ interpretive powers to critically assess our culture and assumptions. Applying the AQAL concept has been “disabled” by embedding SD as our “eye on the world.” Therefore, I employ the lens of cognitive science with its useful alternative vocabulary to shed new light in three areas: key stages of development reflected in our rainbow, assessing our culture, and the nature of stage transitions.
- Dislodging blockages means disrupting assumptions. If there are ever to be enough ashes to raise a new phoenix, we need old assumptions to toss in the fire! The basic moral intuition impels us to always put Humpty Dumpty together again into a larger whole than they were to begin with. When favored assumptions are dislodged it can feel like something is breaking open, and we often hang onto them more tightly, especially if there is nothing new at hand to consider. I address this with care by offering new assumptions throughout the paper and a new slant on confusion with ways to love it while we hate it.
- A sketch of integral methodologies serves as a support for confusion and as a proposal for strong new wings to support development in each of us and in a new culture and practice.
- Then, in shameless optimism that this paper will have started a fire, I close with a vision of our ashes giving rise to a new phoenix, and how to usher in a new integral age!

### **In the beginning**

Because the approach I am taking here covers a lot of territory, the overall length is a concern as I begin. Here and there I will conserve space by taking a rather blunt or condensed approach to get an idea planted so we can move on. In whatever style or strategy I employ, please know my aim to dislodge assumptions is just that, and is not attacking whoever holds them. Even so, to accompany whatever reactions attend your reading, I remind us all of the perennial wisdom from Psychology 101. Whenever we notice reactions in ourselves catalyzed by others' behaviors, “It” isn't about the other person. “It” is about us. “It” is letting us know there is something in us wanting to grow in some way if we only

investigate It more deeply, and fearlessly follow Its lead. This is equally true for positive and negative reactions. If we happen to believe Spirit is manifesting in all of us, It will help us internalize and learn from this psycho-logic.

### **What leads me think there are blockages?**

The pervasive reliance on SD to describe and discuss stages of development and their transitions has resulted in an array of confusions that are blockages to integral community in the Integral Institute and SD circles. They also prevent this community from integrating with other integral circles. Since SD has become embedded in this culture, it lacks interpretive powers for critical reflection upon this culture. As a result, recognized or not, confusions are parading as clarity. Many of the confusions are in how to identify certain stages and what “second tier” or “integral” really are. Some people assume that if they “get the theory” – either integral or SD – then they are “integral.” Being at second tier has become the only “acceptable” place to be. Some believe the leap to second tier can be the result of several days’ work in a seminar. The practice of reducing others to “green” is rampant. People who mention the usefulness of dialogical approaches are labeled green sans inquiry into the intended structures, purposes, and products of such processes. People at meetings trying to work their way through a challenge are looked down on if they need more time than others to discuss it. SD’s laudable principle of making particular inquiries of others in order to interpret their behaviors’ motivations and figure out their “color” is violated, unnoticed. The rich “memetic stack” that flavors different spheres of a person’s functioning is forgotten as mental-egoic images of others sound like one-dimensional paper dolls colored by only one crayon. Many folks uncritically adopt the biases of their esteemed leaders. Openly operationalized as a strategic move, the most obvious of those biases has resulted in the hubris of in-group behavior and assigning negative labels to any thinking or behavior that does not conform to the culture Don and Ken have created. Questions, points of view, and criticisms are dismissed or deconstructed and few feel motivated to try to be change agents of this prevailing culture.

Does this environment sound “integral,” – meaning, both integrated and integrative – by any stretch of the imagination? Or does it sound like the business-as-usual world we want to transform via integral approaches? For the sake of the Spiral, to use the current vernacular, this stasis is neither healthy nor conducive to further development of any kind for anyone anywhere, much less for an “integral community.” Ken and Don, you have co-created a

monster. And this uncritically susceptible community has compliantly helped you perpetuate it. It is like the troll blocking passage over the developmental bridge. It's time to get unstuck so we can all move forward.

### **Assessing through the cognitive lens**

I hear this community's "party line" loud in my ears refuting my observations. Based on ample experience, I know in advance my diagnosis above will be dismissed as green by many readers. I also know from all my previous attempts that integral theory itself has become an impotent tool for interpreting and analyzing events and behaviors in the very community founded on it. The prevailing SD filter blocks integral methodology in the very environment we should expect to find it. Fear of dialogue sends people scurrying when discussing how to work with left-hand quadrants. Therefore, I hand the gavel over to the scientific community to diagnose this one. I choose, from among many others, the domain of cognitive science because it has an independent-from-us yet also authoritative reputation most people in this community will respect. I use it because its examinations get underneath the "presenting symptoms" of behaviors' content and context. It gets under the surface, down to the level where the sparse, deep structures of reasoning operate like the skeletons supporting our bodies. With the concise words and stark x-rays of cognitive research, we can compare SD's familiar constructions and our assumptions with a new lens.

Cognitive research investigates how people – literally – construct their reasoning or logic. As always, each stage of development adds another reasoning capacity that builds on the previous ones. The work of some (Commons, Danaher-Gilpin, Goodheart, & Miller, 2002) has resulted in a mathematics-based analytical method of scrutinizing reasoning structures, which has further resulted in a scoring method to identify where persons measure in their overall cognitive development and the transition steps between them. Other researchers take a different approach. Rosenberg (1988, 2002) provides a more "enfleshed-sounding" examination of reasoning structures. These folks will teach us an easy new vocabulary as we learn about two kinds of reasoning, compare them to our experience and SD, and examine assumptions we hold. My reasons for taking this approach will become quickly apparent as the discussion gets underway.

