

## Managing Complexity with Constructive Integralism

By T.Collins Logan

Imagine you are attending an Absolute Efficacy Conference several hundred thousand years in the future. Also attending are representatives from every sentient race in the known galaxies, with the straightforward goal of determining which forms of consciousness should continue to be supported by the dwindling resources of those galaxies. There are millions of different species represented there – some directly and some by proxy, mainly due to the inability of some the more ancient species to focus their consciousness on such a trivial event – and among those present are *homo sapiens*. Our species had eventually expanded beyond its original solar system, and from there we bioengineered our way into a surprisingly long-running functional niche in the transgalactic energy exchange system. Some species consider us to be no more than irritating parasites, remnants of earlier altitudes of development that have wormed our way into a semi-useful symbiosis with more established species. Others advocate for leniency, since humans still seem to have more potential, and perhaps just require a few more millennia to catch up. But, most notably, the human representatives at the Conference are themselves divided over whether humanity should be afforded additional opportunities to demonstrate their viability. After all, even after millions of light years of expansion, countless advances in knowledge and collective wisdom, and effortless mastery of spacetime itself, we humans still sometimes behaved like wanton apes, either stirring up needless drama, or diluting our overarching sense of purpose until we cease to thrive.

In their advanced wisdom, the beings of this future time are careful not to close any developmental door too permanently, so that even “truncated” species are still provided a limited existence. It has always been a question of whether certain species should be allowed integration with the galactic energy exchange system, or whether they should be quarantined until some future epoch when their contribution can be reassessed. After all, signatories of the Transgalactic Diversity Agreement grokked the profound importance of preserving “additional trajectories;” options for future generations. After one devastating quantum infection, only the thought field of an extremely rare interstitial energy form provided reliable immunity to the spreading disease; that species, formerly confined by decree to the gravity wells of a half dozen migrating brown dwarfs, had since been integrated into nearly everyone’s transport drives. But the current choice before humanity was stark: to be reduced to an almost pre-Earth population and relegated to a cooling solar system with subsistence level resources, or be allowed continued expansion, exchange and engagement within the burgeoning collective of Universal souls. Could we contribute anything to the grand migrations of multispecial consciousness, or would we be regressive freeloaders, stuck in our simian habits of mind?

I have offered this scenario not as preamble to a romantic space opera that pits humanity against a galactic status quo, but as a means of framing the central assumptions and questions of this essay. For one, how could we ever believe that human consciousness is equipped to

grasp the purpose of the Universe, or a tiny fraction of the functions of forms of matter and consciousness contained within it? Such hubris is surely no different than the mistaken belief that the Sun revolved around the Earth. For another, how could we ever project our experience of consciousness – our perception-cognition of a broad spectrum of states that are distinctly human – onto the world around us? That is really no different than a child's certainty that there is a monster in the closet. That isn't to negate any implicit connections between the nature of reality and the nature of mind – for it makes perfect sense to me that some relationship must exist between the two, as reinforced by the accounts of others and through my own experience of unitive, transpersonal conditions. But no matter how complete and persuasive such a subjective sense may be, it does not authorize scalability beyond the operation of my own species – or even beyond the operation of my own mind, despite similar reports from others. So, at a minimum, we should avoid the conclusion that our hypotheses about consciousness apply to anyone but our own species, as anthropocentric projections inevitably lead to unskilled interactions with our environment.

Further, I think we should be cautious about grand attributions to the processes of consciousness itself. Oh, I realize that is precisely what this essay – and much of my other writing – tends to promote. But if we are to be honest with ourselves, we must admit the possibility that “consciousness” is merely a side effect of evolutionary fitness; that is, what we experience as self-directed awareness may be more of a reflexive rationalization, an unconsciously driven justification for our DNA's imperative to replicate. And so we seed the garden of our intellect with mysteries, special perceptions and rigorous disciplines, then label them “insightful” or “rational” or “transpersonal” or “postformal,” when really, as facets of Chalmer's “hard problem,” we may simply be transfixed by shiny, ego-reinforcing illusions. Even our proof of the pudding – the compassionate response to all beings that can arise from immersion in what many consider advanced stages and states of consciousness – could result mainly from prosocial programming encoded in our genes, as reinforced by cultural memes that stretch back millennia to further promote our species' survival. All of this, everything we value and esteem as consciousness, could merely be insulation from the existential isolation of every organism, and the fundamental emptiness of our collectively held constructs. Consciousness can provide a portal into profound insights, to be sure, but that profundity is hopelessly self-referential, so that our awe-filled apprehension becomes little more than a warm, comforting blanket for a terrified child. Or at least this *might* be the case.

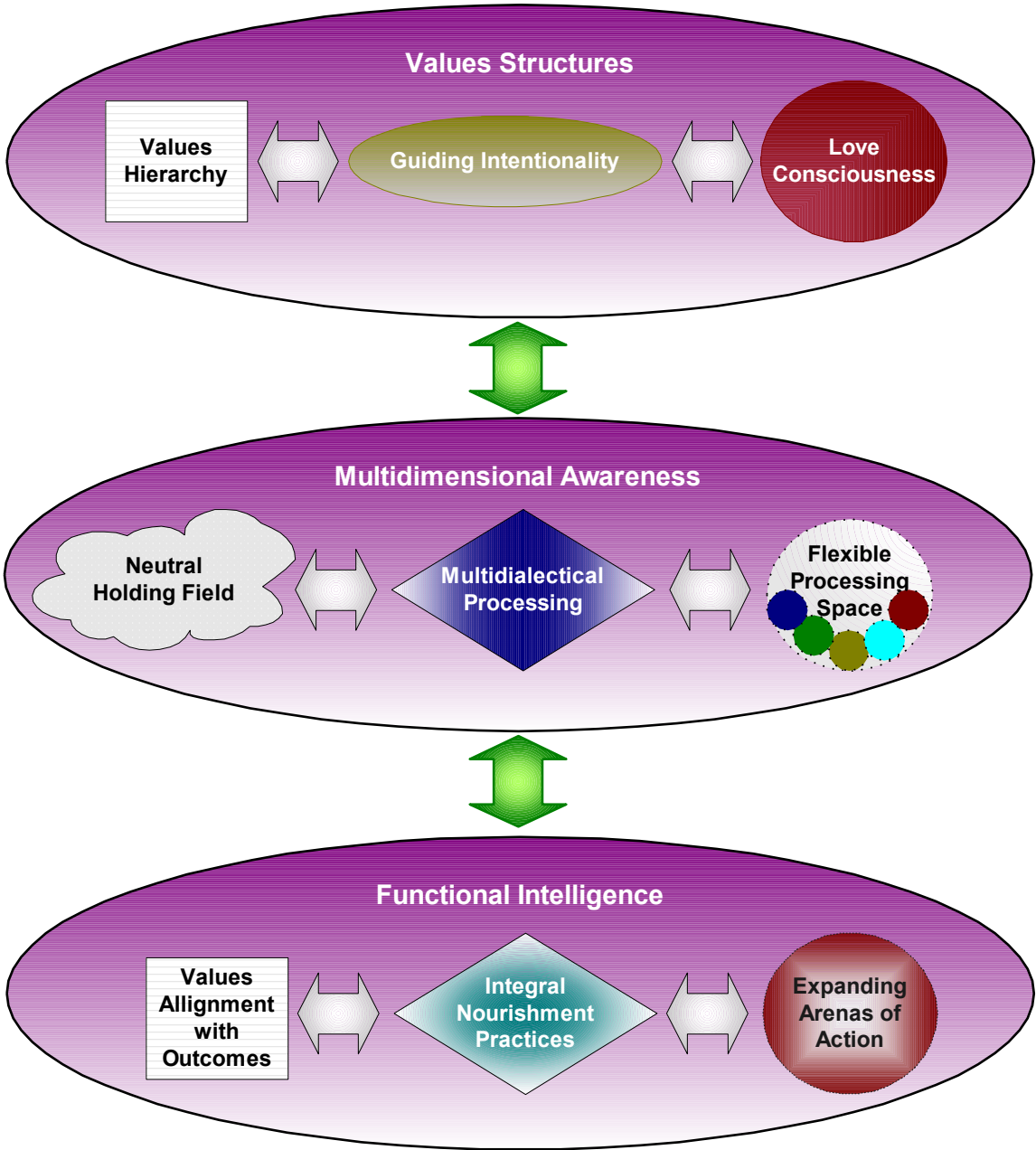
With these caveats, then, I would like to propose a few ideas that, in our species' long and venerated tradition of observation, speculation, deliberation and conclusion, have often been treated as philosophical – or even metaphysical - in nature. Specifically, I want to define what I believe to be the most constructive form of integralism, and how this *constructive integralism* can understand and manage complexity. Why? Because the current phase of human development is confronted with questions of immense importance, both regarding our own survival as a species, our impact on Earth's natural systems, and indeed our relevance in the Universe – and all of these questions seem to relate to how we understand and manage complexity. Not only are we (at long last) becoming aware of the massive and continuously abstracting web of interdependencies all around us, but as a species we are

increasingly injecting more and more influential variables into those systems. And the more we resist integralism – the more we ignore the dynamic interplay of such complex systems, their inherent unity, and the continually emerging matrix of contributing phenomena involved – the more reckless and potentially destructive our contributions will become. By the nature of our own enduring ignorance and increasing power, humanity requires a more prudent approach to predicting and achieving desired outcomes while curtailing unintended consequences. Thus the need for the most “constructive” integralism possible. Rather than, say, a cool new cross-paradigmatic field that offers us highly sophisticated methods of integration – or an eloquent map that quantifies the descriptors, connections and territory of complex systems – we need rich, deep, broadly multidimensional, *practical wisdom and discernment* on how to best navigate complexity. At least that is my proposition.

So...how do we get there? First, to effectively understand and manage complexity, I believe we must openly embrace it. As much as we might yearn to reduce all experience to simplified principles, descriptions and rules, those principles, descriptions and rules cannot encompass the Infinite. There will always be unexpected variation, uncertainty, ambiguity, unanticipated externalities and continual change, and emergent complexity is always greater than the sum of its parts. We can observe throughout the brief flame of human history that humanity’s knowledge has been perpetually incomplete, our comprehension limited, our insights contextual, our wisdom temporary. And this seems even more true for the individual in isolation from the whole, which is increasingly the modus operandi of both elite and average populations in many industrialized societies. Too often the intensity of our exposure to complexity – those moments of overwhelming awe and disorientation – can alienate us from holding myriad relationships simultaneously in our awareness. And yet this is what we must learn to do; we can no longer rely upon specialized knowledge, selective blindness, arbitrary prioritization or irrational beliefs to simplify our experience. Further, an increase in multidimensional processing will require that we access and integrate different processing spaces within ourselves as well. To embrace complexity, our consciousness must concurrently entertain multiple disciplines and dimensions without and within.

There is a lot involved in this process. In order for any integrative awareness to function constructively, I believe it must be guided by an advanced values hierarchy, which in turn is intimately linked to a guiding intentionality that fully embodies that values hierarchy. This is a critical piece, and will define the quality of our efforts at least as much how an integrative engine itself is constructed and actualized; our values and governing intentions are the fuel for that engine. And, finally, we will require a way of understanding how to operationalize and assess our values hierarchy and multidimensional awareness through being and action; we require some handles for guiding the manifestation of our intentions, and predicting and measuring the quality of our outcomes. It seems like a diagram would be helpful here, just to understand some of these relationships, so I’ve included one below. Then we’ll take a crack at defining each element of this model in more detail.

