An Experiment in Education for States

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This article describes three approaches I used to support skillful means in teaching a freshman honors colloquium class at Gonzaga University and contextualizes those approaches according to Integral Theory. I also describe the course itself and report my research from the fourth year I taught the class. My primary focus in teaching the course was to "raise awareness" in students about themselves and expose them to new ideas about the nature of reality. The results were that students expanded their ways of knowing and being through changes in states of consciousness.

Introduction

One evening when I was 19, I was having a conversation about esoteric topics with a friend. In the course of our discussion, he stated that he wanted the ability to psychically bend spoons like Uri Geller. While I thought this was something that would be interesting to do, the response that came out of my mouth was that I wanted the ability to change consciousness. It has taken decades for me to realize the implications of that unanticipated pronouncement. In that time, my understanding of what is meant by the term "consciousness" has been influenced by a number of people's work, expanding from its original and somewhat mysterious connotation into a more integrally informed meaning.

As I reflect back, there was a deep sense of purpose and drive behind my response. It soon led me to take up a spiritual practice, which has also significantly informed my understanding of consciousness. Later, I also pursued a concurrent academic inquiry (along with my course work in leadership studies at Gonzaga University) in the field of consciousness studies. While working towards my doctorate, an opportunity arose to experiment with my ideas regarding consciousness and pedagogical practices. A friend of mine was director of the honors program at Gonzaga and invited me to co-teach the freshman honors colloquium class with him. The colloquium class was structured more like an upper class seminar and was not a pre-requisite in any subject area. Thus I was able to choose whatever content I wished to focus on. This began a five-year experiment in exploring what was meant by consciousness and how I could create opportunities for it to change in educational settings.

In this article I will describe some of the theory that informed how I taught this class and how my exposure to Integral Theory during that time allowed me to refine both my understanding of consciousness and my teaching. In particular, I will explore the distinction between states and stages of consciousness. Then I will briefly describe the class itself, followed by a report on the research I did in my fourth year of teaching the course. The primary focus of the course was raising awareness in students about themselves and exposing them to new ideas about the nature of reality.[1] Through exploring and applying these ideas, students were able to temporarily expand their repertoire of ways to interpret and respond to the world.

I will begin by offering a sample from one student's reflection paper that describes her experience of an altered state of consciousness. In her paper, she chronicles going through a cycle of depression brought on by relationship issues. She took a nap one afternoon and awoke with a revelation:

> I was released. I felt so free and happy. I walked outside, the first thing I saw was the sunset. It was gorgeous. I cannot describe its beauty well enough to do it

justice, but it encompassed all that I felt after my self-dialogue. It was natural and free, and it was spreading its rays across the world regardless of who was having a good day or a terrible day. It just was, and I was simply being.

What is implied from this student saying that life just is and the self can simply be? While the state described was temporary (although it lasted longer than a similar experience she had during one class), it did offer a window into a different way of relating to herself and the world. Over the years, other students reported a variety of changes in perception and how they related to the world, and I will share some of these excerpts later on. The core question guiding my experimentation in teaching this class centered on my long-held desire to learn how to change consciousness. I came into the class with many ideas about what this meant, and my introduction to Integral Theory during this time enabled me to distinguish between structure-stages of consciousness and state-stages of consciousness, and thus expand my capacity to help students understand their experiences.

Beyond that core question, I also entertained a number of more specific questions such as: How can one facilitate students' openness to engage and even internalize new perspectives that may challenge long-held beliefs, even if only for the time spent in the classroom? What is the long-term value of planting such seeds? Can they bloom and have a lasting impact? The first of these questions will be my focus for the majority of the next section. The second and third questions will be partially addressed in my report of the research done during the fourth year of teaching this class.

Skillful Means in Teaching

Facilitating students' engagement with new ideas is for me a question of skillful means. At that time, there were three main areas of inquiry that influenced my teaching: dialogue, hermeneutics, and the quality of presence of the teacher. Since that time, I have come to see the relationship of these areas to the larger Integral framework and its application in Integral Education.[2] For the purposes of this article, however, I will limit my focus to these three areas. They provide some conceptual background on how I approached the class and describe my perspective on these elements of Integral Education. They also were present for me in the classroom as a kind of action inquiry, an ongoing experiment in shifting my understanding from being primarily conceptual to manifesting as skillful means.

When I began teaching this class, I had only briefly encountered Integral Theory.[3] My further readings of Wilber's work helped me realize how, in some ways, I was already using elements of an Integral approach to education.[4] For example, a core aspect of Wilber's conception of Integral Theory is how it is guided by the fundamental principle of wholeness. Wilber's articulation of the nature of wholeness and its relation to other aspects of Integral Theory helped me clarify and strengthen my own capacity to be guided by wholeness.

Prior to encountering Wilber, I had been influenced by David Bohm's articulation of wholeness. Bohm's views on not only physics but also the nature of thought and the practice of dialogue are grounded in a perception of the universe as an unbroken wholeness. This view came from his long and deep inquiry into the fundamental assumptions underlying quantum physics. While aspects of Bohm's view on wholeness have evoked criticism from Wilber for being "partial," Bohm's views have been helpful for me in many ways, as I will explain.[5]

Dialogue
In relation to skillful means in teaching, I found Bohm's application of the principle of wholeness to examining thought as a system and his approach to dialogue to be some of the most practical methods for facilitating open inquiry with students.[6] From an Integral perspective

dialogue can be looked at from all four quadrants. It shows up in the Upper-Left quadrant, for instance, through an individual's attention to their own assumptions. These assumptions are not merely subjective but manifest in the Right-Hand quadrants as well. We often notice our assumptions when they show up as breakdowns in our body, social structures, or other external manifestations. All of these aspects of dialogue can support making distinctions for students that enable them to notice the wholeness of their own experience.[7]