### **Introducing linear thinking**

We know each stage of thinking is due to higher complexity. To make the notion of "complexity" more tangible, I provide the

mathematical illustrations of the hierarchical complexity that can be calculated for the stages I discuss. These are only 'tip of the iceberg' peeks at the analyses that are like looking at the brain's machinations through a math lens. Through these examples, we will see in vivid terms one reason for integral theory's tenets that each stage involves higher complexity, builds on the previous stage, and no stage can be skipped. Each stage needs a lot of practice becoming masterful at what it does, until it encounters sufficient difficult challenges it can "stretch into" and new neural capacities begin to develop.

Commons et al (2002, p. 24) report the mathematical structure of formal operations can be represented this way:  $x * (y + z) = (x * y) + (x * z)$ , where  $*$  = multiply (numbers), intersection (sets), or 'and' (propositions). Thoughts start with a known "given," the first "x." It literally "operates" on the objects it thinks are other relevant "givens" to work on, whether numbers, sets, or propositions. A practical example of this could be one of us noticing something going on that seems to be a problem. We think of what we know or have heard about that is causing the problem. We think about what we've seen or heard about that are impacts of the problem. We might use something like SD to identify any of those objects of attention, whether people, behaviors, institutions, etc. The result of these logical mental connections may result in our having a brilliant solution. That idea then becomes our new starting point for another round of thinking, a new starting "x." We think of all the actors and things they could do to execute the solution. We probably share our solution with others, they think it makes good logical sense, and we all act on it. "We came, we thought our thoughts, we conquered" exemplifies the "complete loop" of formal logic. It does not seek discovery of unknown connections or objects to include, but works on what is concretely known to it. There are no "?"s in this logic.

The two sub-stages of Piaget's formal operations (abstract and formal) share a characteristic in their reasoning structures that Rosenberg (2002) calls linear reasoning. A person who reasons this way "is an immediately, concretely, and intensely conventional social animal" (p. 133). I have extracted from his discussion the most relevant characteristics.

- A simple process of evaluating things, aimed at deciding what is good or bad, normal or abnormal, right or wrong, acceptable or not acceptable.
- A need to determine where cause, blame, and/or praise belong.
- Basing evaluations on a central factor or framework [e.g.,

dialogue, SD], which leads to passing broad judgments on categories of people, actions, or groups irrespective of aspects that contradict the judgment.

- Strong loyalties to the in-group and corresponding enmity toward out-groups.
- Dependent on in-group and esteemed persons' social influence and accepted social conventions to arrive at judgments of what is desirable, normal, and acceptable.
- A limited degree of reflection is possible, though not typical, structured along the same categorical and accepted bases described above.

When people are reasoning in this fashion – as their center of gravity, or just in a particular domain at a particular time – they have a sense of security and surety in how their worlds work, described in Piaget's work as the equilibrium of formal operations (Basseches, 1989). This stability comes from having “a place for everything and everything in its place.” It underlies the ability to create the mental, linear chains of causation and future impacts that contribute to the strategic thinking capacities appearing at orange. This equilibrium also serves as a base from which to repel any perceived assaults on its rigid logic. Arguments contain expert, empirical, or logical evidence presented in a linear, one-dimensional fashion (Commons et al, 2002). Rosenberg reports these coping strategies include denial in the form of a refusal to attend to the issue or question at hand, diminishment of others' evaluations, and buttressing the significance of favored positions or arguments often by invoking or retreating to an expert or authority position.

Linear reasoning characterizes the deep structure of reasoning employed by SD's blue and orange. While each operates on different content and contexts and with respect to their abstract and formal operations, the general linear structure of thought underlies both. Thus the dualistic thinking, the need for a form of social acceptance/belonging, and the defense mechanisms described above pertain to both SD stages. We can readily see from these qualities that underneath the purported individualism of orange is actually conventional stage reasoning. We can't attribute just agentic qualities to orange when its underlying structures lead the person to be such an “intensely conventional social animal” as this. Graves' term for this stage, “multiplistic” (Wilber, 1999a), implies that far more characterizes orange. The SD individualist label masks the deeper operations of those socially governed behaviors. These social needs surely underlie orange preferences to be in, or to seek out, the security of the “expert position.”

Dear readers, the gavel of cognitive science comes down on a vivid, all-quadrant diagnosis of how the “integral community” behaves. We can see, in these impartial snapshots, how some people’s attitudes (UL) and behaviors (UR) have been functioning, what cultural norms (LL) have prevailed, and how institutional behaviors (LR) have been constructed. If we further reflect on this community’s prevalent attitudes, we can notice that the rainbow of developmental levels that exists has been reduced to a new duality a la linear thinking, a new polarity that divides us: people are now viewed as either first tier or second tier. The AQAL concept of levels has been replaced by tiers. It would be a highly suspect rationalization to propose that integral spiral wizards operating at second tier are masquerading as linear thinkers. That would only prove the point, since second tier is authentic and transparent, and doesn’t masquerade. Instead, a science that cannot be judged first tier green (and thereby ignored) has objectively described our culture and practice as classic SD orange. How integral is that?

This assessment holds up a mirror to push our individual and collective reflection. That reflection is the indispensable path to the higher consciousness we all desire, yes? Yes, except we usually like it better when it doesn’t hurt! And it does hurt, initially, when It challenges us to compassionately embrace our still-developing personalities, when It invites us to humbly acknowledge our growing edges, and when It beckons us to lay down our defenses so we can move forward unencumbered. Transitioning out of this secure world can be wrenching and confusing, inwardly and outwardly, and a later section discusses integral methods to support and encourage transition.