# Constructive Integralism



## Embracing Complexity through Multidimensional Awareness

Embracing complexity is demanding, multifaceted process, and it isn't a natural reaction when confronted with large volumes of seemingly contradictory information. As one example, consider the complexity of love. So essential to the human experience, so universal, and yet impossible to definitively encapsulate or reduce. I love my dog. I love moonlight. I love my wife. I love myself. I love ethnic food. I love humanity. I love the Earth. I love music. I love solitude. I love companionship. I love love. Each of these loves is a unique experience, as multifaceted as the objects of affection, and wholly different for every individual – or even for the same individual over time. But sometimes they do seem to be part of the same spectrum of emotion, as variations on a theme. What better example could there be of “a state or quality of having intricately related parts, for which the degree and nature of the relationship is incompletely understood?” Love is complex.



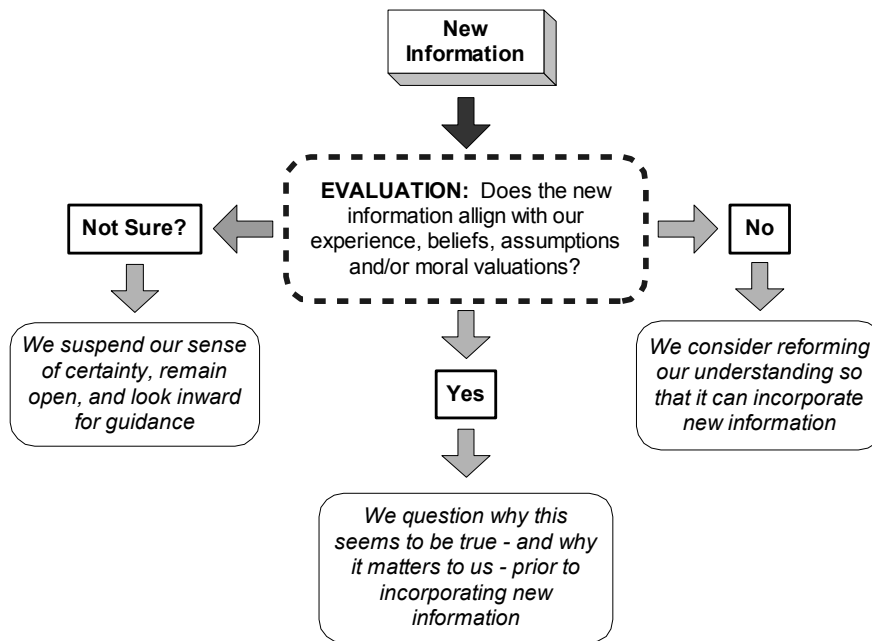
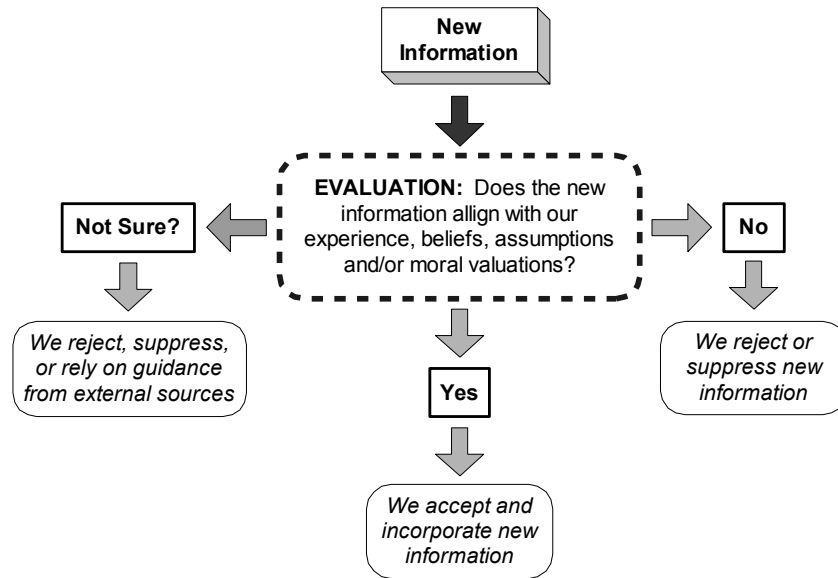
And yet the urge to simplify is ever-present, just as the *agape* graphic above illustrates. We simplify to facilitate communication, so we may be understood by the largest number, often via lowest common denominator. We simplify to capitulate, so complexity does not alienate us from ourselves or others. We simplify to market, appeal, cajole and evangelize, because complexity presents a natural barrier to persuasion. We simplify because we must use words and syntax, which are inevitably incomplete in how they convey meaning. We simplify because it's easy, and complexity is hard. We simplify out of desperation, to bridge intersubjective realms of being, because otherwise we would feel alone. But we simplify at the expense of the only “real” handle we have on our experiences, the only hard and fast truth we can estimate with any certainty: that those experiences are confoundingly complicated. We say “I love you” because it implies a certain inexpressible condition that we hope will be positively interpreted. But what are we really saying? Perhaps we are saying “there is a condition, an infinitely complex and nuanced felt reality, that I sometimes experience intensely, and sometimes only intuit exists within me. I offer a symbol of that

condition to you now, in the spirit of sharing and openness, in hopes that you might benefit in some intangible way, and perhaps taste just a smidgeon of this felt reality yourself....” And yet, despite the unlimited varieties and scopes of love, we will accept what is offered, and even reciprocate in kind, because of a fundamental desire to connect with our fellow humans. And so we simplify an abstract complexity into one word, fervently gripping the tiniest fraction of the whole so that we might escape the overwhelming vastness of the unknowable, even as we try to honor it.

Such an urge to simplify is of course pragmatic. Reduced symbolic representations of complexity permit us to exchange, synergize and synthesize. But the instant we forget that the symbolism is a shallow façade for the underlying mystery, we can become distracted from the process of exploring and integrating more subtle realities. We can begin to neglect one or more dimensions of being in our practice, and become blinded by the world of form – or the world of discrete ideas – so that we can’t see the forest for the trees. And, consequently, we may cripple our perceptions, the flexibility of our understanding, and the efficacy of our wisdom. In a race to recover a perception of balance, we may even simplify further and further, compelled to take charge of the realm of symbols so that we can avoid or deny the depths of powerful, truly harmonizing, non-symbolic insight. Thus we push ourselves into disharmony, until we are experts in symbols, but incompetent at what the symbols represent. And unless we let go of this compulsive spiral of reduction and specialization, we will, I strongly suspect, become miserable captives of our own willfulness.

So to master the practice of embracing complexity, we should learn how to do several things simultaneously. For example, we would want to train our perception-cognition into the most open-minded and discerning patterns of interpretation and response, then provide lots of room for many different modes of interior processing (while perfecting our ability to switch between them). Then we would want to cultivate a neutral holding field to contain all of these elements, so that we can invite disparate input streams, even those that contradict each other, to inhabit our consciousness and peacefully coexist. In these ways we can begin to develop a habit of *multidimensional awareness*. Does this sound like an daunting task, or perhaps an impractical one? Actually, I would insist the gift of consciousness is already wired to accomplish exactly this feat, and much more easily than we might imagine. In fact, all that we require to sustain such multidimensional awareness is to let go of more constrictive and inhibited habits of a symbolizing mind.

To illustrate, take a gander at two contrasting modes of evaluation in the diagrams below, noticing the factors that would constrict the flow of an increasingly integrative understanding, and the factors that would best facilitate that understanding.



What is the primary difference between these two modes of assessment and integration? In the first, we conform to what has been defined for us by various consciously accepted external authorities and unconscious cultural programming, suppressing or rejecting any new information that doesn't fit neatly within our adopted worldview. In the second, we remain more emotionally and intellectually open to new information, continually questioning and evolving perspectives that source more from our own interiority, and rely less on enculturation or societal power structures. And of course this isn't a purely intellectual process – it is more a harmonized state of mind, heart and physical well-being that is resilient

enough to simultaneously entertain doubt, courage, uncertainty and curiosity in the same processing space. And so this simultaneity hints at an even deeper principle for this mode of being: the cultivation of a *neutral holding field*.

In the past I have described the cultivation of a neutral holding field as a mystical process called *the art of suspension*. As I wrote in *The Vital Mystic*:

“This is a potent kind of watchfulness, because no one idea or experience is allowed to dominate, and competing convictions, emotions, and tendencies of will can be held simultaneously without anxiety or drama. There is no sense of conclusion, because we remove ourselves from direct contact with all these simultaneous considerations. We can calmly harness ourselves in a web of *seeming* incongruity and overwhelming information, and still be at peace. In fact, from this suspended state, we will often discover surprising interconnectedness. We see patterns which unify, which show us how diverging ideas or evidences are not as mutually exclusive as they once appeared – for there is almost always interaction and overlap between all forces and fixed points, no matter how far apart they at first appear to be. We discern new relationships, harmonies and coalescences, and when we cannot immediately reconcile one observation with another, the uncertainty does not disturb us...

...The art of suspension thus welcomes us into this space of all-encompassing neutrality, conditioning our mind for a mystical process whereby everything can be definite, but nothing certain.”

Those familiar with my work will recognize the art of suspension as a component of what I call “mystical” perception-cognition. For those skeptical of anything smacking of esotericism, I would encourage you to enlist the second mode of information evaluation illustrated above, and just substitute whatever belief-neutral labels work for you, so that you can incorporate the very useful functionality of a neutral holding field into your cognitive toolbox. At the opposite end of the belief continuum, some might also see parallels with the approaches established by certain wisdom traditions (Buddhism and Taoism in particular), and that’s fine too. It doesn’t really matter what label we place on this idea...it’s just one of many practices necessary to perfect multidimensional awareness.

But what populates this neutral holding field? What constitute viable input streams for the most constructive, summative and actionable observations? Well that brings us neatly to the concept of *flexible processing space*. This is also a pretty simple idea, and one that I believe is already hardwired into our DNA, if we can just *allow* it to be expressed in our consciousness. And allowing flexible processing space of course requires a further letting go of cultural programming, ego barriers, unresolved fixations and so forth, so healing the psyche will always be an important cofactor to multidimensional awareness. Let me just say that a little louder if I may: we must heal ourselves across many levels in order to grow and refine our consciousness in requisite ways, because the structures within us that best support a multidimensional approach are the same ones that support a whole, harmonized self. My somatic self, my rational self, my emotional self, my social self, my historical (semantic) self and its resultant self-concept, my sexual self, my ground-of-being self, my transpersonal self,



my purposed self...my integral self. Flexible processing space just one more of these dimensions of self; it's where we exercise a fluid shifting from one type of interior processing to another, and ultimately where we strengthen each input stream so that it has something substantive to offer the neutral holding field we provide.

What follows is an excerpt of how I describe flexible processing space in *True Love*. This description is a tad lengthy, but the concept requires some detailed exposition to flesh out. Once again, for those skeptical of "spiritual" dimensions of self, feel free to substitute whatever wording works for you, and focus on the definitions of each processing space.