Bohm and associates describe dialogue as a "flow of meaning" that can access insight in order to bring greater coherence to thought.[8] Bohm saw dialogue as a way "a group of people can explore the individual and collective presuppositions, ideas, beliefs and feelings that subtly control their interactions."[9] This process can allow for insight to "re-hardwire" the individual and collective system of thought. This re-hardwiring enables changes in perception to occur, overcoming the inertia of thought. The hypothesis I operated by was that training students in the use of at least some aspects of the dialogue process could, over time, be a means of support for transformative growth. In the class, I would focus on select lines of development[10] to enable temporary changes from one state of consciousness to the next. By supporting students in experiencing this kind of temporary shifts in the relative safety of the classroom, I hoped to plant seeds for future growth.[11]

Bohm saw the suspension of thoughts, judgments, and assumptions to be central to the process of dialogue. This suspension is seen to involve a quality of attention similar to that described by Moustakas in heuristic research and in Gendlin's articulation of focusing as a way to bring healing to underlying emotional conditions.[12] This act of inward listening, or focusing, allows "a display of thought and meaning . . . [that] creates the opportunity for each participant to examine the preconceptions, prejudices and the characteristic patterns that lie behind his or her thoughts, opinions, beliefs and feelings."[13] Examining these aspects of our consciousness enables us to have some perspective on them, as opposed to these aspects operating as automatic reflexes. In this way, suspension can be used as a state technology to support the temporary movement of consciousness to the next state-stage (as opposed to the next structure-stage, which is a more involved and long term process). Providing students with access to this kind of temporary state change was accomplished by emphasizing inquiry over finding the "right" answer. Students were encouraged to ask each other "Why?" in response to statements of belief or descriptions of behavior and to suspend the need to bring closure to inquiry by finding the "right" answer.

Integral Theory's recognition that (both states and structures of) consciousness develop according to well-defined stages has impact in virtually every stream of life, and dialogue is no exception. There is a developmental nature to dialogue as it has emerged from Bohm's work, then Isaac's, and now Scharmer's more recent work.[14] They describe a four-stage model moving from "talking nice" in the first stage, to "talking tough" in the second stage, to "reflective dialogue" in the third stage, and then "generative dialogue" in the fourth stage. Each of these stages represent a different state being experienced. This approach to dialogue recognizes that one must pass through the earlier state-stages in order to reach the later or higher ones. These distinctions helped me understand that dialogue does not "just happen" because you ask students to do it. Rather, it develops over time, involves specific changes in states of consciousness, and moves through distinct stages. Over the course of a semester, the class would gradually move through the first two "state-stages" and later on experience periods of reflective dialogue.[15]

Hermeneutics
Another essential component of my approach to teaching came from a mix of spiritual practice and hermeneutics. While hermeneutics is mainly associated with textual interpretation, the insights of this methodology have led to broader implications. For me, the value of this inquiry has been in opening up important distinctions about how we conceive of knowledge and what we are aiming to do in the classroom.

My understanding of "integral" at the time I was teaching this class is best reflected in Jean Gebser's notion of integral consciousness as being a worldview that "goes *beyond our conceptualization*."[16] I perceived this to be corroborated by issues involved in the study of hermeneutics. This aspect of going beyond conceptualization became a focal point for many of my ideas and was supported by experiences from my spiritual practice.

Subsequently, my exposure to Integral Theory helped me tease apart ideas I had initially lumped together. For instance, Integral Theory describes integral consciousness as mature vision-logic, a stage of cognitive development that, while stretching rationality to its limits (and thus still not "transrational"), clearly goes beyond the kind of conventional analytical reasoning present at the formal operational stage. Coming across this distinction allowed me to see vision-logic as an important transition between formal operational reasoning and more transrational types of perception.[17]

In modern times, formal operational cognition and rational analysis have played a central role in our collective approach to understanding. This view of knowledge sees truth as a noun, a static thing over which we can have power over the world through our analyses.[18] But this was not always the case. Cassirer showed how the Enlightenment changed the premodern concept of reason and brought about this modern view.[19] "Previously [reason] had been associated with 'the territory of eternal truths.' The Enlightenment shifted the use of reason to simply as a faculty or tool, the original power of mind, to be grasped only in exercise of its analytical functions."[20] This premodern conception of "the territory of eternal truths" is best illustrated in Plato's work. Plato refers to an eternal world of forms that hold the true form of each particular thing in this world. In his dialogue, *The Meno*, Plato uses Socrates to show how knowledge of these eternal truths pre-exists in the soul and that learning is a process of remembering this knowledge.[21] In the classroom, this translates into avoiding pedagogies that are grounded in a "tabula rasa" or blank slate view of students' minds.

Shifting the connotation of the term reason to a more analytical orientation did free it from some of the mythic level thinking attributed to eternal forms but also reduced its domain of validity. From a hermeneutical perspective, Richard Palmer shows how this modern view of reason as rational analysis has diverted it from contact with, or awareness of, direct, lived experience:

> Analysis is interpretation; feeling the need for analysis is also an interpretation. Thus analysis is really not the primary interpretation but a derivative form…. The derivative character of logic as it depends on the propositions is clear enough; the characteristically derivative character of the explanation or analysis is not so obvious, but no less real.[22]

Palmer makes it clear that "the 'understanding' that serves as the foundation for interpretation is itself already shaping and conditioning interpretation."[23] Wilber also points to the role of interpretation, stating that "the entry into post-modernism begins with an understanding of the intrinsic role that interpretation plays in human awareness."[24] The main principle here is to take rational analytical thinking and shift it from the subject from which we operate to an object that we can choose to use coherently.

Further implications arise from this line of inquiry that take understanding beyond notions of knowledge or truth as a thing. Gadamer states that "understanding is not conceived as a subjective process of man over and against an object, but the way of being of man himself."[25] Understanding is seen not as a method, tactic, or even an epistemological process but as an ontological one. This fundamental shift is reflected in Gadamer's view that "all understanding is ultimately self-understanding," or the ontological mode of Being in the world.[26] In this way the intrinsic role of interpretation in a postmodern worldview is grounded not merely in the development of the intellect but of the self as well.