### **Introducing systematic thinking**

Systematic reasoning is the first level of systems thinking. Again with the purpose of making tangible comparisons of complexity, here is a glance at more equations. (I realize this is a “turn-off” for some; nonetheless, it’s important for contrast.) Commons et al (2002, p. 24) and Commons (personal communication, 1.20.03) represent the mathematical structure of systematic operations this way:

$$x * (y + z) = (x * y) + (x * z) \text{ then,} \\ [(order\ 10\ actions)\ x] ? (y ? z) = (x ? y) ? (x ? z).$$

The ?’s can fall into either of two different approaches (bear with me, here):

- A.  $x \ 0 (y * z) = (x \ 0 y) * (x \ 0 z)$ , where 0 = “+” or “or” or union of all elements from either.

B.  $x * (y \cap z) = (x * y) \cap (x * z)$ , where  $*$  = multiply or and or intersection (overlap, elements in common).

Note this thinking's character of exploring for unknown relationships among and between the propositions and sets involved in the problem being tackled. Eventually, over time, enough of the operations on and interrelations to objects being considered with new iterations of the sequence get sorted out to whatever extent the thinker takes it. This thought system is too complex for me to offer a few sentences' worth of a practical example. The following discussion explains why.

This stage of development is made possible by a more complex deep structure that recognizes systems of relationships, which some (e.g., Commons et al, 2002; Rosenberg, 2002, 1988) call systematic reasoning. By all accounts of those who research adult development, this is found in a relatively minor segment of the population, so we owe it to ourselves to get some idea of what this stage is like. Rosenberg (2002) explains that "in its most industrious and sophisticated elaborations, it yields very general theories of personal, social, and political life and very self-conscious and careful strategies for observing, interpreting, and judging events" (pp. 134-135). The complexity of systematic reasoning is reflected in Rosenberg's recognition that he could not summarize it as is his more usual way of concluding chapters, nor can I do it justice. Introducing its characteristics as "integration, abstraction, and interpretation," (p. 134), he goes on to caution that like all forms of thinking, it requires effort. It may therefore be conducted in a more or less methodical and elaborate manner. Where there is less effort, the result will be conceptual systems that are partially or loosely constructed and principles that are less abstract and less carefully deduced and applied. Although deficient, the basic quality of thinking and the structure of the understandings and evaluations in such cases are nonetheless systematic (Rosenberg, 2002, p. 135).

The primary feature of systematic processes is the dynamic constant juxtapositioning in which "specific events, interactions, claims, preferences, conventions, and rituals are considered with reference either to the relevant individuals and communities or to the relevant principles of social exchange" (p. 215). This sheds light on the "?" functions in the illustration above. Every "invisible" relationship the thinker can identify gets examined. This reasoning and the evaluations it produces indicate social values of a more universal nature, and it recognizes that even energetically-advanced conclusions are constructed and subject to further

improvement. We could expect to hear vigorous arguments based on strong principles but they are not likely to reflect a dogmatic attachment to the argument. The nature of this mental process results in Rosenberg's assertion that the familiar equilibrium-related principle of cognitive dissonance does not apply to systematic reasoning as it does to earlier structures. This is because the structure of the reasoning is looking for what else needs to be considered. It is an open thinking system in that regard.

The main limitations of systematic reasoning arise from its own complexity. As we saw in the math, it can conceive two different systems of analysis, and it can reason both inductively and deductively, but it is not yet able to coordinate these approaches to draw well-completed conclusions. This unresolved two-paths-to-choose-from-at-the-same-time is at the root of its relativistic quality.

### **New respect for "green"**

Yes, systematic reasoning is relativistic "green." It can be more or less sophisticated or efficient depending on where a person is, and it has a built-in problem reaching conclusions sometimes. Beck & Cowan (1996) do not recognize the existence of systems thinking at green, while Wilber and cognitive scientists do, with Wilber calling it early vision logic, the first post-conventional stage (Wilber, 1999a, 1999b). From both the SD book and listening to Don, it sounds as though systems thinking begins only at second tier, and he has said that is why he thinks it is so important that people develop to yellow. What actually develops at yellow, though, is meta-systems thinking, and of course it is crucial in these times. I get the impression he and others believe that learning to apply SD is complex enough to jump people up to second tier. Linear reasoners can apply SD as a strategic or analytical tool with ease, and when they do, the results will reflect that thinking, not jump it to higher complexity. I've heard there are "cascades" of people going into second tier these days. There is no research that supports the possibility of such cascades. The stark difference I illustrated between orange and green thinking shows why. Learning new material and how to apply it, such as integral theory or SD value systems, is just learning new material and how to apply it. Teaching a development model doesn't develop the people taught. First, we must learn to think and manipulate information in systems terms with a lot of ?'s before getting to yellow's systems-of-systems thinking.

A significant contrast with SD green arises in another Rosenberg (1988) discussion. Systematic thinkers are flexible, independent,

not reliant on social grouping or definition, and conceive themselves as independent entities, though they are not anti-social. They require a sense of independence and freedom of thought and action. Readers who are familiar with SD might think he is describing orange or yellow instead of green. His research does not reveal a deep structure that seeks for itself warm fuzzy community. This is because systematic thinkers are not bound by what they already know or have heard about; they are the first “seers of invisible systems.” This detaches them from identification with former groupings, and the resulting independence characterizes their thought and self-sense. Because they see connections, overlaps, and interrelationships not apparent to others, talk and concern about community and how others feel and experience things can be a characteristic because those are among the many systems it tries to include in its thinking and analyses.