First let's explore what is meant by processing space. There are many more than the five outlined below, and each of them overlaps and interacts with all the others in whole or part, creating a complex matrix of nuanced processing capacity in every person. But for the sake of simplifying and understanding types of processing space in a usable way, they have been narrowed down here to what happens mainly within our head, heart, body, spirit and soul. Each of these engages a unique form of perception-cognition native to our being, each one necessary to interpret and process various aspects of the world around us. Over time, we naturally tend to gravitate towards the processing spaces with which we are most comfortable, or which we believe have helped us the most during the course of our life, and use them as our primary mode of interaction within each dimension of nourishment. Each processing space also operates at a specific, subjective rate of time. That is, time runs faster or slower for us when we are functioning in a particular processing space. So what we are really talking about here is unique spacetime of perception-cognition.

**Mental Spacetime.** This is future-oriented, fast-paced analytical processing. Here we are focused on effective action or reaction to immediate circumstances, using our analytical abilities to make what we interpret to be rational, sensible choices. Most of us don't need to consciously practice this or incorporate it into our daily experience, since we are constantly pressured by externals to operate in this mode. We plan our week out in a day-timer; we focus on the next task to accomplish; we engage in animated discussion about some topic of interest; we quickly rationalize our choices so that our actions are justifiable; we absorb the evening news and pass judgment on the world. In Western culture, much of our daily routine occurs in mental spacetime. And since mental spacetime is highly valued in Western society – that is, to make quick decisions, communicate clear goals, have decisive reactions, be competitive with others operating in this mode, and so forth – Westerners tend to dedicate much more of themselves to this processing space than is necessary or beneficial to their well-being. When we neglect to consciously shift into other modes of interior processing, we inevitably disconnect from a wellspring of alternative insight and nourishing function within ourselves, as well as from the healing, growth and transformation that is available through our other manifestations of being. In fact, we disconnect from some of the critical substance of our own humanity. In terms of exchange, this mode allows us to connect with others on mainly verbal, symbolic and intellectual levels.

**Emotional Spacetime.** This is past, present and future-oriented and generally slower-paced emotional processing. Here we feel our way through situations, knowing intuitively that we can't rush certain experiences or decisions. When we heal from grief and loss, for example, much of that healing occurs in emotional spacetime. When we fall deeply in love, our affection develops within this processing space. And where in mental spacetime it may be

easy to dismiss a hunch or intuition as superstitious silliness, emotional spacetime accepts the importance of such input, feeling its way through the moment. This processing often happens unconsciously. But paying conscious attention to this spacetime both honors the intuitive component of self and integrates felt experiences into our being. If we ignore or suppress it, heart-based processing can become arrested or confused, and an important input stream to our wisdom and discernment will be crippled. Examples of consciously entering emotional spacetime include the gratitude meditation in the next section; praying from the heart; journaling about intensely personal or emotional issues; attentively feeling the music to which we are listening; free-flowing creative expression; replaying significant memories from childhood; daydreaming; certain guided meditations; falling in love; or dwelling the felt experience of the current moment. When people share love, laughter, tears, anger, joy or other strong emotion with each other, they are connecting in emotional spacetime.

**Somatic Spacetime.** This can be either very slow-paced somatic processing, or fast-paced reflexive responses; in both cases, however, somatic spacetime is usually oriented to the past or present. On the slower side, when stress or trauma occurs in our lives, somatic memories are created that we carry with us for years. Processing those memories – bringing them into conscious awareness – is one reason why accessing somatic spacetime is important. Another is that our body has intelligence, wisdom and guidance for us should we choose to listen to it. If we don't listen, our body's efforts to engage our attention may become more and more extreme, until serious illness or other chronic conditions develop. On the faster side, our bodies can react very quickly to threats, attractions, the perceived body language of others and so forth – more quickly than we could ever consciously react. So shifting into our body's processing space can rapidly accelerate our awareness, or slow it down to the speed of breaths and heartbeats. Shifting into somatic spacetime can occur during therapeutic bodywork, certain types of yoga, in body-centered psychotherapy, during physical listening meditations, when trying to identify an emotive locus in our body, when we invite the palpable presentation of intuitive promptings, during physical intimacy, while practicing martial arts, or any time we are completely absorbed in physical activity. We can connect in somatic spacetime with others through things like playing sports, having sex, giving or receiving body-centered therapy, or sharing other intensely physical experiences.

**Spiritual Spacetime.** This is time-space suspended spiritual processing, meaning that it has no anchor in sequential time, moves independently of most concrete or tangible reference points, and is a sort of spiritual intuition. I like to call it *gnostic* processing. Sometimes entering spiritual spacetime seems like complete stillness without even the possibility of movement, and at other times processing in this spacetime seems faster than light, spanning incredible distances in an instantaneous leap. Many schools of meditation and interior spiritual discipline encourage access to this space, but it can be experienced spontaneously during prayer, as a natural component of wonder and awe, as an ineffable *aha* when peak experiences occur in other processing modes, during the course of a dream, during intense moments of pleasure or pain and so on. Exchanges in this processing space can occur during group mediation and prayer; during shared experiences of intense intimacy or intense crisis; or in the sudden, unexpected recognition of a kindred spirit.

**Soul Spacetime.** This could be described as the eternal present, an arena of spacetime that is entirely free of processing – it just is. This becomes an important concept in certain spiritual disciplines, in particular the advanced mystical practices that cultivate immersion in a kind of non-awareness or non-being that harmonizes with the Absolute. At the center of

this processing space is a completely transparent connection, exchange and merging – with the essence of the Self and the essence of the Universe, with the All, the Transcendent Reality, the ground of being.

In one way, all spacetimes are simply modes of interior processing that are always present and available to us. We interpret our experiences unconsciously through an internal nexus where all of these modes coincide. We can, of course, suppress or interrupt this natural synthesis. Things like stress, obsessive thought or behavior, incomplete or indulgent nourishment in one or more dimensions, the consumption of mood or mind altering substances on a regular basis – all of this can interfere with the natural rhythms in each processing center and their combined synergistic power. Likewise, when we begin cultivating each mode of perception-cognition as a distinct, conscious experience, major shifts will occur that increase potential synthesis, stimulating processing on many levels at once. Through practice we can consciously integrate all of these modes into an input stream that informs our wisdom and discernment, especially in ways that nurture all essential dimensions of being at the same time, so that our efforts are not only healing and skillful, but transformative. So, at a minimum, it is extremely helpful to develop specific awareness in each spacetime mode so that we can live more effective and fulfilling lives. Once this is accomplished, we can shift between each spacetime with increasing ease, flexibly engaging any situation from multiple perspectives. This flexibility becomes a powerful ally in our efforts to nurture ourselves and express compassionate affection through every thought and action. To master each mode of perception-cognition and access them on-the-fly in any situation allows us to love more truly and effectively.

The consequence of flexible processing space and the neutral holding field is something I call *multidialectical processing*. Simply put, this is our ability to incorporate multiple vectors of information into vigorous, simultaneous dialectic with each other, drawing on both rational and nonrational methods of evaluation. It bears repeating that multidialectical processing *holds rational and nonrational methods in ongoing dialectic with each other*, and this is what differentiates it from traditional dialectic synthesis. As each concept, condition, structure or force asserts itself, it is given ample room to ferment and mature, until it can offer some cogent counterpoint to other input streams. Nothing is suppressed, and nothing is exalted; everything has an opportunity to contribute, even if this results in multiple tensions and contradictions. And, as we move gently forward, we continue to maintain those dialectic tensions as we develop discernment and wisdom regarding our intentions and choices, as well as how we assess the results of our actions. This does not mean, however, that hierarchies aren't created, or that input streams aren't subjugated to a set of intrinsic values – we will get to this winnowing process in a bit. So synergies include analytical proofs, felt realities, abstract ineffables, and intuited confidences discerned through the five spacetimes of perception-cognition described above. Eventually other, as yet undefined input streams will be included as well. Often, all of these will compete for dominance or exclusive veracity, like a group of rowdy adolescents clamoring for attention. But all of their voices can and should be heard, as equals contributing to a virtual consensus.

On a purely analytical level, we can find rough equivalencies to multidialectical processing in the techniques of critical thinking, scientific inquiry, Hegelian dialectics, cognitive behavioral therapy and other disciplines. Once again, though, this is not a strictly analytical process...it incorporates a multidimensional mode of being where analytical mind is just one component, made equal to all others (and sometimes subordinate to all others). Beyond postformal or transrational thinking, beyond metacognition, beyond cross-paradigmatic conceptions, here we find felt sense, non-symbolic insights, intuitions, yearnings, *gnosis*, sudden *ahas* and all manner of other impulses and information streams converging into a dynamic synthesis. We are, in essence, learning how to harness all of these convergent energies, without prejudice or exclusion, toward an emergent end. In time, we will organize our synthesis within a values hierarchy that originates in the neutral holding field itself; that is one of the intriguing ironies of this process, because what begins in neutrality does result in a clarity of priorities and choices. And, once we understand how all of these input streams relate to our values, we can begin skillfully actualizing some of our conclusions.

So this is an essential component of constructive integralism: that, despite a persisting neutrality, ambiguity and uncertainty, there will indeed be dynamically nested priorities, subordinations and interdependencies within our thought field, even though these may continually reorganize as new information and input streams are integrated. Thus the larger the field – the more comprehensive and inclusive our neutrally energized space – the more multifaceted that order will become, even as certain overarching principles clearly evidence themselves. In fact, fundamental components of previous systems of thought (and previous values hierarchies) may be discarded or disempowered entirely; for example, those that emphasize oppressive power dynamics between aspects of self (i.e. that rational is superior to nonrational), or that enable oppressive power dynamics in social relations. In contrast to some integral thinkers who insist that higher order thought fields will always contain and benefit lower order ones – or that more advanced hierarchies will transcend and include earlier ones – I would say that, although some primitive memes may persist into higher altitude systems and expressions in subtle ways, for the most part the counterproductive ones will collapse into vestigial isolation. They will, of necessity, be boundarized and de-energized, so they can't disrupt or destroy superordinate, more unitive expressions. In other words, sometimes the final synthesis is subtractive rather than additive. But all of this is about to become clearer.