Schumacher emphasizes this when he states that "this is the Great Truth of *adequatio* . . . the understanding of the knower must be adequate to the thing to be known."[27] In terms of Integral Theory's quadrants, there must be a requisite capacity present in the interior, Left-Hand quadrants in order to know something in the Right-Hand, exterior quadrants. This perspective is echoed in a number of places. Braud and Anderson note that "we can perceive and know only that which our sensitivities have prepared us, and these sensitivities depend on aspects of our being."[28] Osborne states that "we cannot inductively derive an essence from examples unless we can already intuit that essence."[29] There are many implications for this in teaching, primarily for pedagogical practices that recognize the developmental nature of consciousness.

The exploration of this relationship between self and understanding not only affects our conception of knowledge, it also impacts our conception of self. Two examples point to the reframing of this conception. In exploring the nature of Being from a Buddhist perspective, Epstein noted that "when I learned to restrain my own patterns of reactivity, my identity had a chance to reveal itself, not as a fixed entity, but as a flow and potential."[30] Bohm's inquiry into the nature of thought led him to a similar conclusion: "the point is to have the notion of a *creative* being, rather than of an *identified* being."[31] Thus our self-concept can be framed, not as the fixed notion that comes with identification, but as this more creative, unfolding notion of Being.

In the classroom, I found using dialogue helpful in unpacking the layers of assumptions surrounding the students' self-identity or self-concept and initiating this process of reframing. Of course, there are limits to what can be accomplished in just one semester, so my goal was to instill a sense of trajectory and a reflex or method students could use as a response to new life experiences. Integral Theory describes transformation of the self-concept in terms of vertical growth through stages. Kegan's model of an evolving self describes this as the self as subject, in which we are embedded, becoming a self as object that we can observe and have a relationship with.[32] Thus the process of reframing the self-concept can be described as self-transcendence. Carey describes self-transcendence as a "fundamental option," a core choice that we can make and that (as opposed to self-embeddedness) defines how we approach life.[33] Exposing students to the idea that they can continue to develop beyond what they may have conceived as being "grown up," and that there is a degree of choice and directionality available to guide this growth, was another form of planting seeds.

Quality of Presence in the Teacher
The final area of skillful means I focused on is how a teacher can be present in the classroom in a way that models and facilitates a quality of Being commensurate with the ideas already presented. I have found the work of Parker Palmer to be influential and inspiring in this regard.[34] His fundamental premise is that we teach who we are. He states, "As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together."[35] This makes explicit the hidden curriculum of every classroom: the ways in which the teacher implicitly shapes the space in which learning is possible.

This quality of presence is related to teaching in at least three fundamental ways. First, the developmental capacities of the teacher can enhance or limit the kind, quality, and level of understanding available to give attention to or recognize in the classroom. In exploring hermeneutics, Gadamer was cited saying that "all understanding is ultimately self-understanding," meaning the postmodern conception of interpretation is related to the development of the self rather than just the intellect. In an integral approach to education, it seems imperative to me that sufficient attention be given to this element, although it can be a contentious issue to assess. Second, it is also apparent that the quality of perception, understanding, or presence of the teacher will need to be of sufficient capacity to be adequate to the nature of the subject being inquired into. Finally, the level of development of the teacher needs to be adequate to meet the level of development of the students.[36]

Palmer also brings the subject of integrity to the foreground in education, speaking of truth as "troth"—a living pledge. "We find truth by pledging our troth, and knowing becomes a reunion of separated beings whose primary bond is not of logic but of love."[37] He also states that "we must remember that truth seeks us as well."[38] In relation to how truth seeks us, Palmer says that "a self and a world that do not allow themselves to be known by love have a distorted self-image."[39] Being known by love is something that is not simply rational or intellectual. Neither is it an emotional kind of love but an unconditional, divine Love. Having a presence grounded in this Love can be seen as essential for a teacher wishing to facilitate a transformation of consciousness. The degree to which they will manifest this Love, and the particular forms that it will take, will be as unique as each person.

Palmer also says that to teach is to "create a space where the obedience to truth can be practiced."[40] Creating space is also a subject Harrison Owen explores.[41] Owen talks about the quality of Being or presence necessary for facilitation in organizations and leadership contexts. When asked about the effect of his presence during facilitation, Owen replied that it had more to do with witnessing than anything else.[42] This points to the importance of the capacity of the teacher to "manage their state" and allow this witnessing consciousness to be present in the classroom.[43]

This quality of witnessing consciousness can be contrasted with the self-image created by thought. In my view, the witnessing consciousness operates more as the creative, unfolding notion of Being pointed to by Epstein and Bohm, while the self-image is the more static or identified notion of Being.[44] Our attachment to the latter causes suffering and resistance to the flow of Spirit.[45] Quoting Gandhi, Chatterjee describes how one can lessen this resistance and suffering by getting our "small self," or our identified self-image, out of the way to allow the higher Self, Witness, or Spirit to flow through. "There comes a time when an individual becomes irresistible and his action becomes all pervasive in its effect. This comes when he reduces himself to zero."[46] This reduction of the egoic self-image to "zero" allows a teacher to transcend their personal capacities and limitations and open themselves up to acting in service of a higher consciousness.

These issues around the quality of Beingness and presence of the teacher motivated me to attend to my own state in the classroom. There were many struggles within myself and with the students that illuminated the gap between what I knew intellectually about teaching and how I was actually present in the classroom. In the first year of teaching this class, my intentions were good, but my method of teaching did not match them. When the rubber hit the road, older, more deeply programmed reflexes kicked in, and I reverted to more conventional stances in the classroom. I presented controversial, challenging material, and when my students reacted with criticisms and rebuttals, I simply met them head on, implying that this was the truth, so why didn't they just get it? This authoritarian approach talked dialogue but did not walk it. Five years of experimenting with new methods of teaching allowed me to gradually let go of old habits and pedagogical reflexes that were deeply embedded from past experience, and gradually I began to trust in a higher consciousness flowing through me, opening up the space for students.