It is consistent with green’s awareness of systems-as-systems that a person also develops a stronger sense of self-system, which is the accurate meaning of the term “individualist.” Graves himself classified this stage as both individualist and relativist (Wilber, 1999a). Rosenberg’s research agrees not only with Graves, but also with other researchers’ classification of green as individualistic (e.g., Cook-Greuter, 1999; Fisher, Rooke & Torbert, 2000). We can see a pattern emerging. Here, as in the orange analysis, the surface features SD focuses on can lead us astray. Those surface features of value systems – the content of speech and behavior – stem from opposite core “realities” in the deep structures. In both cases, we find the SD characterizations misleadingly shallow to describe whole people. This is because value systems or vmemes do not describe whole people; they describe the means people use to achieve ends driven by the deep structures of reasoning and meaning-making, which may vary by circumstance. There are no hard-cast people molds. With regard to green, the cognitive gavel comes down on SD’s interpretation as not only inconsistent with its own origins in Graves’ research, but also with well-respected bodies of other research. The thrust of this argument is that the prevailing, shallow caricature of green we inherit from SD misses the mark. This caricature has played the starring role in creating – and perpetuating – the troll blocking the bridge.

### **The roots of anathema**

That argument’s mission was to get across that green uses the first level of systems thinking, that systematic is a complex thought system, and most importantly, why it demands our respect. Green is the highest order complex thinking most us will encounter in our lifetimes, except for the minuscule percentage of people evidencing

second tier development. And all of the folks in that second tier population will only have got there by being damn good at thinking systematically green. Why is this community's bias bent against fostering green?

Well, we already know the answer to that one. The bias against the discussive and/or deconstructive behavior of some people in a particular transition step and/or particular stage of development and/or discovering self-awareness and/or of extraverted personality and/or who knows what else, has resulted in the pervasive impatience, disgust, and/or fear of dialogue. Unfortunately, all of these variables have been reduced to "green." What's really at the root of this reductionism? There are three factors. All are related, and all virtually guarantee a collision course.

- The first factor is time. Systems thinking at any of its levels takes time. By contrast, linear thinking can quickly follow its mental linkages from point to point to point in sometimes very rapid succession. Therefore, linear thinkers tend to be very impatient with systems thinkers.
- Method is the second related factor. Collisions are inevitable because linear and systematic thinking each "despise" the other's approach to problem-solving. Linear thinking with its periods (.) at the end of its logical conclusions hates it when systematic question-marks (?) pick up the "x," bump it to a higher scale, and run with it to start applying a whole new sequence of reasoning at a whole other invisible level that is almost nothing but ?'s. Likewise, systematic thinking may never really think it has reached a satisfying conclusion, because it often thinks more connections are out there. It hates it when "time's up" is announced and it has to slap a period on the end of incomplete thoughts and systems!
- It goes much deeper than this, though. As we saw earlier, orange linear thinking's growth to its next stage requires it to think with many fewer periods so it can move to green's complexity. Green systematic thinking's further development requires it to discover where periods go so it can move to yellow's complexity. Now, basic psychology tells us we like in others what we like in ourselves, and dislike in others what we dislike in ourselves, bluntly put. Remember that our evolutionary spirit constantly searches out openings to help us shift to higher complexity. For that reason, when we're stuck where we are, we sort of hate being where we are, and we hate it even more when others have what we don't have, but we can't yet identify what that is. Still, on some deep level within us, we know there's something else, something more,

and we want it a lot. This very spiritual human dynamic is called Projection. It tells us where we hate being stuck so we can get growing again. It may sound nonsensical, i.e., non-linear, but I can't say it any plainer than this.

The very methods that can be most effective helping systematic reasoning develop beyond its limitations offer productive structure for its mental processing, and are the very same methods needed for linear reasoning to develop beyond its limitations. These are discussed together later.

What has this examination of green systematic thinking accomplished? If it succeeded in its mission, it has disrupted damaging, long-held assumptions and judgments by mounting a strong counter-argument. Its arguments have been strong enough to resurrect and catalyze critical thinking, in scarce supply lately. People should feel compelled to voice old and new questions. Others should feel compelled to answer. A good dose of confusion should remind us all that theories are not dogma; they're simply human constructions that can serve us as long as they're both useful and life-giving. They are not for wielding like clubs over fellow human beings. We should see rigid perceptions begin to relax into more open, multi-perspectival systems that can breathe the fresh air of freedom to take seriously – and fearlessly – the steps necessary to pursue development in self and others, naturally, one step at a time. There should be some clarity emerging about what those steps are.

### **Where we spend our time: stage transitions**

Now that significant contrasts between two stages are firmly planted, we need to move to the next smaller scale – the radical transitions needed to get from stage to stage. This community does a lot of talking about “whats” but virtually none about “hows.” This observation applies to the whole culture we've created. Knowing “what” a stage is, is only static information. Understanding “how” things happen is not only one purpose of Ken's theory, but also adds the dynamic “how” a thing becomes what it is. Even a modest amount of self-reflection reveals we do not make stage transitions rapidly. Commons et al (2002) find that people to the age of 24 “transition every two years at most, sometimes even less [often]” (p. 8, emphasis added).

### **The steps involved in all stage transitions \***

<p>Step 0 – “Faultfinders” [from step 4]</p>	<p>Temporary equilibrium point (thesis); Previous stage synthesis does not solve all tasks (deconstruction begins)</p>	<p>Perceive tremendous unfairness, can get stuck here. See the failures of the behavior of the present order to obtain what others do.</p>
<p>Step 1 – “Nay sayers” [<b>RED and/or BLUE</b>]</p>	<p>Negation or complementation (antithesis); Subject forms a second synthesis of previous stage actions</p>	<p>May consist of those who enter therapy, rebels, radicals, discontents. Have given up their old ways. If A is wrong, then the opposite of A is right. Substitute behavior B for previously successful behavior A.</p>
<p>Step 2 – “Relativists” [<b>GREEN</b>]</p>	<p>Relativism (alternation of thesis and antithesis): Alternate [chaotically] the coexisting schemes but no coordination of them</p>	<p>In [the academic] culture, it is quite often the largest group. They stop progress by insisting there is more than one way to look at things but cannot decide. This produces anxiety, and uncertainty about roles, values, etc.</p>