As one basic illustration of what I'm suggesting, consider the following chart of emotional states. Drawing from psychotherapeutic conventions, research in the social sciences, various wisdom traditions and my own experiences, I propose that some emotional states are rarely if ever beneficial, while others are consistently beneficial; that is, some are "healthy" (prosocial, reinforcing individual and inclusive fitness of the species), and some are "unhealthy" (antisocial, reinforcing a lack of individual and inclusive fitness). And although we can draw upon research in neuroscience, anthropology, evolutionary biology, psychology and so on to validate the prosocial benefits of "healthy" states (see E.O. Wilson, Grit Hein, Scott Huettel, Joan Silk, Marc Hauser, Robert Boyd & Peter Richerson, Nancy Eisenberg & Richard Fabes, etc.), we likely won't intuitively grasp those benefits or be able to fluidly navigate

them until we achieve higher altitudes of moral development – we will explore this idea further in a moment. We also can't forcefully impose such states on ourselves or others – which would likely result in cognitive dissonance or decompensation anyway – but we can aspire to model behaviors, relations, language and civic institutions built upon the most constructive patterns of being that we *do* intuitively understand.

| <b>Healthy Emotional State</b>   | <b>Unhealthy Emotional State</b>  |
|--|---|
| Courage to defend the well-being of Self and others, with patience and forbearance   | Indignant, self-righteous rage, which is easily provoked and unconcerned about the damage it inflicts                   |
| Compassionate desire to nourish others with wisdom and kindness, while at the same time sustaining our own well-being                                  | Compulsive need to rescue others without considering our own well-being or what is truly best for those being “rescued” |
| Love that has no conditions or expectations attached to it, and that patiently accepts another's shortcomings  | A desire to control disguised as attention and devotion, but which impatiently demands specific reciprocation           |
| Self-controlled ordering of effort according to what supports our values system  | Impulsive submission to every urgent or self-indulgent whim without a thought for what is important                     |
| Patience for, and an attempt to understand, those who oppose or antagonize us  | Fear, paranoia and hatred of things we do not understand  |
| Gratitude and forgiveness  | Resentment and divisiveness   |
| Acceptance and flexibility with whatever comes our way   | Resistance to change and panic when things seem out of control  |
| Honesty and openness   | Avoidance, denial and deception   |
| Peaceful and supportive internal dialogues   | Chaotic and demeaning internal dialogues  |
| Admiration and encouragement   | Jealousy and criticism  |
| Contentment in any situation, rich or poor, because our focus is on the quality of our relationships, operationalizing values and deepening our wisdom | Greed and avarice: a compelling desire to possess material power and wealth   |
| Guilt and shame, which resolves into humility and a renewed commitment to growth and maturity  | Perpetual, unresolved guilt and shame, which injures self-esteem and cripples any ability to change                     |
| Vulnerable and joyful sharing of sexual intimacy in the context of socially responsible, mutually considered relationships                             | Wanton lust: an immersion in carnality without considering emotional, interpersonal or societal consequences            |
| Mutual inspiration to greater achievement through fair-spirited competition and/or cooperation   | Egotistical competitiveness, which craves victory at any cost   |
| Confidence with humility   | Self-aggrandizing arrogance   |
| Taking pleasure in the success of others   | Taking pleasure in the suffering of others  |
| Hope and faith in positive outcomes  | Despair and pessimism: presuming doom   |

Do these proposed dynamics make sense? That there are constructive, positively reinforcing, socially cohesive, emotionally productive patterns of being, and patterns that are antagonistic to individual and collective wellness? I have encountered those who insist that every situation defines the benefit of its emotional content, and that there are no absolute standards of beneficial intention or response. That makes for great rhetoric, but, as already alluded to, there is just too much research to support the positive physiological, psychological

and social impacts of certain patterns of emotion – as well as the constructive behavior those patterns evoke – and the negative impacts of their opposites. This is how we can define opposing pairs of operation.

Now, before delving further into the abstract, let's take a break and bring this discussion down to Earth, into a specific arena of intention and action: the rule of law. Returning to the idea of love, if I immerse myself in love, if I plumb the depths of its mystery and remain open to its unfolding complexity, why would I ever require rules to define how I should love myself or others? Why would I ever need instruction or guidelines at all about how to exercise affectionate and effective compassion? And if everyone in my community and society is intent on expanding their relationship with complexity and unleashing the magnificent magic of skillful kindness, why would they need to be corralled in any way? As long as we are all operating in harmony with an ever-evolving vastness of compassionate being, committed to honoring the ineffable unity of loving kindness in all its myriad manifestations, why would we require any governance at all...?

The answer is...simple. That is, the answer is once again our tendency toward simplicity. The individual who is not healed, whose capacity is limited, who is not disciplined or diligent, and who consequently rejects complexity in favor of simplicity, will operate by the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law, because they are immersed in a rigidly symbolic landscape. What few glimpses they have of mystery will be cast aside in favor of the accessibly reductionist concrete. Legalism prevails in their conception because the more vast, subtle and inexplicable ideal is lost to them. Do I believe that all conscious beings have the potential to embrace multifaceted, nuanced complexity? Yes, I do. Yet, although the potential is present in all consciousness, it is not yet fully realized...and until it is fully realized, we require the rule of law. The symbols that order all of existence into neat little rows, that reduce the Infinite into tidy boxes with highly specific locations and abbreviated memes, are necessary for now in many instances. Such order is of course artificial, and perhaps even seems silly to someone comfortable with advanced complexity and steeped in love-consciousness, but for a probable majority of humanity this order generates a sense of safety, a manufactured equilibrium that permits the tenuous aspirant to venture out of their symbolic shell, so they may encounter complexity in comfortable, bite-sized experiments. Then they can decide to venture forth from simplicity a little more. And, as they gain courage, perhaps a little more after that...just as long as they can feel safe doing so.

I remember once, when I was ten or eleven, a friend and I were out on a wintry Massachusetts morning climbing frozen trees. At some point, his mother appeared and launched into hysterical shouts that my friend *get down out of that tree immediately*. He could fall, she yelled. He could break a limb. He could die. I received reproachful looks, being the obvious inciter of what she clearly thought was a misadventure. I have reflected on that day many times over the intervening years, mainly because I could not fully appreciate her reaction. My friend's mother seemed so afraid for him. Was that really love, to be so protective and fearful? Why not let him explore, why not let him climb to the heights and

experience the amazing exhilaration of accomplishment? Why assume the worst would happen, rather than the best? But eventually I came to understand her reaction a bit better: simply put, she knew her son better than I did. I assumed that he already appreciated the inherent risks of Nature. But she knew that he did not. I had grown up around forests, but my friend had lived in city apartments all his life. My circumstances had demanded I become fairly independent and self-sufficient at age five, but he had been prone to frequent illness as a child, and was still very dependent on his mother. He was also physically weak in ways I could not appreciate. Because I did not comprehend the differences in his conditions and experiences from my own – the variables that made the dangers of his tree climbing much greater in that moment – I inadvertently encouraged a potentially self-destructive impulse in my friend. I was operating not from love, or from a faith in his potential, but from a myopic projection of my own values. I assumed my friend's knowledge and capacities were equivalent to my own, and I was wrong.

And thus we arrive at the participatory component to multidimensional awareness. This is such an important aspect of any multidimensional process – and so thoroughly imbedded – that it is often overlooked. But we really do need each other to complete the circle. We require the sounding board of a friend; the reflection of our thoughts, emotions and experiences in the hearts of our loved ones; the amplifications of group experience; the synergies of honest intellectual debate; and occasionally “the wisdom of the crowds.” Consequently, we need open environments for the exchange of ideas, data, knowledge, opinions and worldviews, and to allow the propagation of new memes throughout our collectives. For one of the hallmarks of appreciating compounded complexity is accepting all our differences without prejudice, and valuing the diversity of human experience because it is part of that complexity. And so – just as we promoted within our neutral holding field – everyone has to have a voice...everyone has to be able to participate. At the same time, the key is to encourage an ever-increasing altitude of moral sensibilities across all perspectives, and to accept some constraints on the morally immature.

Returning to the real world, accepting a standardized rule of law also becomes easier in this context. Why? Because, over time, a truly democratized process inevitably finds the Goldie Locks zone between what is too restrictive and what is too lax; it incorporates the full spectrum of human experience and capacity as it evolves. It also incorporates changes in social mores, conceptions of freedom and civic responsibility, and other societal structures. It allows for the flexibility inherent to complexity. Yet the enduring challenge seems to be one of scope. How can any rule of law be entirely and equitably inclusive? How can it ever adapt to the infinite complexity of a global society? How can a rigid code adapt to dynamic emergence? Eventually, I suspect the letter of the law will fade away, and only its spirit will remain. This is the essence of our maturation process. As humanity relinquishes its craving for simplicity and develops the capacities and tools to embrace complexity without fear, the rule of law will be able to relax. For now, however, those capacities and tools are not yet collectively shared. As a culture, too many still cling to reductionist views of the world for succor, painting emotionally compelling, black-and-white pictures of subjective realities that are woefully distorted by inflexible ideologies. Political polarization and

religious fundamentalism are just a symptoms of this resistance to a more nuanced, subtle and complex apprehension of the human condition. We resist because we are afraid. But, eventually, if we persist in encouraging each other to venture forth from our symbolic shells, I believe that fear will ebb, and, as we are guided by authentic love, we will all be truly free. At that point...and only at that point...will a truly egalitarian participation in democracy take root, and oppressive class structures will vanish with the rule of law – both illusions that are no longer required.

Thus our current experiments with democracy could – if they were truly unfettered from the persuasions and distortions of egoic delusion – provide a collective mirror for the neutral holding field, flexible processing space, multidialectical processing and multidimensional awareness cultivated in individual and participatory consciousness. This is less a metaphoric relationship, and more of a literal correlation. But the mistake sometimes made by those who have glimpsed a more unitive future for human society is the imposition of that vision on the current status quo, perpetrating a sort of “integral overlay” that still relies on contemporary structures and systems. But this is like trying to create a sophisticated representation of quantum mechanics with pebbles and sticks. I do hope that humanity can aspire to higher orders of collective function, but we cannot do so with the reptilian brain dominating so many of our civic institutions, economic systems and prevailing ideologies as it does today. Our evolution will require the sloughing off of vestigial structures, not sublimation of those structures via some integral slight-of-hand. To restate again: multidialectical processing involves subtractive synthesis as well as additive synthesis.

This all reminds me of something a friend of mine said after we watched Ridley Scott’s *Prometheus* film: “It’s kind of depressing to think our progenitors – such an ancient and experienced race as they are portrayed to be in this film – were still subject to the same petty, spiteful, self-destructive impulses we consider to be the worst in ourselves today...” Yeah. And this is really a central issue regarding humanity’s ongoing evolution: we will need to enhance, expand and cement our most prosocial tendencies to ensure our continued presence in the Universe, whether or not our species is assessed by an Absolute Efficacy Conference of alien intelligences or not. Integrating our shadow self or embracing our more reptilian instincts is insufficient – we must also stimulate a more love-centric self-concept and compassionate mode of existence in order to succeed. We may still retain primitive evolutionary structures in our physiology – we are still primates after all – but our nascent love-consciousness must eventually dominate so thoroughly that those structures no longer prevail in our ideations, volitions and reflexive behaviors.

Anyone who has read my books and essays will undoubtedly recognize here a convergence of themes I have covered before; it seems to be a pattern in my writing of late that old ideas re-integrated with new insights into larger semantic containers. As with those previous iterations, there remains the importance of translation in praxis, but as always the translation should be inherent to the process itself. Managing complexity is really an essential component of every other topic I have ever written about, so it makes sense that there would be a natural evolution into (presumably) greater spheres of inclusion. This is the expectation



of integral thought, but, as with most of human understanding, and despite the grandiose efforts of many clever thinkers and passionate activists, our species seems to just be arriving at the edge of the sea of our own vast ignorance in many regards. So it is a given that this topic, its conceptual components, and any practical applications we can derive here will be moving targets awaiting the larger, ever-more integralizing embrace of future memplexes. This disclaimer shouldn't discourage us, though, because anyone engaged in something like the collective evolution of consciousness, a broadening amplification of compassion, a deeper understanding of the Universe or any other great work can still avail themselves of new tools to aid in their efforts. And it is precisely such tools I hope we are exploring here.