Application

The question of skillful means in the classroom was indeed a living inquiry for me, and the students taught me well. By the fourth year I was better able to relax and trust that the appropriate truth would emerge for students over time, and that this truth would be grounded in their lived experience. As I gained experience and confidence in this more integral way of teaching, I became interested in assessing the impact this was having on students. I was also taking a quantitative research methods course in my doctoral program and was required to do a quantitative research project. In this section, I will report on the research that I engaged in to see

what, if any, impact the class was having on students. But first, some background on the nature of the class itself.

Description of the Class
The class was required as part of being in the honors program at Gonzaga and was for those students only. There were usually twenty or so freshmen in the class. In addition, there were four students from the sophomore, junior, and senior honors classes who acted as assistants, helping me provide orientation to the freshmen, facilitate small groups, and look after parts of the service learning component of the class.

The classroom itself had once been the university theater. It was large, with high ceilings, stained glass windows, rows of old wooden seats, a small stage with a large screen for projecting video, and an open floor space between the rows of chairs and stage with tables and chairs. The tables were set to the side of the room and there was just enough room to allow everyone to sit in one complete circle.

The classes were two hours long. I would always have some pop music playing as students came in, choosing songs that reflected a theme that we were exploring in class. We would open the class with announcements related to honors program activities and then go around and do a brief check-in. Then I would generally make some remarks to set the tone and topic for the class and get the students questioning and discussing things. Sometimes we would watch a piece of video from someone we were studying or do some kind of experiential exercise. Then I would break them up into random groups of five or six for small group conversation, and they would disperse to corners of the room or other parts of the building. They would have a guiding question for their discussion drawn from the readings or video presentation and an upper class student to facilitate. Afterwards, we would gather in the circle and share what was learned. At some point in the conversation, I would often find it appropriate to say a few words for maybe ten minutes. This might be described as a "teachable moment" that would arise during the process of inquiry into the topic. I would be watchful for a "ripeness," where the students had shared or explored the limits of their own understanding of the topic, and that my offering would help situate things and open up a new set of questions.

In addition to the in-class activities, students submitted a two- or three-page reflection paper every other week. These were to give them a space to show how they were wrestling with the topics we were exploring, how they were doing with the methods we were practicing in the classroom, and how it related to their everyday experience. During the other weeks, they would post to an electronic blackboard, sharing thoughts with classmates and getting into discussions to prepare them for the class. Also, as noted above, the class had a service learning component, where students had to go out into the community and participate in some form of community service. Later in the semester, these experiences were brought into the classroom to see how the topics being explored were experienced in those settings.[47]

Throughout all of this there was a fluidity, experimentation, and conscious attempt to meet the authentic needs of the students as they began to feel comfortable to show up and be themselves rather than trying to fit some conventional image they had of how to be in a classroom. It usually took up to half the semester for them to relax and realize that they could trust the process, and that genuine "not-knowing" was better than figuring out the "right" answers. This would lead to a deepening of the collective engagement in class and produced some truly wonderful educational moments.

The results of all of this activity and application of theory were evaluated during the fourth year by way of first-, second-, and third-person research methods. First-person research involved student reflections on their experience in class. I have included excerpts from these reflections in order to give a flavor of the students' experience. For second-person research, I had observers

present in the class, and we engaged in dialogue after each session. (I will draw on some of the insights that emerged from these conversations as further means of illustrating my application of Integral Education.) Finally, I engaged in third-person research by using an empirical measure, the state/trait anxiety score, and I will provide a brief summary of the results of these empirical evaluations.

First-Person Research
The introduction to this article included a quote from a student about her experience related to the class. During the first of several guided meditations we did in class, she experienced an altered state of awareness. She expressed frustration after subsequent meditations at not being able to access the same experience. Her sudden revelation described above occurred later in the semester, and this new state of awareness managed to stay with her intensely for a few hours and wore off gradually over a week or so. Talking to her a year later, it appeared that this experience had left a lasting impression on how she experienced life.

Another student described a similar altered state experience. In one of his reflection papers, he described growing up in a very Catholic family and how he eventually began to doubt the simple stories of religion that he believed as a child. He even began skipping mass for the first time in his life. His frustration with religion had led him to ignore it entirely for a while. After describing this, he then wrote:

> This class seriously put me back on track. . . I can't say precisely what it was that got to me, but I was fascinated with what I read. I began to look at the world in a whole different way. . . . I have always believed in God, and I began to see God as our consciousness. . . . I can't even explain everything that I began to think about consciousness, but am definitely interested in it now, and want to learn more. Last week I went to mass again. . . . My head was filled with all of my doubts of our religion, and new insights about consciousness. . . . The whole time I was trying to piece everything together, and suddenly I felt like I was truly aware of everything. I can't even explain the feeling, but it was one of the best feelings to have ever experienced. I left that mass feeling the best I had felt in weeks. Everything suddenly seemed clear to me. This whole week I have been in a better mood, and feel as though there's something spiritual or mystical about life. . . . I can't explain a lot of things right now, because there is so much going through my head. I do know that I'm very interested in consciousness right now, and finding my own consciousness. More than ever I feel that there is something more to life. I just don't know exactly what that is right now.

One student described a change in behavior that had an impact on his experience in other classes. He titled his last paper of the semester "I Didn't See This One Coming," in reference to coming to class for the beginning of the semester with no expectations.

> One thing is for sure is that [the class] has changed my point of view on many topics relevant to my everyday life, and has put into perspective ideas that before I never gave more [of] a second thought to. If your goal was to make me learn more about myself through what I learn from my classmates and notable thinkers across the world, then be proud, for you have succeeded. . . . First off, I have decided to stop wearing a watch, at least when it is not necessary to. This was a conclusion I came to after all these weeks of talking about living in the moment, and not allowing the past and future to concern me, or at least control my actions. Since I no longer have a watch on during classes, I do not sit and stare at my watch and count the seconds until class is over, giving grief to myself and causing me to not pay attention in class. I am much more relaxed during class, focusing on the task at hand, and I feel I am taking more out of each class I am in. Also, when

the teacher says it is time to leave, I no longer think to myself, "finally," but instead I think about how quick that class was, and what a pleasant surprise it is that the class is over already. . . .