<p>Step 3 – “Movers” [ORANGE]</p>	<p>Smash (attempts at synthesis): Comprised of [chaotic] sub-steps of a) incorporating all possible elements, b) over generalizations, c) under generalizations</p>	<p>Moving from smash to consolidate. Create great trouble for themselves and others by throwing ideas and actions together in a creative haphazard way, taking a great deal of risk.</p>
<p>Step 4 – “Unshakables” [to Step 0] [BLUE]</p>	<p>New temporary equilibrium (synthesis and new thesis)</p>	<p>Everything is OK if it is not OK. Avoid: conundrums, contradictions, comparisons to people looked up to. Everything is good enough.</p>

\* This table is taken from and adapted by combining Tables 6a, 6b, 7 in Commons et al (2002), (pp. 31-32). Bracketed items added by the author.

They also illustrate how we spend our ‘stage-time’ in transition steps, and “every subject’s behavior could be categorized to a transition step between stages” (p. 8). This is because the patterned nature of these steps consistently appears in all adult stage transitions. As the chart suggests, these transitions can make it even trickier business to pin a stage label on others. (So how about we create a culture where people quit doing this?)

These steps are the general mechanisms of movement through each stage of development. Researchers and theorists employ diverse descriptions but the essential dynamics are pretty much the same. The steps’ resonance with some of SD’s “memetic stack” is no accident. This is what Graves probably did not have the vocabulary for, back then. The “Spiral” is fractal, thus the whole spiral is within each person, but not only at the main level of stages, in my opinion. For now, I just want to plant the idea that when we become aware of this fractal resonance between the transition steps and the main stages, it is obvious that we tread on thin ice if we assume we can know someone’s stage of development “at a glance.” We can’t. I seriously doubt most of us can know even our own without professional, objective assessment (check the benefits of the Leadership Development Profile on

<http://www.harthillusa.com>, and cognitive scoring on <http://www.tiac.net/~commons/>). Study the chart above for insights into how someone can have a center of gravity at one stage, yet operate out of other “colors” in quite a range of situations. Complex beings, we are.

Since by its nature evolution is toward increasing complexity, “adults are simply not meant to ‘get stuck’ at these substeps,” and when they do, additional support or treatment is needed (p. 8). Through this quick look at transitions, recognize the real demand is for respectful and knowledgeable discernment, not amateur diagnoses that we stick on others with permanent glue. Rather, let’s sense the dynamic dance of Spirit that doesn’t necessarily hold still long enough for us to judge what it is doing in others.

### **In the midst of confusion**

On the fervent assumption that this paper is stirring up some confusion, confusion itself – and its kinship with our further development – needs closer attention. For most people, contradictions and confusion are hard to take, hard to figure out, and provoke resistance aimed at maintaining the status quo. (These are healthy reactions, compared to well-developed coping mechanisms that “stuff it” before we even notice discomfort.) Yet these are literally the internal chaotic conditions that lead to the greater complexity that leads to further development. The tug-of-war between linear and relativistic processes over those darn periods and question marks is really at the root of all confusions and contradictions. So to help us love them while we hate them, let’s return to the notion of transitions.

We saw there are hints of fractal resonance between transition steps and all the adult stages they lead to. Those with some exposure to Harris’ (2001, 2003) Temenos system will already be familiar with the fractal concept embedded in a stage theory. Harris’ is the only system I have yet found that fully develops the entire fractal image in transition steps playing roles within each stage. In his system, each stage has twelve transitions, and the powers of analysis this affords is evident to any reader of his articles.

Fractals are mirror images that occur at larger and smaller scales compared to whatever is “anchoring” our attention at any particular time. That is why individual human development frameworks mirror those studying larger scale human systems, including our community’s culture and practice, organizations and large social systems, etc. At smaller scales of human endeavor, they are discernible in projects, meetings, agendas for meetings, and

agenda items (Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2000). Once we are awake to fractals, they offer a pattern to assist our powers of outer and inner observation and interpretation.

Harris' system and the transitions chart put us on notice that fractals exist "inside our skins" at even smaller scales. This is where recognizing fractal patterns becomes personally useful, especially when dealing with confusion. Confusion's progressive dynamic is illustrated in transition steps 1, 2, and 3. Has anyone ever noticed these back-and-forths going on inside when they were confused about something?

That question leads to the connection between confusion, transitions, and the sort of self-reflection that supports us in the midst of them. I know Ken's writing has influenced a number of folks' assumption that meditation is the only way to adopt a Witness stance that observes what goes through the mind. Self-reflective awareness is keenly observant, but not passively in Ken's sense. It notices the reactions, feelings, questions, resistances, bodily sensations, skirmishes between punctuation marks, assumptions and their origins, confusions and clarities going on inside in order to engage, explore, and learn from them. Likewise, when transitions – at any scale of inner or outer development – are engaged and supported rather than resisted or just endured, we can play a conscious role in development. My experience working this way with myself and others over many years suggests self-reflective processes transform discomforts to insights (step 4, synthesis/thesis), which leads to the next natural step, a next stage. This is why a culture and practice of self-reflection can accelerate our development in, I suspect, more radical ways than we currently imagine.