## **Values Structures & Moral Development**

In a nutshell: the primary goal of Integral Lifework is the cultivation of productive and sustainable love-consciousness (prosocial ideation and behavior of the highest order), a love-consciousness that radiates outward from our innermost being, amplifying itself across successively widening arenas of action, encouraging personal evolution of character and the moral maturity of human society so that loving kindness reigns supreme in every situation. So everything proposed here is either a natural outcome of this compassionate affection, a supportive structure to enable the growth of that felt experience...or (and this is often the case) it is both. Love, in the sense of an advancing *agape* that seeks the greatest good for the greatest number, unifies, harmonizes and indeed subordinates all other concepts and practices. So all that we need now is a way to describe and organize this unitive, prosocial, governing intentionality as clearly and pragmatically as possible, so that its function and priority are holistically understood.

In my early attempts to express qualitative handles for love-consciousness, I described one of its primary components as “the golden intention.” As I wrote in *The Vital Mystic*:

What, then, is the *golden intention*? It is the effort to conform my will and work to the good of everyone and align myself with the life-force that infuses every moment of our existence. It holds to the ideal of putting the welfare of the Whole above the self-gratification of a few, and eventually erases all self-consciousness in action....

Is the objective of golden intentions a kind of devoutly altruistic attitude? In some ways, yes, but such “selflessness” does not always take on a self-sacrificial flavor. We may appear very selfish and still do good work, because we have shaped our ideal of what nourishes our own well-being around what we also believe nourishes the well-being of others. For example, if I were to write a poem, and someone finds the poem inspiring, my self-expression may still appear indulgent to another person who doesn't enjoy the poem at all. By its nature, then, the golden intention cannot be consistently externally validated by others...The main consideration here is that, in the mystic's worldview, the generation and exoneration of our motives is chiefly an internal process, and is not dependent on externals.

Later on, in *Essential Mysticism*, I elaborated a bit more on the “golden intention,” shifting its focus:

I cannot emphasize enough that actuating spiritual cognizance and encountering a gnosis of the Absolute without concurrently developing the most beneficial of intentions can have counterproductive, sometimes even disastrous consequences. Questing after knowledge, trying to find inner peace, gaining personal power or becoming a more compassionate agent of positive change are all inadequate motivations. In mysticism such desires, however impassioned, must be subordinated to an overarching intention to align oneself with the “good of All,” even if we are not certain how that is defined. Mainly, this is so we become less attached to personal enrichment and our own interpretations of right and wrong, and more attentive to an all-inclusive developmental process. Even if we suspect the good of All is inevitable, or is destined to advance without our personal contributions, couldn't we still enhance it through the focus of our consciousness and will? The orientation that we can – and the conviction that we must – is called the *golden intention*.

What is the good of All, then? In short, I believe it is the spiritual evolution of the Universe itself. But what I believe is irrelevant, and you should discover any shared understanding through your own mystical journey. The key is trusting that the good of All is possible, and that we can in fact bind ourselves to it. We may never grasp the entire picture as it relates to our current actions – though spiritual cognizance will of course help us in this regard – but if we discipline our hearts to sincerely desire what is best for All Things, including ourselves, then it does not matter if we are certain of any specific direction or outcome. In fact, mysticism tends to discard moralizing and determinacy in favor of personal integrity with a simple principle: to develop as our first priority the habit of acquiescing to a higher nature, and thereby enter a flow of directedness supported by the Universe itself. In a way this is an article of faith, but it is a necessary one evident in all branches of mysticism, and it grounds our spiritual practice.

And by the time I revisited the “golden intention” in *True Love*, it had developed further:

Energy exchanges within a broader context tend to be much more fulfilling. A meal lovingly prepared for us by a friend is a lot more satisfying than a quick snack alone. Adorn that meal with a special occasion – a favorite holiday, a birthday, an anniversary – and it becomes memorable as well, nourishing our heart and spirit. In the same way, when we approach nourishment with a consistent, guiding intentionality behind our actions, we add value and energy to our experiences. If we care about what we are doing because it supports a deeper conviction about why we should act, then we can make choices with more confidence and execute them with more zeal and perseverance. This is how intentions affect our nourishing style and capacity. In one way, love itself performs this supportive function, and when we are immersed in love-consciousness we tend to act from that state of being without calling upon anything greater. Love justifies itself. But what supports love? What is the governing intention behind the will to be caring and compassionate? Often we will find that the life purpose we identify for ourselves fulfills that function, acting as a backdrop against which all decisions can be measured. But what is the backdrop for our backdrop? What supports us when we temporarily lose our personal vision, or fall out of love for a while, or stumble across new barriers that seem intimidating or insurmountable?

One answer that spiritual traditions offer us is an overarching desire for the good of All. That is, what benefits everyone, including ourselves, to the greatest degree. Before making any major decision, if I ask myself “is this for the good of All?” I can begin aligning my intention with that higher stratum of moral valuation and a broader, more inclusive purpose. I may not always know for a certainty the answer to that question, but if I ask it, I am at least examining my own heart for any signs of willfulness. And creating that softness of heart, that willingness to align myself with a greater good, opens a channel to wisdom and insight. You might be asking: “Wait a minute, how can we ever know for certain what the good of All really is? Isn’t that kind of bigheaded?” And of course that is one of the dangers. If we assert that we have been granted some special dispensation to stand for good in the world, and that therefore whatever we desire is for the good of All, then we can fall into a classic trap of willful ignorance amplified by unrepentant arrogance, and lose ourselves in megalomaniacal delusion. At the other extreme, if we deny our innate capacity for wisdom and discernment, submitting instead to a sense of helpless inevitability, we can annihilate our potential contribution to all-inclusive beneficial outcomes. So this practice requires just the right balance of courage and humility, relying on an inner conviction, a certainty of faith, that the good of All is possible – perhaps even inevitable – and that we can and will contribute to it. We are confident not in our having the perfect solution, but in our willingness and eagerness to be part of a solution. Our fundamental belief that the good of All deserves to be manifested and indeed cries out to be manifested is what calls us forth and draws us onward. I call this the golden intention.

The skeptic might argue: “How can I trust in something if I don’t know where it comes from or where it is taking me?” Because it is precisely our not knowing that entreats our faith. Even if we have a pretty solid idea of what is the most beneficial and skillful for everyone in a given circumstance, any failure to actualize that vision – or just the inevitable twists and turns in the road that obscure any outcome – can sap our momentum. And the exact details of that bigger picture are almost always hidden from us. We may catch glimpses every now and then, but it is difficult to differentiate the illusion of our own desires or the realism of our imagination from what is actually happening. So we must trust that our governing intentionality will contribute to a bigger picture, that our will aligns and harmonizes with the good of All simply because we choose this as our destination. As an additional benefit, as we integrate this intention into our modes of being, we will begin operating within higher and higher strata of moral valuation. That is, we will begin to view our choices and the events around us through a more refined filter of spiritual understanding. And this will not only enwiden our insights, but sustain us through great difficulties.

Now since references to “altitudes of moral function” and “strata of moral valuation” keep popping up, this seems like an opportune moment to flesh out this concept. The basic idea, inspired by thinkers as diverse as Aristotle, Plotinus, Spinoza, Hegel, Teilhard de Chardin, Sri Aurobindo, Jean Piaget, Gene Gebser, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan and Ken Wilber, is that there are multidimensional shifts in our moral operation over time – especially as we advance in our wisdom and discernment about the nature of our own being, consciousness and humanity. These layers or “strata” of moral valuation represent cascading hierarchies of values, all of which eventually subordinate themselves to love-consciousness.

Another way of saying this is that each stratum represents a grouping of mutually supportive perceptions, thoughts, emotions and behaviors that operate according to an imperfect understanding of affectionate compassion, but still reach toward it like a plant toward the sun. Each is a successful holding pattern (in terms of individual and inclusive fitness) for a stage of relating to self, others and the world around us. Although the demarcations between strata are inexact, once we adopt these definitions they are readily observable in ourselves and others, albeit as different levels of maturity in different types of interpersonal relationships and contexts, and within different dimensions of self. That is, we don't tend to advance uniformly, linearly or non-selectively; rather, this is an organic process, with lopsided lurches and leaps that induce dissonance just as often as they resolve into harmony. Thus advances and regressions are in constant (multidialectical) tension with each other. Below is a chart that maps the course of a proposed moral development.

***Strata of Moral Valuation***

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| <p><b>Applied Nonduality</b></p>   | <p>This is an expression of mystical, nondual consciousness as a supremely unfettered existence where intuitions of universal freedom are fully realized. There is a certain irony that the autonomy one's ego so craved in earlier strata is now readily available through the absence of ego. The lack of a distinct sense of self in some ways eradicates any sort of identification at all - so non-being is equivalent to being, and self is equivalent to both nothingness and previous conceptions of "the All." Here inexhaustible loving kindness is conclusively harmonized through advanced forms of discernment. An enduring all-inclusive love-consciousness integrates all previous moral orientations, current intentions and actions into a carefree - but nevertheless carefully balanced - flow; a flow into what might be described as "ultimate purpose." Previous orientations are then viewed not as right or wrong, but as a spectrum of imperfect expressions of that ultimate purpose. In this final letting go of self-identification, all nourishment is love, all love is nourishment, and all values hierarchies are subordinated to skillfully compassionate affection. At the same time, this realization and any other constructs become just that: constructs, inventions of the mind. Up until now, the main concern of moral valuation has been the orientation of self-to-self, self-to-other, self-to-community, self-to-environment, self-to-planet, self-to-humanity, self-to-nothingness, self-to-All, etc. In other words, previous values hierarchies tended to be preoccupied with the context of the self. In this stratum, that context is no longer relevant, because there is no self, and no concept of no-self. Along the same lines, the past/present/future construction of time dissolves into insignificance.</p> |
| <p><br/><b>Spiritual Universality</b></p> | <p>Through persistent and intimate connection with an absolute, universal inclusiveness of being, moral function is defined by whatever most skillfully facilitates "the good of All." "The good of All," in turned, is an evolving intuition, a successive unfolding of mystical awareness in concert with dialectical cognition and neutrality of personal will. However, it tends to remain more of a felt sense than an exclusively rational construct. Skillfulness can still be refined through empirical experimentation and observation, but it is always subjected to a filter of intensified and unconditional compassion - a felt sense as well. Identification with the All is fluid and seamless, and moral thought and action flowing from this identification are also fluid and seamless. That is not to say that this stratum can't occasionally be interrupted by regressions to previous strata within one or more dimensions of being (usually as a reaction to overwhelming or stressful situations), but the contrast and incongruity of those regressions is strikingly obvious. Past, present and future become a continuum where "now" is less fixed; the experience of time itself is more relative and process-oriented. Nevertheless, "now" remains the primary reference for that process.</p>  |
| <p></p>                                   | <p>This stratum is marked by an increasing flexibility of moral orientation. For example, the realization that more than one values hierarchy can be valid, that someone can operate</p>   |