Another student reflected on the impact Anthony DeMello's ideas were having on her:

He says that we "make a choice" to get angry and that "you" make yourself angry. Others only make choices as well, and we choose to let it affect us. It is a really hard thing for most people to accept and especially to integrate into their own life experience. I know I couldn't ever do it until this semester really, and even now I can do it about one time out of a thousand. When I can practice this extremely valuable tool it is immensely helpful.[48]

She also touched on the issue of integrity and truth as "troth" by commenting that:

I have found such faith in the fact that I can "exist" on my own, without anyone else! It sounds stupid to say it now on paper, but it has really made a huge difference in the way I live and my level of happiness. This semester's colloquium and our discussions of consciousness have been so good for me. I never really thought at all or was even "conscious" of my consciousness, let alone a collective consciousness, as Bohm proposes. Colloquium, even though I didn't realize it at first, has been for me like John Scherer's leadership program—a reflection on myself and what I really believe and how I can apply that to every aspect of my life.[49] I have been living in this separated quasi-darkness almost, without consciously integrating my true values and inner being into my outer life and actions. . . . Lately, in the seemingly most important instances, I have been able to see the real "I"—who I really am, without anything changing me—and it is total freedom.

Other students described their experience in more general terms. Not everyone had altered state experiences. For some, the impact of the class was felt in more general ways that pertained to changes in perception about themselves and life. In describing how the variety of readings and discussions impacted him, one student said, "Rather than causing me to accept everything [that was presented in class], it has helped me to find what it is I believe for myself."

Another wrote:

Prior to even entering the classroom doors of Ad 101 for our first Thursday night session, many ideas and rumors about the class were gestating in my head.[50] Dripping from this saturation was a fear of the class. . . . Blatantly oblivious to my situation, I could not have fathomed the way freshman colloquium would change my thinking.

A student who liked to clown around and use humor in class wrote:

I was thinking the other night about this Colloquium class as a whole. I think that my attitude coming into it was something like this, "Hey, this is some weird class that I have to take. I don't have to enjoy it, but I can try to get something out of it. I'll just try to make it as tolerable as possible and ignore whatever comes along that I don't really agree with." It is easy for me to see now that I was ignorant in a lot of respects. It is hard for me to admit that this class has been one of the best things for me since sliced bread.

In talking about some of the controversial material and how he had thought "it was inherently wrong because it contradicted what I knew," one student said, "I was able to find that I believe parts of it and find others far-fetched and a little sketchy. It was just nice to take it apart without judging it right away." He closed with:

> I feel more open to learning new ideas. I know that I won't go into Colloquium this week excited to get into a big discussion about consciousness or quantum physics or anything, but I am expecting to grow somehow. I guess that's how it always is though. What challenges you forces you to grow somehow. A band called Skillet says in one of their songs, "Our disillusionment is how we grow." More than any other class I've had in a long time, Colloquium has helped my disillusionment. It has helped me to reevaluate that which I believe and has given me new techniques for growth in my spiritual life.

On the electronic blackboard used in class, a student wrote:

> As to the actual class itself, I can say this—though I may not have agreed with much that was presented, I did take away from it all a thirst for knowledge that I hadn't previously possessed. The ideas of quantum physics and Buddhism and holographic universes all sparked within me this desire to explore everything around me. To call it all into question.

These reflections provide descriptions of a variety of ways in which students experienced changes in consciousness. Some of these changes were brought about through altered state experiences that opened them up to higher possibilities. Some reflected ways that students used the ideas presented to re-frame their current level of development and try out new behaviors. Many expressed a new openness to a greater world beyond their present experience.

Second-Person Research
This section includes three samples from after-class dialogues. A colleague (one familiar with transformative education) and myself spent time after each class engaging in dialogue aimed at understanding how the theoretical inquiries behind my approach translated into action. I will present a few brief excerpts from those dialogues to illustrate the kind of second-person research that formed part of the inquiry into my application of an integrally informed pedagogy.

In examining how the introductions on the first night of class went (I had students go through a process in pairs to prepare to introduce themselves without using to the common points of reference such as where they were from, their major, or other such items), I noted:

> Jonathan: So they are carrying in their subjective space whatever anxiety and expectations they have, and they had a chance to get that off their chest and out of the way, which then seemed to create a space within them for something to come out more easily than they might have if they were still holding onto all these anxieties, expectations, preconceptions. . . . And it just occurs to me that maybe that's one of the ways this space gets created: when people acknowledge what's present for them in their awareness, and they have a chance to debrief and let it go, then there is some space for something else to come out. Otherwise, it seems that everything is being filtered through that.

> Michael: I get a feeling, because I have experienced it sometimes with my own cohort, that when there's an opportunity and a safety and sort of permission to own your fear and publicly admit, "Hey, I'm just sitting here trying to look good," when that's out, then there is this simple, radical freedom that comes after that. And then they can comfortably say what's on their minds.[51]

This process of creating space through giving voice to what is present on the surface of attention, in a way that allows it to be let go of, is a key aspect of a dialogical method of teaching. For a more authentic quality of presence to reveal itself, these surface elements normally holding attention need to be suspended. The freedom alluded to comes with letting go of identifying with those surface elements, which encourages the group to evolve to the next stage of dialogue.

One evening we watched the movie *Mindwalk*, based on Fritjof Capra's book *The Turning Point*.[52] It explores the shift from the Enlightenment view of reality and classical Newtonian physics to the postmodern implications of relativity, quantum theory, and systems approaches to reality. I show it to students in order to expose them to new ways of looking at the world and how paradigms change over time. Talking after class, my colleague and I observed a number of things related to how the students were processing the material and how this dialogical approach to that process manifested:

> Michael: During the break, I observed a lot of informal conversation that was on topic. I wonder, because these are really bright kids who are accustomed to having the answers, and this is a setting and a subject in which they don't have the answer, are they reticent to speak out and confirm that they don't have the answers? Especially in front of their peers?