This circles right back to my serious intent to jar some assumptions. On an equally serious note: when we feel a conviction losing its grip and notice our instinctive reaction to hang onto it, it is emotionally vital to know that whatever is being jarred is also concurrently destined to transform in a next healthy step, as long as nothing gets in the way of the process. Just as we saw with main stage transitions, we are simply not meant to get stuck in any transitions, so it helps to be able to recognize them. With that awareness, we can seek support for ourselves as well as empathetically companion others in whom we recognize potential for, or evidence of, these discomforts. Transitions of almost any kind are clearly times for self-other support. We can all learn to welcome the initial discomforts of "letting go" and enter into a bit of inner and sometimes outer chaos that is just as much Spirit in

Action as anything else we might conceive.

### **What about “second tier”?**

There is a vast amount of confusion about what constitutes “second tier,” or put another way, what integral “looks like.” A few ideas below point in the direction of clarity. My observation is that the SD presentation of yellow is insufficient to convey the meta-systematical – systems-of-systems – level’s enactment of its value system and core intelligence. Reminder: no one theory describes whole-person functioning, and curiosity should be satisfied by exploring multiple resources. In regard to the path to second tier, my research finds no support for the hypotheses floated over the last year or two about orange and green being parallel paths. In agreement with a multitude of stage theories, cognitive science and integral theory plant firmly in our minds the impossibility of linear reasoning stage-skipping to meta-systematic reasoning. Linear thinking must first learn to “see,” welcome, engage, and process with “?’s.” My sense is that it will take a lot of work and time to develop a holistic synthesis of what integral looks like. In the meantime, **there are two different clusters of folks in preliminary stages of collaborating, one on an article, the other on a book, that will present clearer notions of “integral” ways of being and operating in various domains in day to day and moment to moment events.**

My own practical suggestion about second tier is this.

Step One: Let’s forget about it, and forget about achieving it, for a good long while.

Step Two: Let’s assume that none of us are “there” yet, and that that’s okay.

Step Three: Let’s transcend the old culture by including new alternatives with new vocabularies (one suggestion follows).

Step Four: Let’s create and enact integrally-designed means to foster healthy development for all in the course of doing the work that attracts us.

Why? Because the strive-drive to be at the top of the spiral and/or get everybody else there quickly has backfired and created a monster that is blocking the bridges of our individual and collective development processes. In so many ways in this community, it is like holding out the coveted gold ring above the revolving carousel, while also assuring no one grows tall enough to reach it. I say this because orange will not grow tall enough as long as it is sick and tired of dialogue and/or afraid of the ?’s required by all forms of complex reasoning. Green will not grow tall enough because its ?’s are not tolerated and therefore its thought-loops have no elbow

room to break the barriers into second tier.

The way to get rid of the trickster-monster in a particular game is to learn from it so that we can quit playing that game and find a more successful one. We can't get out of the game if we keep using the same language. Language sustains cultures. It occurs to me that dropping stage references in our interactions is crucial. More integral, developmental, and applicable across all stages would be to use terms to describe how we experience things in ourselves and others, for example: open, closed, and/or confused. This would change our culture by requiring us to communicate, inquire, reflect back, and be transparent. And it would leave no basis for damning judgments because all of us are in those three dynamics at various times. However we language a new culture, several integral practices should be at the minimum, requisite, integrated core of any new game, and they are discussed next.

### **Integral practices and healthy development**

Yes, life's day-to-day occurrences tend to foster development in us all by themselves, at least for most of the more fortunate members of the human race, like us in this community. If we want to be more proactive about it so we can more effectively foster development in others, we should consider all these practices (and more, some of which need to be developed). Each of these are most effective done intersubjectively, especially while developing proficiency, before used alone. Yes, that means with others, and yes, that means dialogically. Each is different and all are productive, enlightening, and deepening approaches that can help us develop and make life more evolutionary. With a foundation established on sure ground and sustained practice over time, eventually some of these can become such a way of "doing life" you might no longer consider them "practices" at all. And you may even find yourself attracted to teaching them to others (hint).

### **Self-reflection**

The *In the midst of confusion* section gave a flavor of self-reflective awareness and what it pays attention to, i.e., everything it can notice going on inside of us. Seeing a good therapist, spiritual director, or life coach is probably the best way to learn how to begin to notice, the heart of the practice. Trained ears hear what we skip right over, and help us come back to it to explore deeper. People should always check out the philosophy of such helpers. What doesn't foster self-reflection is for another to tell us how to "fix it," whatever the "it" is. My conviction is that listeners who trust that others have their own answers, already within, are of high service for helping others mine their own experience. We don't need to

have “a problem” before we seek this kind of support; just growing in self-awareness in daily life is ample agenda for sessions.

People who want to pursue this new capacity on their own should really first ask themselves why they want to do it alone. If nervousness about self-disclosure to another human being is a concern, then that is really ideal material to start with and explore with a therapist that feels comfortable and trustworthy. If we have any fears of self-revelation to a trusted other, then it is highly probable that we have a lot of inner stuff we haven't even let ourselves notice yet. Self-revelation, done appropriately in given contexts, is also called “transparency.” Transparency is a hallmark of second tier behavior.

Self-reflection furthers linear thinkers' development by gently and safely helping them test the waters of exploring important questions. Once they experience for themselves the personal benefits of discovering questions and the unexpected, life-giving insights that result, they are well on their way to becoming more open internal systems, and that's the path of development. It can also heighten their awareness of what is going on around them that impacts them, giving them first hand introduction to “invisible” systems, important groundwork. Some systematic thinkers may have begun exploring self-reflection and its benefits, even as a byproduct of their ability to observe self as system in some cases. Yet practically all of us get periodically stuck in rigid positions in some life domain or another, and rigidity holds back our growth. I encourage everyone who hasn't yet, to experience the benefit of finding a qualified listener to help them deepen interior exploration. Like everything else, self-reflective practice evolves through its own stages of development.