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| <p><b>Transpersonal Holism</b></p>          | <p>within multiple values hierarchies simultaneously, or that seemingly opposing values hierarchies can synthesize a new, higher order moral orientation. This intersubjective moral ambiguity is then navigated through the discernment of intentional, strategic outcomes that benefit the largest majority possible. Definition of what constitutes "the largest majority possible" likewise changes and evolves, but is strongly informed by transpersonal perceptions and experiences. In turn, identification with this transpersonal connectedness subordinates other identifications, so that, for example, experiencing a shared ground of being is indistinguishable from compassionate affection for all beings, and compassionate affection for all beings is indistinguishable from attenuation of individual ego. The relevant timeframe for this stratum becomes contextual; the relevance of past, present and future shifts with current priorities, and the cycles and patterns of time begin to give way to a continuum.</p> |
| <p>↑<br/><b>World-Centric</b></p>           | <p>Now there is a greater appreciation and acceptance of ecologies that facilitate, transcend and include human society. These ecologies may contain biological, metaphysical, quantum or other systems-oriented constructs, with the feature that these systems are vast, complex and interdependent. Here moral function is inspired by individual and collective commitment to understanding and supporting those systems in order to support all life. Personal identification with this broader, ecological consciousness expands humanity-centric compassion and concern into world-centric compassion and concern. Values hierarchies now begin to be viewed as a primary form of nourishment, from which all other nourishment is derived. Time dilates and slows a bit here, tending to be viewed more as cycles and patterns than a line.</p>   |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Principled Rationalism</b></p>  | <p>Moral function is now defined by a rationally defined set of reasoned moral principles, principles with the unifying objective of benefiting all of humanity. For anyone operating in this stratum, empirical validation of moral efficacy is of particularly compelling interest; what really works should be embraced, and what doesn't should be discarded. There is also an additional form of individuation here, where identification with previous communities (communities whose values and goals had previously been facilitated and integrated) begins to fade, and is replaced with increasing identification with, and compassion for, all human beings. Social divisions are discarded in favor of equal status. The future can now become an all-consuming fixation that drives more and more decisions, the past becomes an advising reference, and the current moment a fleeting absorption. As a result, time tends to both constrict and accelerate in this stratum, remaining linear in experience and conception.</p>    |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Cooperative Communalism</b></p> | <p>Here a communal role and collective responsibility is firmly accepted and established as part of moral function, and community is defined by shared values and experiences, rather than just shared benefits or just laws. The necessity of collaborative contribution to human welfare is understood, and the desire to compete for personal advantage fades away. A community's shared values are appreciated, integrated and supported in order to further that community's goals and collective nourishment, but without the suppression or sacrificing of personal values and identity that were common in earlier tribalism. Thus distinctions of class, caste, and social position tend to attenuate. This stratum tends to invite preoccupation with the future, sometimes even beyond one's personal future, because one is charting a course through increased complexity. Time is experienced and conceived as episodic.</p>  |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Competitive Communalism</b></p> | <p>Moral function is strongly influenced by personal acceptance of the importance of participating in a mutually beneficial and lawfully just community, while still retaining individual uniqueness. However, this initial expansion into a communal moral orientation usually orbits around competition. Competition with others for personal positional power and influence in the community; competition with other moral orientations, asserting the relevance of one's own views and priorities; non-conformance with, and continual challenging of, a community's established values hierarchy; and competition for other forms of social capital. In this stratum the future gains more importance as one strategizes navigation of these competitions. The past also regains its teaching role, with emphasis on both failures and successes to inform current strategies.</p>   |
| <p>↑</p>                                    | <p>Now more fully individuated from the primary tribe and its social constraints, one continues to be committed to one's own well-being, freedom, wholeness and access to more subtle, nuanced and complex nourishment resources. Moral function is increasingly defined by</p>   |

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| <p><b>Contributive Individualism</b></p>        | <p>efforts that appear “good” or helpful to others, as framed by conscience, the context-of-the-moment and one-on-one relationships. In this sense, moral relativism is derived from one's own experiences and interactions, and tends to be maintained and defended within this self-referential absorption. The present is still paramount here. This stratum is part of an individuation process from the tribe and the tribe's values hierarchy. Moral orientation may lapse into previous strata, but is otherwise centered around a sense of obligation to one's own uniqueness, freedom, well-being and wholeness. As a result, one is open to more complex nourishment that was not available within egoic or tribal orientations. Probably as a component of emancipation from tribal expectations, there tends to be minimal concern about the impact of one's individuation process on others. In this stratum, the present once again gains preeminence; the past is being left behind, and the future matters less than assertiveness in the now.</p> |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Opportunistic Individualism</b></p> | <p>This stratum is part of an individuation process from the tribe and the tribe's values hierarchy. Moral orientation may lapse into previous strata, but is otherwise centered around a sense of obligation to one's own uniqueness, freedom, well-being and wholeness. As a result, one is open to more complex nourishment that was not available within egoic or tribal orientations. Probably as a component of emancipation from tribal expectations, there tends to be minimal concern about the impact of one's individuation process on others. In this stratum, the present once again gains preeminence; the past is being left behind, and the future matters less than assertiveness in the now.</p>   |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Defensive Tribalism</b></p>         | <p>Here the social order and internal rules of our primary social group(s) are championed as correct and proper both within the tribe (regulation) and to the outside world (proselytization). Competition with - and subjugation of - other individuals or groups outside of the tribe ( or one's class, caste or social position) becomes more pronounced. Thus moral function is defined by rigid definitions and legalistic rules (law &amp; order, right &amp; wrong, black &amp; white) that justify and secure personal standing within the tribe, as well as the tribe's standing within a given environment. Now, because one's tribal position is secure, the past again dominates. Past authorities, traditions, insights and experiences infuse the present legalistic frame with self-righteous justification.</p>  |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Tribal Acceptance</b></p>           | <p>Conformance with social expectations, and approval of one's primary social group(s), governs moral function here. What is “right” or “wrong” is defined by what increases or attenuates social capital and standing within the group(s). The acknowledged link between personal survival and tribal acceptance expands self-centeredness to tribe-centeredness, but otherwise operates similarly to lower moral strata. In this stratum, one's "tribe" tends to be fairly immediate, and fairly small - a family, team, group of peers, gang, etc. Now the relevant timeframe shifts back into the immediate future, where status and influence will either be lost or realized; the past may still be instructive, but what waits around the next bend in the road is what preoccupies.</p>  |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Self-Protective Egoism</b></p>      | <p>Moral function is governed by acquisitive, manipulative, consumptive or hedonistic patterns that accumulate and defend personal gains (i.e. secure nourishment sources) in order to insulate the ego from risks and loss. This self-centeredness may be masked by primitive adaptive personas that navigate basic reciprocity, but is generally indifferent to other people except for the ability of others to satisfy personal demands. Now the past can actually become more important than the present, because the past is where wrongs were suffered and gains realized. Reflections on the present and future, on the other hand, tend to be inhabited by fear of risk and loss.</p>   |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Self-Assertive Egoism</b></p>       | <p>The aggressive utilization of basic tools to satisfy own wants and whims, usually without regard to the impact on others, is an overwhelming moral imperative here. In most situations, this imperative is only moderated by fear of "being caught" and the personal embarrassment, punishment or loss of personal nourishment that may follow. The relevant timeframe for fulfilling one's desires expands a little here, so that gratification can be delayed until the near-future. However, the past is largely irrelevant, except as a reminder of negative consequences to be avoided.</p>  |
| <p>↑<br/><b>Egoless Raw Need</b></p>            | <p>Naïve, helpless state in which volition is centered around unrestrained basic nourishment in every moment, but where the mechanisms of needs fulfillment are unknown, unskilled or otherwise inaccessible. In this stratum, the scope of one's "relevant timeframe" for this needs fulfillment is almost always the immediate, everpresent <i>now</i>.</p>  |

It takes a while to absorb the content of such a chart, and it would take even longer to discuss it more fully, but the idea that there is a predictable arc of moral advancement is an essential feature of the values hierarchies that support constructive integralism. Why? Well, for one thing the shape and feel of a “golden intention” – or any other overarching imperative that directs our intentions – would otherwise be impossible to predict or promote. For another, “love-consciousness” would be just one of many possible states of being, and there would be no way of validating its primacy. We would have trouble, for example, defining and grouping emotionally “healthy” states, or defending the observation that they are more constructive or efficacious than emotionally “unhealthy” states. This is precisely the same relationship that multidimensional awareness has to a higher tolerance for complexity, so that an open-minded, self-discerning mode of evaluation is clearly more beneficial than a closed, reflexive loop that relies on externalized guidance. And without a way to prioritize ideations, values and actions, our efforts would be set adrift amid an ocean of competing and seemingly equivalent ethical ideologies...which is in fact one of the more miasmatic maladies of the post modern era. Indeed, I feel it is this very malady that may have infected some of the other iterations of integral thought.

As an alternative, if we allow responsible and skillful love to instruct and refine all other emotions, thoughts, behaviors and intentions – all impulses of consciousness, body and will – we can begin to arrive at values hierarchies that are not only internally consistent, but that energize a clearly defined evolutionary arc amid complex and often competing systems. When combined with multidimensional awareness, we can sort through the profoundly complicated issues of the modern world and assign dynamic, flexible priorities. I can attest to this not only theoretically, but from my own experience. In managing people in organizations, for example, whenever I placed “the good of All” above any other agenda – above shareholder profits, for example, or my own ego gratification, or the favoritism of one person over another, etc. – then the outcome was always beneficial to the largest degree for the largest number, as long as I could integrate as many perspectives as possible within this compassionate prioritization. And this was true in all sorts of environments, from non-profit to corporate to governmental to community organizations: a principled decision motivated by maximally-inclusive compassionate affection always created more harmony and contentment in the end, even if it wasn’t initially popular with one or two employees or community members, and even if it ruffled my manager’s feathers.

Of course, we could also choose something else to power our values hierarchies. We could choose acquisitive materialism, or reinforcement of unequal social power structures, or righteous indignation, or violent justice, or self-imposed victimhood, or childish egoism, or malicious spite, or one of the many other motivational memplexes available in humanity’s noosphere. But what the sages of nearly every wisdom tradition declare, the prosocial genetic programming of primate species suggests, the depths of mystical gnosis illuminates, and multidimensional awareness affirms, is that the felt experience of compassionate affection has the greatest motivational efficacy. It is the wisest pilot for our consciousness, the most elegant moral arbiter for our species, and the choicest compass for our soul. In *True Love*, I

go so far as to say that skillful love is a prerequisite for adequately nourishing ourselves or others in any dimension:

A stronger way to state this principle is that without the cofactor of love, the nutrients available to different dimensions of our being cannot be properly metabolized. You could even say that a paucity of love is our greatest barrier to wholeness and well-being. The felt experience of compassionate affection must develop in parallel with every other aspect of self; it is both a prerequisite and product of nurturing efforts. Returning for a moment to the strata of moral valuation, consider that movement from one stratum to the next cannot occur unless love is firmly seated in our consciousness. Authentic love, in this context, is the fullest expression possible of our particular level of moral development; it progressively defines what we value and how courageously we act on those valuations. This leads to one way we can define love-consciousness: love that has become fully conscious within us, producing a sensitivity that is wholly infused with love and grounded in ever-expanding arenas of affection. Another way to say this is that our moral development reflects the maturation of love within us, and this in turn defines how skillfully we can achieve multidimensional nourishment for ourselves and throughout all of our interactions. Our energy exchanges become the very currency of love and the evidence of its sovereignty in our life...