> Jonathan: They are in somewhat of an uncomfortable place.

> Michael: Maybe they are in a paradoxical place.

> Jonathan: So _____, for instance, is saying, "This is what I know, and I read the class material and feel like it goes against my beliefs." So he knows where he stands in relationship to the content.

> Michael: He's in control of the content.

> Jonathan: He's distanced himself, so he's categorized it in relation to his own values and belief system, or his understanding of those things, so that it's safe.

> Michael: In a sense, he's objectified the knowledge and when it's objectified, he's not educationally at risk of being wrong, because he's just reporting from a remove.

> Jonathan: I got the impression from the students that the movie made sense, even though they recognized that they understood only a small fraction of it. This is new to them. It was expanding their horizons in a way that felt okay. It didn't clash with their belief systems, or perhaps they were able to hold their belief system in abeyance, to suspend it and be open-minded.

> Michael: And I think that the proof of that is in their casual conversations, where they can joke about it, and they can talk animatedly about it, but they are not going on academic record as making a statement of acceptance or non-acceptance. Maybe they are checking with each other for mutual confirmation.

> Jonathan: One of the things I noticed when hearing some of their reactions and how they struggled with the film was that they know almost nothing about the way I see these things. I haven't said if I agree or disagree, and I realize I am holding back so they can struggle with it, so that there is no conventional classroom etiquette where the lifeline is extended, and by the end of the class the

teacher brings closure and says, "Here is what I think about it," or what the answer is.

Michael: What you just said reminds me of an old adage in education: that one of the most difficult but important things is the wait time. You ask a question or present something that requires a response, and then wait. In a sense, I feel that's what you are doing. I know how uncomfortable that can be for the instructor and especially for the students. Everyone is sitting there, and no one is saying anything, yet they are all thinking, "Somebody say something," you know, just to break the tension. But I think that as long as it feels safe and dynamic, and it doesn't feel like nothing is happening and people are checking out, and if there is a tension in there, then it adds to the process because it does force them back on themselves.[53]

A number of relevant issues arose during this dialogue. The students' relationship to knowledge, and their objectification of it in order to feel safe from the demands it may make on them, appears as a standard response that fits with more traditional approaches to education. Their ability to be open to new ideas and suspend assumptions was noted. Another way in which space was created is by allowing students to struggle with "not-knowing," both what "the answer" might be or even what I as the teacher think about the subject. The wait time is often held over a number of class periods, allowing the students to move deeper into their own learning rather than relying on the teacher's authority and expertise.

One evening, a guest sat it on the class and offered this insight during the dialogue:

Michael: I thought, "Boy, if I were Jonathan, I would really be uncomfortable right now with the amount of silence I'm getting out of these kids." But then I began looking at it in another way and thinking about _____, and what came to mind was that I chose to see it as uncomfortable. Now I think it was more creating a space and a real effective use of silence. Silence is very educative, and it just really came to my notice tonight.

Eleanor: I found the silence absolutely natural, very comfortable. I have silence in my classes, too, when they come out of their negative situation. Myself, I didn't want to say anything and. . .I felt that all of us were comfortable in that circle, and we wouldn't have been so comfortable if you, Jonathan, hadn't been comfortable yourself.

Michael: I had that sense, too.[54]

Here, the element of silence emerges as an aspect of holding the space for the class process. These comments also indicate that the teacher needs to be comfortable with themselves in order for the class to be okay with silence and to learn from what the moment offers. This reflects the need for adequate presence in the teacher in order to hold open the possibility for silence and other spaces that may be uncomfortable or run counter to deeply held cultural norms.

These brief excerpts from the series of after-class dialogues highlight some of the challenges in applying an integrally informed approach to teaching. They also reflect my ongoing learning about how to approach education in a more integral manner.

Third-Person Research
As I mentioned earlier, during the time I was teaching this class, I was also taking a quantitative research methodologies course for my Ph.D. We were required to do a project involving gathering data and statistical analyses. I chose to use Spielberger's state/trait anxiety test. It was

developed from research done primarily during the 1960s and '70s that helped to conceptually clarify anxiety as a theoretical construct. Spielberger describes anxiety as an emotional state "characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry, and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system . . . [that] exists at a given moment in time and at a particular level of intensity."[55] In contrast to the transitory nature of this kind of emotional state, "personality traits can be conceptualized as relatively enduring differences among people in specifiable tendencies to perceive the world in a certain way and in dispositions to react or behave in a specified manner with predictable regularity."[56] Thus the state/trait anxiety test can assess both the current state of a person in relation to their degree of anxiety and their personality trait in this regard. It has been used extensively in educational settings and is a well-normed and researched measure.

While the state score is clearly able to change due to variables in the environment, the trait score is purported by Spielberger to be stable and not subject to significant change over time. My hypothesis for this research was that the intervention of students participating in this class could have a statistically significant impact on student's trait scores. The implication is that lowering their tendency towards experiencing anxiety in response to life situations would have a positive impact. Spielberger notes that "it is important to determine the extent to which emotional problems contribute to academic difficulties in students."[57] The greater degree of openness to new ideas expressed by students in the section on first-person research, especially ones that challenged existing beliefs, were qualitative signs of this kind of reduction in anxiety. This third-person research would see if the change reported by students was supported by empirical data.

There were 26 students in this class. For a control group, I also had a freshman psychology class of 32 students participate in the study. These two groups were my independent variables. The dependent variables were the state and trait scores. The tests were administered at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of it. For the purposes of my statistics class, I performed a large number of statistical analyses on the data. For this article, I will focus on the most relevant findings.