### **Timely action inquiry and transformative learning**

Bill Torbert has developed the action science he calls timely action inquiry (TAI) (Torbert, 2002). In *Personal and Organisational Transformations* (Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2000), the authors describe its triple-loop reflection process that attends to four “territories of experience” and begins with the “trans-cognitive territory of intention” (p. 18). The other territories cover plans or strategies, the outward action(s), and the outcomes of an effort. The “effort” reflected upon can be anything at any scale, and this process is essential for individuals as well as work groups and other collective endeavors. TAI encompasses all-quadrants, with attention to first-, second-, and third-person layers of experience. Their research has shown some users of this form of action inquiry over a period of time increased by one stage in their development. Torbert

has shown how a relatively large organization can be run as a “liberating discipline” that juggles productive work with personal and organizational transformation (Torbert, 1991). I have taught this to small group endeavors that put it to lasting transformative use. The fullest benefits of this practice are derived when it is institutionalized in some way, by intentional inquiry communities or integrated into organizational processes, for example. The intentional community approach seems likely to be the kind of environment where deeper self-reflection can be supported and fostered.

Transformative learning processes are valuable, alone and with others, for taking a structured approach to identifying and suspending assumptions. This is also called critical reflection. Some authors take it to deeper subjective depths than others; some worth checking out include Boyd (<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/boyd/Publications.htm>), and Brookfield, Cranton, and Mezirow (see references). Good material that provides a structure for getting started on transformative learning integrated with self-reflection includes Kegan & Lahey’s (2001) four-column exercise for exploring underneath assumptions, and Jordan’s website articles that include a conflict awareness mandala and conflict as yoga (<http://w1.522.telia.com/~u52220602>).

These forms of personal and group inquiry are impossible without persons developing their self-reflective capacities to some degree. They support development for both linear and systematic reasoning in ways quite similar to those described above. Using these approaches in group contexts fosters capacities for developing more transparency with others on matters of interpersonal significance.

### **Toward an integral methodology**

The very term “processes” has been associated with the anathema of dialogue in this community. It’s time to get over it. To be AQAL – and include UL and LL – methodology has to be processual, by definition. Processes can be informal or structured. But to begin to spread into wide usage, we need integrally-structured formats in replicable (and customizable) forms that can be used to not only assure AQAL areas of attention, but also foster development while producing results.

The two objectives of this section are quite space-limited. The first is to introduce some general principles of integral methodology and provide a link to one application example designed to be productive while fostering transitions in worldviews and thinking complexity.

Many variables are involved in applying appropriate methodologies; this is to start a discussion about what we need to develop. The other objective is to show how processes can intentionally foster development in everyone's thinking. This rounds out my promise to cover the range of integral methods to foster development in not only linear and systematic thinking, but also all people and their endeavors.

### *General principles*

This is a partial list, and we should begin developing a comprehensive one to guide us. These would apply to research methodology, policy development, educational settings, and numerous public or organizational settings.

- Critically assess the entire effort from beginning to end – TAI's four territories of experience – through an objective lens, as in the Jordan & Turner What is Integral? checklist (in the library at <http://www.gircorp.org>.)
- Critically assess the whole and each phase of the effort through both subjective (UL) and intersubjective (LL) lenses.
- Assure clarity and commitment to behavioral ground-rules, the process itself, its objectives, and timeline.
- Assure all-quadrant, all-level aspects of the "whole" being addressed are included.
- AQAL efforts do not treat others as objects to move around the chessboard – efforts need to reflect that others are the subjects of their own experience, else the integral test is failed.
- Assure thorough multi-perspectival approaches, from outside and from within each perspective (walk in others' shoes, especially when they aren't in the room).
- Assure multiple layers of depth and interrelated factors are incorporated into attention and treatment, particularly when complex issues or questions are being addressed.
- Embed intentional shared reflection on learning, to foster effectiveness and development.
- Embed a spirit of collaborative inquiry, to foster learning, effectiveness and development.

The only way to learn what any of this really means and accomplishes, is to do it. One replicable process designed on these principles is described in a short paper on the integral public practice I developed for complex public issues (in the library at <http://www.gircorp.org>). Such approaches are transportable across diverse settings. One set of materials is posted on the Integral Politics Portal (<http://noosphere.cc/integralpolitics.html>). SD lends

itself well to fostering such multi-perspectival deliberation through the tensions and trade-offs between and among different people's life conditions and value systems, from within their worldviews and experience, and should be widely used for that. My action research and other experiences consistently suggest that skillfully embedding developmental insights into processes is a positive support and catalyst for transitions.

### **Developing thinking complexity**

Rather than running away from any stage's reasoning, integral methods must engage it in order to benefit from and develop it. There is general agreement that cognitive development "leads the way" to next stages of development. For integral methodology to be evolutionary, then, in addition to addressing structural and other environments with core need and life condition components of issues, it should incorporate intentional design to encourage cognitive and worldview development in participants. This is another reason for processual approaches. I will sketch my view of how these support and further develop linear and systematic reasoning in a symbiotic way, while also increasing overall effectiveness of efforts. Notice that the other integral practices discussed earlier play necessary integration roles in the overall process.

When we remember thoughts have transition steps too, we realize we all use linear and relativistic thinking dynamics, on particular subjects and at particular times. Therefore, an essential point about well designed processes for collective developmental efforts is that the back and forth needs for both clarity (periods) and open discovery (question marks) are each met by linear thought and systematic thought at alternating and intervening points. The way those shift points are discoverable is by regularly assessing what stage of thought the effort is in, in relation to meeting the overall objective, e.g., problem solving. This assessment needs timely action inquiry integrated with features of transformative learning's assumption identifications and suspensions. In order to know when to do any of that, self-reflective qualities are necessary, including being tuned into intuitions and mental processing that are still developing inside. This takes time, often best achieved by walking away from the effort for a while, or simply thinking about the thinking to date. These are like background processing that yields no tangible outputs until the processing has reached – what else? – a punctuation mark! The entire process depends on a culture of respect, trust, patience, interpersonal skills, and flexible pacing.