...If I feel affection for myself, won't I want to nourish every aspect of my being? And if I can care for myself effectively, won't that help me become more competent in facing new challenges? Thinking, choosing and acting from a place of loving kindness, we have the courage to be flexible and allow appropriate fulfillment impulses to take the upper hand when needed. Then our love can flow forth into the world around us as well. I am sure you can intuit the critical role that compassionate affection plays in the nourishment process – it is the beginning and end of our journey. True love is the kernel of enduring strength at our core, the wind that lifts us, and the distant horizon towards which we fly. It is the cofactor for metabolizing healthy nourishment in every dimension of self and the sunlight that enables growth. It inspires change and supports us as we test our wings. Love then provides the courage to see ourselves and the world around us clearly, and envision a future appropriate to who we really are. In the end, it is only through love that we can grasp the importance of the life we choose to live, or measure the real worth of our triumphs.

My understanding of love-consciousness, values hierarchies, the golden intention and so on continue to be transformed by the integralizing filters of discernment, a neutral holding field, flexible processing space and multidialectical processing. I believe it has been through this growth curve that I eventually arrived at the book *Political Economy and the Unitive Principle*, where the importance of collective moral development in enabling the capacities and durability of civil society becomes so pronounced. Here again, all of this remains dependent upon individual commitment to self-nourishment and loving intentionality that expresses the “unitive principle” of love. As I wrote there:

Is it the natural maturation of a more sophisticated and far-seeing self-interest that inspires a unitive vision? Is it an inevitable evolutionary refinement in social relations? Is it an arbitrary hiccup in the development of the brain that provides some adaptive advantage? Is



it evidence of a divine imprint on the human psyche, or part of what Sri Aurobindo called "supramentalisation," the ongoing descent of the divine into the material plane? I have my suspicions, but of course I don't know the answer. I have just observed it over and over again: the *unitive principle* appears to be firmly embedded in holistic nourishment and moral creativity as a function of natural maturation and growth, with continuously humanizing, harmonizing and liberating effects. And this why I believe transformative, all-encompassing love-consciousness should become our guiding intentionality for everything, including models of political economy, because this kind of skillfully compassionate affection has proven itself to be the most constructive force available to us.

Returning to the main subject of this essay, it should be obvious by now how a memplex infused with *agape* can contribute to our management of complexity. Along some popular integrative lines, one approach might propose elevating and refining postformal reasoning; another that we expand quantum models of cognition; another that we unify objective, subjective, intersubjective and interobjective perspectives; another that we develop cross-paradigmatic orders of hierarchical complexity; another that we rely on complex systems theory; another that we develop transcontextual thinking via participatory processes; and so on without end. Many books have been written about these and other approaches, and how each one has potential advantages over another. So our first impulse might be to integrate all such proposals into a neutral, multidialectical space, holding them lightly until we recognize the virtual point that relates along multiple lines into our current decision matrix. And of course any such conclusions would be fluid because our localized context, informing variables, valuations, outcome metrics and prioritizations are all equally fluid – just as our understanding of what “all-inclusive” or “maximally beneficial” would also be fluid. And this strategy would indeed be “integral” in one sense. But I believe such a strategy would still fall tragically short if it is not executed in a thought field permeated with love-consciousness and nonrational contributions.

Why? Because, once again, integrative approaches should operate at the highest moral altitude possible, where the importance of a governing intentionality of compassion, and the role of a *certain something* that transcends rational deliberation, are dominant parts of the mix. Some philosophers (Hegel, Fichte, Shelling) alluded to that certain something as “Anschauung,” a nondiscursive insight or “intellectual intuition.” I have described variations of the certain something as mystic activation or gnosis. But everyone who returns to rational intellection after these peak experiences – however we choose to name them – seems to arrive at the same conclusion: concern for the well-being of others and the harmony of society as a whole is an inevitable byproduct of authentic “certain something” experiences. Even the Buddha – after inhabiting profound insights about the emptiness of all phenomena, all concepts of self, all consciousness and all being – still concluded that the only thing left worth doing was to relieve the suffering of others. In *Political Economy and the Unitive Principle*, I document how compassionate sentiments are preeminent within the Western canon of ethics philosophy, and indeed are part of a nearly universal, cross-cultural ethical lineage. And I would be so bold as to say that love-consciousness is common to all productive insight, discernment and wisdom, and indeed *must be present in any form of integral processing*. For if unitive insights truly issue from higher altitude moral strata, they

will by their nature always reflect these all-inclusive characteristics, which in turn will evidence themselves in cascading moral valuations based on prioritization of compassionate relations. A passionate commitment to the good of All is always present. A felt sense of genuine affection binds all interdependencies. An ineffable certainty (that is, non-symbolic, experiential wisdom) overrides rational constructs, then facilitates our rationalization of thoughts and actions that facilitate prosocial impulses. In my view this convergence ensures highly advanced integral processing, regardless of the dominant technologies, worldviews, memplexes and paradigms that detail the processes of that integralization. In Integral Lifework, love-dependent gnosis effectively transcends all conditions and interpretations.

Although many of these principles are explicit in many philosophical and spiritual approaches throughout history and around the globe, they have often been forgotten in the hyperrational, reductionist ideologies that pepper our post modern era. And of course I feel this is a dangerous departure, a disconnect from previously proven modes of constructive, prosocial being. As Rumi reminds us: “Intellect is good and desirable to the extent it brings you to the King’s door. Once you have reached His door, then divorce the intellect...You have no business with the how and wherefore. Know that the intellect’s cleverness all belongs to the vestibule. Even if it possesses the knowledge of Plato, it is still outside the palace.” Discursive modes of analysis can get us close to the palace of wisdom...but they can’t get us inside. So that is the caveat we must always observe when reveling in our highly advanced, multidialectical, inter-specialized, integralizing understanding of the Universe: if it isn’t guided by love and gnosis, it profits us nothing.

### **Functional Intelligence: How We Know We’re Managing Complexity Successfully**

At the beginning of this essay, before I offered these proposals regarding constructive integralism, I tainted all that followed by questioning the adequacy of consciousness itself to see beyond its own operational boundaries. If consciousness evolved to improve the individual and inclusive fitness of our species, then fitness is really all that it provides. Anything beyond this – any grand philosophical or transpersonal musings – may just be so much fitness-reinforcing fantasy. And this brings up an important litmus test for “constructive integralism:” Does it add value to our individual and collective survival in concrete ways? My suspicion is that if we believe it does, then it will. In much the same way that the placebo effect facilitates healing of all sorts of illness, a mode of being that manages complexity in ways it *believes* are beneficial to all systems being integralized – including human survival and the evolution of consciousness – will be more likely to induce the desired results. On one level, this means that *any* such beliefs are beneficial; on another, the more inclusive our input streams, and the more diligent our metrics to assess outcomes, the more available a positive trajectory will become...along with the faith that trajectory inevitably demands. So just as the scientist trusts her instruments, and the hiker trusts his compass, and social institutions trust the collective agreements of their members, we must also trust the capacity of our consciousness to see beyond itself, to a new way forward that hints at self-

transformation. It is my contention that this is the mythical vestment we must don to help heal our society and, ultimately, evolve our species.

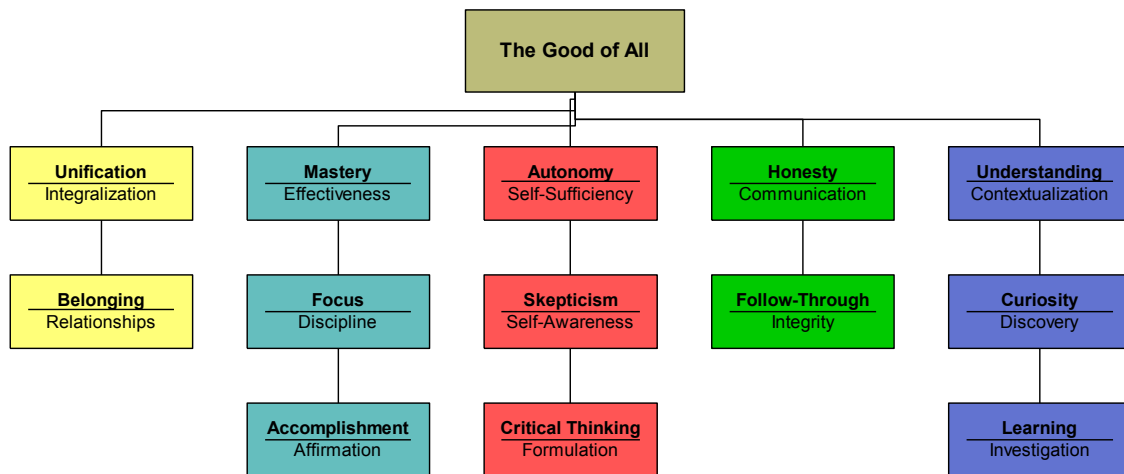
But how can I assert this with any confidence? Well, I think it's obvious that natural selection among humans has been influenced by individual choices and cultural practices for millennia – we have been involved in reinforcing certain genotypes and phenotypes in our species everywhere around the globe, whether we readily recognize this or not. Consider the lack of genetic diversity and/or increase in genetic disorders among populations isolated or decimated by persecution and war, or by famine and malnourishment that resulted from poor cultivation methods, or by self-oppressing and self-defeating cultural ideologies, or by domination of one group by another over multiple generations, or by the proliferation of toxic pollutants. Consider also the genotypes and phenotypes that have thrived and reproduced in violent cultures, male-dominated cultures, cultures where ruthless competition is prized above empathic cooperation, cultures that promote sedentary lifestyles and obesity, or societies where medicine has preserved reproduction among carriers of fitness-limiting genetic disorders. As a species, we have been overriding natural selection for a very long time, and as our technological sophistication escalates, so will our ability to (intentionally or unintentionally) reinforce certain traits and, ultimately, interfere with our own evolution. So shouldn't we focus more attention on how we navigate this situation? Shouldn't we step back for a moment, and recognize that all of our choices will not only impact the environment we leave for future generations, but also the fitness of their DNA?

Surely, we must begin to address these kinds of decisions more consciously and compassionately, and find useful ways to measure the efficacy of our approach. What should we be looking for in outcomes, and what metrics can be relied on for our ongoing evaluation? How can we get a handle on accurate predictions (and cascading predictions)? My answer to this dilemma is to adopt a standard of *functional intelligence*. As I write in the essay "Functional Intelligence:"

In the context of Integral Lifework, *functional intelligence* represents our effectiveness in perceiving, operationalizing and developing personal values. This demands a high level of self-awareness, and answers to some detailed questions. For example, are we aware of our operative values hierarchy, especially in contrast to an idealized one? Do the outcomes of our efforts actually align with our values? Do we routinely and accurately predict those outcomes? Have we been able to improve our skillfulness in actualizing our primary values? Do we recognize when we stray from a desired course? Over time, have we been able to integrate new, idealized values with our more intuitive and reflexive values? In this way, does our values hierarchy reflect an ongoing maturation process? In the most concrete and measurable terms, what is the relationship between our internal values, what we think, how we feel, and what we do? By answering these questions and elevating our attention to these patterns, we begin to outline the many facets of *functional intelligence*.