I performed a series of T tests (tests designed to calculate statistical differences in group scores) on the differences between the pre-semester and end of the semester state and trait scores for both the experimental and control groups.[58] When administering the test to the experimental group at the end of the semester, I had them do the trait score section first, and then I took them through a deep relaxation/guided meditation exercise prior to taking the state score section of the test. This was to see what impact this exercise would have on their current state of anxiety. The results of these tests are summarized in table 1.

Test	Group	Mean (Pre-semester)	Mean (End of semester)	Difference	T	Significance
State	Control	38.1563	37.9063	0.2500	0.100	.921
State	Experimental	37.1912	30.7308	6.4615	3.482	.002
Trait	Control	38.9688	38.1875	0.7813	0.446	.658
Trait	Experimental	38.2308	36.1154	2.1154	1.906	.068

Table 1. Statistical Results From Test Scores[59]

It is apparent from the data that the relaxation/meditation exercise that the experimental group underwent just prior to taking the post test for the state score had a very significant effect on the test scores. The more important finding involved the significance of the change in trait scores for the experimental group. While less pronounced than the dramatic but expected change in state scores, this result indicated a high level of correlation between the experimental intervention of the class and the reduction in the long-term personality trait of anxiety.

Conclusion

"It just was, and I was simply being." This description of a student's experience during the semester of the freshman honors colloquium class I taught reflected a change in her state of consciousness. Providing students with experiences of non-ordinary states of consciousness, helping them make numerous small transformations, and supplying a conceptual framework for them to hang these experiences on led to changes in consciousness evidenced in the research reports. The first-person reports from students provided a qualitative measure of the impact of my application of an integrally informed pedagogy. These self-reports were matched by the comments of an observer and further triangulated through empirical research.

Teaching the freshman honors colloquium for five years was an incredibly rich and rewarding experience. My life long interest in developing the ability to raise consciousness was given an opportunity to experiment with applying an integrally informed pedagogy as a means of meeting this goal. Along the way, I discovered a great deal about what it takes to have skillful means in manifesting an integral approach to education. The questions that I began with have had some measure of answers and await another round of experimentation in the classroom. For now, I see Integral Education as a container for ideas to be tried out, further experimentation, and a growing community of practice to build consensus on its essential characteristics and elements. I look forward to future opportunities to engage in this inquiry.

Notes

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[1] By "raising awareness in students about themselves," I am referring to activities that included: exposing them to various readings that examined how the mind functions, the influence of emotions and beliefs on behavior, and ego development; inviting them to participate in exercises and assignments designed to elicit self-reflection; and linking service learning activities to course content. By "new ideas about the nature of reality," I am referring to ideas in diverse fields such as developmental psychology, certain interpretations of quantum physics, morphogenetic field theory, education, leadership, and consciousness studies that challenge "traditional" or "modern" perspectives on these subjects. In the last three years of the course, these included readings from Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 1996 and *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*, 2000. With these pedagogical strategies, I aimed to generate a new conceptual awareness of self and the world and enable students to internalize these concepts to whatever degree possible in order to enhance their capacity for interpreting their experience in more successful ways.

[2] For a more comprehensive discussion of Integral Education and Integral Pedagogy, see Feldman, "An example of integral pedagogy," this issue, and Esbjörn-Hargens, "Integral teacher, integral students, integral classroom: Applying integral theory to graduate education," this issue.

[3] See Wilber, "An integral approach to consciousness studies," 1997b

[4] See Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 1996; *One taste: The journals of Ken Wilber*, 1999; *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*, 2000.

[5] The distinctions involved in this difference of views on wholeness are beyond the scope of this article. However, for readers interested in Wilber's critique of Bohm's work, see Wilber, *Eye to eye: The quest for the new paradigm*, 1983, chaps. 5 & 6, and *The eye of spirit: An integral vision for a world gone slightly mad*, 1997a, chap. 9.

[6] See Bohm, *Thought as a system*, 1992

[7] In examining the relationship between Bohm's view of wholeness and the practice of dialogue, there are a number of points to consider. Bohm described thought as inherently limited and unable to grasp the wholeness or undivided nature of reality. (This "undivided wholeness" as the nature of reality could correspond with causal or nondual states of awareness). He asserts that there is a wholeness of thought that includes the mind, emotions and body. (These could correspond with the subtle and gross states of awareness). To Bohm, thought functions by measuring aspects of reality to create images, drawing lines to be able to comprehend a manageable amount of reality. This process can be more or less coherent in its functioning and, in general, allows us to function quite well in the world.

In this way Bohm saw thought reducing reality (or nondual/causal wholeness) to its own images. (This could correspond with the movement from nondual or causal into the subtle and gross realms). It then asserts that these images are all of reality, that it is perceiving "reality out there in the world," rather than recognizing that it is perceiving the images it has created. (These images are not limited to the mind but can also manifest in emotions or the body). The lack of proprioceptive awareness of this movement of thought going from creating images to asserting direct and coherent perception is the fundamental incoherence of thought in Bohm's view. Thought's identification with both the images and the process of creating them produces a set of defensive reflexes that guard the images from being challenged, building an inertia that resists change. (I would propose that it is awareness's attention being "captured" within thought that allows this identification to occur.) Learning to work skillfully at unpacking these reflexes becomes crucial to supporting students in changing their perceptions.

Bohm tried to counter this inertia of thought by using dialogue to slow down and observe the process of thought constructing perceptions. He talks about how we have proprioception, or an immediacy of awareness of the movement of our physical body, yet seem to lack this awareness with thought. By slowing thought down and illuminating deeper layers of the constructed images of the world and self, Bohm saw that thought can become more coherent, or more in line with the wholeness of reality. This process of illuminating the images of thought is in essence one means of facilitating a subject/object transformation. Applying this in the classroom became a means of opening students to new perceptions of self and the world.

[8] Bohm, Factor & Garrett, "Dialogue: A proposal," 1991

[9] Bohm, Factor & Garrett, "Dialogue: A proposal," 1991, p. 1

[10] In this class the primary focus was on self-identity and related lines of development, including the emotional and interpersonal lines. Students were encouraged to reflect on experiences involving relationships with friends and see how patterns of behavior manifested reflexes of thought.