The range of integral practices I have covered – self-reflection,

timely action inquiry and transformative learning, and structured processes – serve as crucial foundations if our desire is to develop throughout the spectrum of our human experience while we also impact our environments positively. Progressively over time, they bring into conscious attention our meaning-making systems, increase our complex thinking capacities, teach us how to consider and work with multiple perspectives, enrich our capacity for healthy human interaction, and reveal our formerly-hidden coping mechanisms as well as our limited or erroneous assumptions. All of these are transformative changes that result in Spirit emanating ever more effectively in our uniquely embodied ways of being, and that further enables our endeavors to foster the healthiest and highest good in and for all life.

### **And so . . .**

As I draw to a close this love's labor to start a fire, my heart is full of hope that it has achieved its goals. In recognizing that our embeddedness had left us blind, it employed a different gaze to take us on a ride above it so we could all see it. In doing so, it gave us an opportunity to examine our assumptions about ourselves and others, and critically reflect on our individual and collective behaviors. It helped us see the active roles played by our beliefs about development, its stages, and its transition dynamics. It recognized the possibly painful confusion some may experience in letting go of important old assumptions and trying on new ones, and drew our knowledge together by encouraging integral ways and means of loving confusions while we hate them. In doing so, it made its best effort to put all Humpty Dumpty's together again into more hopeful and enlarged wholes. Then, and only then, it laid out ideas for new ways of thinking, languaging, and practicing the construction of a new integral culture, and suggested additional resources. Throughout, it modeled an integral way to turn "whats" into "hows" in all quadrants and relevant levels, so that we can all begin to internalize what our commitment to integral implies, requires, and promises. As that happens, the troll at our bridge will begin to dissolve into the deep waters from which it came, and we can all move forward together. If this mission has been accomplished, let's turn our attention to that fire.

### **A New Phoenix Rising?**

Throughout this writing, I have referred to us as a community. We really haven't been much of one in any meaningful sense of the word. But I believe we need to become one. I think the current invitation is for a new kind of community to rise from the ashes of the old paradigm. What do you think?

*What might such a community look like?* I don't know! But I'd sure like to see our imaginations get to work on it! I can imagine a mission to create a networked integral learning, research, and practice community that does and shares substantive work and where everyone is encouraged and stretched in appropriate ways that lead to further incremental and holistic development for themselves and their efforts. All of the work would be imbued with individual and collective action inquiry to consciously foster development as it produces high caliber integral efforts. All of those involved would observe and reflect on their learning, meaning-making, and reasoning. The substantive nature of the work could be: developing needed integral methodologies through research and development efforts integrated with educational workshops extended over time with interim practicum assignments (little of enduring value results from one workshop, in my experience); periodic work-producing meetings; research projects that have been waiting in the wings for a long time and newly conceived ones; consulting efforts that further the work; cyber-and-in-person networks of interrelated mini-think-tanks that apply dedicated research and development thinking to systemic aspects of issues challenging the planet; and powerful conferences and publications that push collective co-creativity, knowledge, and practice. Such a community would gradually become integral by virtue of the process of learning to do, and doing, the work in an integral way.

*How might it begin to evolve?* First, we need to find out if there is a "we." By synchronous grace, we have a new mechanism to find that out, so I am starting a threaded forum on the re-launched IntegralAge website. We can use this for exchanging questions and reactions, and for exploring why we want a new phoenix rising and how to give it a lift. Certainly there are various paths and constellations possible, available, and upcoming. Does anyone feel like going on a long walk? We can get a start on path-maps on the new forum. How? To join the Phoenix Rising Forum on email me know you want to be added to that forum's member list, and I will send you the URL when it is available, shortly, along with forum etiquette ground rules. My email is sara@one.net. New forums to pursue in-depth discussions can also be created on IntegralAge by members subscribed to the site after it is launched. Please also see the postscript below.

*Why would we want to?* This is an "I" question before it could ever become a "we" question. I know why I want to. I am not an island. My thinking, my work, and my person do not evolve in a vacuum without challenges from peers and the world at large. It's been sad to lose my earlier hope that I-I would be a dynamic community of research and practice that would push and support my own and be

a way I could contribute to others.' Even so, having its network of fellow travelers around the planet has been invaluable in many respects. I wish that same, and more, for others: stimulation, nourishment, and support for their productivity. My primary interest revolves around developing integral ways to address the confounding issues that face and impact humanity while and by also fostering individual, collective, and institutional development. How well I know how much we need help to tackle this stuff! We need to create incubators that teach and help develop such efforts and people, including ourselves. And that requires multilateral efforts of multi-scale members in a networked community committed to such a mission.

Why wouldn't we want to?

*If not us, who?*

May we all contribute to a new phoenix rising and be Spirit's dance into a new integral age!

Blessings, fellow travelers!  
Sara Ross

February 2003

P. S. We're older and wiser now. One of the ways to build an integral network is to start out by being a transparent community of inquiry. A couple weeks ago, I sent this letter to Ken and Don, as well as to a handful of other colleagues. In my cover note to all of them, I asked them to please consider sending a public response to this paper to IntegralAge's VOX section for posting. VOX is for brief written pieces. In this way, IntegralAge enables us to begin as and become a transparent community of inquiry and exchange on subjects of shared interests. The forum can be used for discussion of this paper and the initial responses to it, and any who wish can email a short written piece for VOX posting to [vox@integralage.org](mailto:vox@integralage.org).

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