Also from that essay is a limited example of values hierarchy, operationalization and assessment:

## Cascading Values Hierarchy



## Operationalization & Assessment

A friend asked me if I needed some help leading a community discussion about how to oversee business expansion in our neighborhood. I thanked her but said no, I would like to lead the discussion myself, and that I would appreciate any resources she could provide. So she sent me some information on how to seed a group with ideas and build consensus before the meeting occurred, so that it would appear as if consensus was happening organically, when really it was a result of prior persuasion. But, after meditating on the subject and discussing it with some trusted friends, I decided not to take this approach. Instead, I researched some more until I found material on facilitating group discussions that encouraged brainstorming among different perspectives, then provided ways of "bubbling up" those different ideas into shared primary objectives. I then led the discussion using these tools, and was able to cultivate consensus in the group regarding the question at hand. As a result, the community was able to consolidate behind a specific list of standards that businesses would be required to adopt when setting up shop in our neighborhood. It would be several years until we were able to assess whether the standards would have the desired results, but in the interim the community felt empowered to engage in the governance process, and optimistic about their prospective impact. What was clear for now was that I did seem to operationalize my own values hierarchy in this process.

Of course, whatever altitude of moral sophistication we can sustain will shape our values hierarchy – and vice versa – so encouraging a moral maturity that cultivates unitive love-consciousness remains a central focus. But how do we get there? How can we stimulate and sustain our own moral development? What are the supportive structures for our own healing, growth and transformation? Well, that is again what Integral Lifework is all about, for by nourishing twelve dimensions of being in skillful ways, we create interior and exterior conditions for exactly those consequences. As I write in “A Mystic’s Call to Action:”

Compassion, discernment, skill, patience, persistence – all of these may add to the mix, but they are not enough. Why? Because all truly effective effort arises from balanced and harmonious wholeness; that is, an energy, intention and love-in-action that is invigorated by all of the supportive structures that make up our being. By consciously attending to these supportive structures, our wholeness not only becomes harmonious, but also greater than the sum of its parts...

...What do I mean by "effective nourishment" of twelve dimensions? Each facet of the whole requires its own focus – its own special flavor of energy and effort – and the descriptions above make much of this self-explanatory. But there are other, less obvious characteristics of effective nourishment as well. For instance, there is a Goldilocks zone for each dimension, a

virtual space between deprivation and indulgence that provides optimal support, and although this will be different for each person, it is important to cultivate a Goldilocks zone in every dimension. There is also a component of dialectic tension that establishes push-and-pull stimulation for each type of nourishment. Like tides moving up and down a beach, the energy of that tension stimulates growth and change. For example, the tension between rest or relaxation and vigorous exercise for a Healthy Body, or the tension between creative self-expression and appreciating and internalizing the creative expressions of others in Playful Heart.

There are also certain qualities of connection, openness, intimacy and relationship that must be present in each dimension for it to be nourished; like an inner family of hungry kids, we must help them care for themselves and each other, and sincerely care about themselves and each other. And although Integral Lifework begins as a series of nourishment routines that target particular dimensions, its ultimate objective is harmonized nourishment of the whole through integral practice. That is, to cultivate habits, activities and patterns of thought and emotion that nurture many dimensions at once in the most balanced and loving ways. Harmonious interplay is the final most critical characteristic of multidimensional nourishment. There are many additional components of essential nourishment, but these few are key.

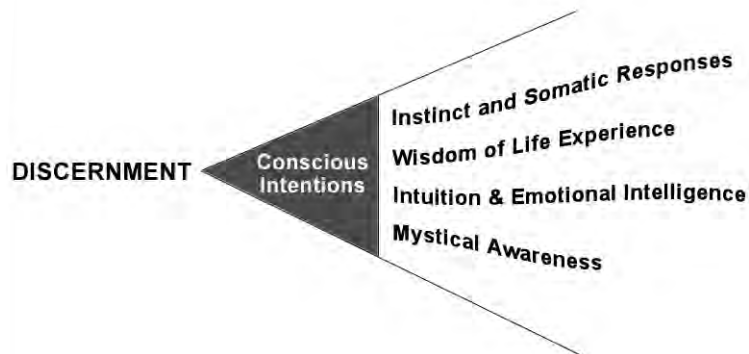
At first all of this may sound a bit overwhelming, but one of the delights of holistic nourishment is that simply becoming aware of all twelve dimensions and their importance is a significant step towards wholeness. To whatever degree we can include the care and feeding of these twelve inner selves in our daily routines, we will begin to create synergies and harmonies that nourish and sustain the whole in unexpected ways. This care and feeding may begin as the targeting of just one or two undernourished or neglected dimensions, and developing slowly from there. And of course there are many activities that will nurture more than one dimension at once – sometimes all arenas can even be nourished at the same time. All regular self-care has unintended cross-pollination, even if we are not conscious of it. Eventually, when all twelve dimensions come into balance, something miraculous happens....

Such compassionate caring for all dimensions of being at once is what I mean by “integral nourishment.” That is crucial to supporting a natural, effortless expression of a high altitude moral orientation...that is, the perfection of love-consciousness in widening arenas of action and intention. We begin with interiority and expand out from there in concentric circles of dynamic interplay, so that our values are operationalized first and foremost in our modes of thought, feeling and volition, and then in all of our relationships – with friends, neighbors, communities, economic systems, political systems, ecosystems and so on. Thus, ultimately, the *golden intention* – our passionate desire for the greatest good for the greatest number – percolates through our entire being until it overflows into every interaction.

There is more to this, of course, such as specific definitions for the twelve dimensions of nourishment, various methods of nurturing and overcoming personal and collective barriers to nourishment, the primary drives and fulfillment impulses that shape our volition, and so on, and all of that information is easily accessible via Integral Lifework resources scattered throughout my work and around the web. But is there a guaranteed method of predicting

and evaluating outcomes that assures us of our own values-alignment? Well, yes there is, and we've already touched on it several times: the wisdom and discernment that develops through multidimensional awareness. From *Essential Mysticism*, an abbreviated snapshot of that process is captured below.

Many factors will combine into moments of discerning insight. Here are examples of some critical input streams:



Each input stream requires separate attention and refinement, and although all of them are innate processes, in the modern world there is often little encouragement to nurture them. After all, how often do we really listen to what our bodies are trying to tell us? And the wisdom of our life experience may sometimes contradict what we learn in school or the latest advice from media talk shows. Our intuition may be ridiculed or dismissed by coworkers, family members and sometimes even friends. And mystical awareness will present challenging and paradoxical information, in part because it has a different orientation than other input streams...Now consider that all of these may not readily agree with each other – at least not on the surface – and discernment can seem impossible to synergize. However, as we filter each contribution through the golden intention, with sincere confidence that the good of All will be served, our discernment has an anchor and a filter, so that the implications of each choice become unquestionably clear.

And once again we come full circle to the heart of the mystic's way: letting go. By releasing our certainty about what is, what our ego demands of us, and even what our past successes have taught us, we invite lucidity and synchronization into current consciousness. By relaxing our dependence on intellect and physical sense, we enter a Sacred inner space where the broadest possible context for our actions is revealed. By letting go of personal attachment to outcomes – and the dominance of any one input stream – disparate information merges into unified insight.

For me, the quickest route to this unification is meditation. Difficult conundrums melt away when the mind is quieted and I am no longer so attached to thoughts and feelings. What swiftly arises is not only distilled vision, but also the underlying principles supporting that vision. Sometimes this can only be explained as an inexplicable "knowing." At other times, in a flash of interconnection, things fit together in ways that make rational sense. And, of course, there is the final necessity of following through. When we support true

discernment with action, our wisdom is confirmed and our faith in mystical methodologies deepens....

What is perhaps most interesting here are the roles and relationship between what have traditionally been considered “conscious” and “unconscious” elements of mind. In functional intelligence, there are indeed intuitive values that exercise a primary influence over our thought field and volition, but what an active development of wisdom and discernment provide (and what integral practice in general promotes) is a more transparent and fluent communication between conscious choices and unconscious patterns. We will always operate from our intuitive values, that is a given, and it is also a given that those values will be to a large degree an intersection of cultural programming, peer pressures, core material from childhood, resilient memes, and our own clever rationalizations for what our DNA compels us to do. What Integral Lifework promotes, however, are avenues for additional input into that values formation that result from a targeted array of self-nourishing practices.

I would also take this one step further and say that there is probably no such thing as a structural separation of conscious and unconscious, that instead there is merely a shift in active focus (i.e. varying degrees of executive function and volitional engagement) across a broad spectrum of structures that comprise perception and apprehension. Some of these structures, like somatic memory, tend to resist active focus more than others. But that does not mean they are strictly “unconscious.” Among many reductionist errors during the course of Western science is a compartmentalization mind into arbitrarily defined components that must, of theoretical necessity, explain the perceived whole, while always (also of seeming necessity) retaining their significance as discrete functions. In much of my writing – including my theory of identity in *Memory : Self* – I also introduce such invented divisions, in order to describe various processes and interactions I have observed. At the same time, however, I endeavor to reach for a whole that not only includes “parts” that have often been neglected, but that result in a more emergent, relational, process-oriented field of being that itself is interconnected with myriad other fields of being not ordinarily ascribed to “self.” And why is this important? Because I would extend the same reasoning to include elements of mind that do not reside in our physiological being at all, but are transpersonal expressions of a collective, superordinate Whole. This is the mystic in me speaking, to be sure, but my point is that all effectively communicative language constricts exposition to a much narrower spectrum of ideas, intuitions and senses than actually exist. Without experiential learning, the arts, moments of profound insight, gnosis and so forth, we would be trapped in the paucity of our limited vocabulary. I suspect that every author, songwriter and poet knows this to be true.

In any case, we will ultimately know that we are succeeding – that we are functionally intelligent – when our evolutionary success as individuals and as a species improves over time, inclusive of all the variables, unintended consequences and externalities an integralizing model seeks to encompass. That is the really long arc that serves as our most definitive metric. But we can and should attempt to predict that arc using the tools discussed here...as well as tools we haven’t thought of yet that will be based on more elegant models of integral understanding in the future. As the scientific research alluded to earlier contends that

prosocial tendencies evolved to improve our species' fitness, it seems like a solid bet that refining those tendencies – and unifying them within a thought field governed by love-consciousness – continues to hold promise for the future. And yet...is this “The Answer,” or just another error predicated upon “the myth of the given?” As one pragmatic way to parse this dilemma, we can circle back to the emotions chart and assess the successes and failures we have observed in our own lives, in the lives of others, and throughout the recent history of our society according to those contrasting dispositions. Of course there will be research bias when undertaking such an assessment, but again...that is where meditation, deep introspection, multidimensional awareness and emotionally honest discussion with our peers can help us discern our way through ever-emerging convictions.

So there you have it. Yes, there are many moving parts to be accounted for here, and new ways of thinking, doing and being to be cultivated, but once we develop a few new habits of mind, heart, body, community and spirit, we can hone our functional intelligence into an easily accessible praxis. And the result? We will better embrace complexity, comprehend complexity, predict complexity, and manage complexity within and without, in all its infinite expressions, while doing this in the most compassionate and beneficial ways...for the good of All.