[11] I also hoped to induce some measure of lasting change over the course of a semester, and the section of this article focusing on the research I did during the fourth year of this class describes one way in which I was able to assess the results of this intention.

[12] Moustakas, *Heuristic research: Design, methodology and applications*, 1990 and Gendlin, *Focusing*, 1981

[13] Bohm, Factor & Garrett, "Dialogue: A proposal," 1991, p. 3

[14] See Isaacs, *Dialogue and the art of thinking together: A pioneering approach to communicating in business and in life*, 1999; Scharmer, "Presencing: Learning from the future as it emerges; On the tacit dimension of leading revolutionary change," 2000; and Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges*, 2007.

[15] This movement was not linear but would occur as the next state would open up and provide moments of breakthrough followed by regression back to the perceived safety of the "known" previous state. Over time, the students would become more familiar and comfortable with these new states of consciousness and increase their capacity to move more quickly into the later state-stages of dialogue.

[16] Gebser, *The ever-present origin*, 1949/1985, p. 267

[17] It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe these types of spiritual or transpersonal perception. My early attempts at understanding the differences between the common use of reason and the types of perception I was exposed to through my spiritual practice led to lumping everything beyond rationality as being transpersonal. (I seemed to have avoided the worst of the pre/trans fallacy.)

[18] Capra, *The turning point: Science, society, and the rising culture*, 1982; Capra & Steindl-Rast, *Belonging to the universe*, 1992; Palmer, *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*, 1993

[19] Cassirer, *The philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 1951

[20] Scheurich, *Research method in the postmodern*, 1997, p. 69

[21] Plato, *The meno*, Trans, 1956

[22] Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 1969, p. 23

[23] Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 1969, p. 22

[24] Wilber, *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*, 2000, p. 160

[25] Gadamer, *Truth and method*, 1993, p. 163

[26] Gadamer, *Truth and method*, 1993, p. 260

[27] Quoted in Palmer, *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*, 1993, p. 51

[28] Braud & Anderson, *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience*, 1998, p. 22

[29] Osborne, "Some similarities and differences among phenomenological and other methods of psychological qualitative research," 1993, p. 171

[30] Epstein, *Going on being: Buddhism and the way of change*, 2001, p. 213

[31] Bohm, *Thought as a system*, 1992, p. 169

[32] Kegan, *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*, 1994

[33] Carey, 1992, p. 217. This perception of seeing self-transcendence as a choice implies a number of assumptions that are not made explicit in Carey's work. From the perspective of Integral Theory, self-transcendence relates to moving vertically up through specific levels or stages of consciousness in a variety of lines. There is an aspect of "choice" as free will to choose self-transcendence, and then it is a process dependent upon numerous factors. However, I also interpret this "choice" to be occurring within the soul prior to incarnating (see Hillman (1997) *The Soul's Code* and Newton's (2000) *Destiny of Souls*). This choice can also be seen in our everyday lives as we choose how to respond to life events. The direction of these choices can be oriented over time along a trajectory that could be described as tending toward either self-embeddedness or self-transcendence.

[34] Palmer, *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*, 1998 and *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*, 1993

[35] Palmer, *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*, 1998, p. 2

[36] In listening to students describe various classroom experiences, it seemed evident that many of their complaints about the education they were receiving were based on these issues. Many of the students clearly wanted to engage the subject matter with a level of discourse that their teachers were unable to facilitate, leading to immense frustration and lowered expectations.

[37] Palmer, *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*, 1993, p. 32

[38] Palmer, *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*, 1993, p. 72

[39] Palmer, *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*, 1993, p. 12

[40] Palmer, *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*, 1993, p. 69

[41] See Owen, *The power of spirit. How organizations transform*, 2000

[42] Owen, personal communication. The Witness is described by Wilber as a fundamental aspect of awareness that is constantly present but often masked by attention being drawn into the creations of thought. One can, however, consciously practice witnessing the objects in their awareness, and, over time, gain a certain freedom from those objects, which can support transformation to a higher stage of development.

[43] Dee Hock, founder and CEO Emeritus of VISA, says that managing one's state is actually 80-90% of the job requirement for managers and leaders (personal communication).

[44] See Epstein, *Going on being: Buddhism and the way of change*, 2001, and Bohm, *Thought as a system*, 1992. A distinction that is relevant here is referring to the self-image or ego as a functional self-system, or as a self contraction. The former is necessary while the latter is the connotation being referred to here.

[45] Owen, *The power of spirit. How organizations transform*, 2000

[46] Chatterjee, *Leading consciously: A pilgrimage toward self mastery*, 1998, p. 51

[47] It was fascinating to hear them apply aspects of Integral Theory they had been studying in these community contexts. The value of having this service learning component in the course was immense, as it gave many students their first meaningful insights into the impact of different developmental levels in people's lives.

[48] DeMello, *Awareness: The perils and opportunities of reality*, 1990

[49] One reading was a chapter from a book by local leadership development author John Scherer.

[50] AD 101 was the number for the classroom we met in.

[51] Personal communication, January 18, 2001

[52] Capra, *The turning point: Science, society, and the rising culture*, 1982

[53] Personal communication, February 1, 2001

[54] Personal communication, March 22, 2001

[55] Spielberger, *State-Trait Anxiety Inventory*, 1983, p. 4

[56] Spielberger, *State-Trait Anxiety Inventory*, 1983, p. 5

[57] Spielberger, *State-Trait Anxiety Inventory*, 1983, p. 42

[58] I was also able to calculate the differences for male and female populations within the two groups, although the smaller sample sizes did not support the same level of confidence in the findings. Females in the experimental group had a more significant change in score than the males. At the time, I hypothesized that this result may come from a greater degree of maturity or receptivity to the class in females.

[59] Norms for college students are 37.90 for the state score and 39.61 for the trait score. These scores indicate an average state score (other than the experimental group end of semester) and slightly lower than average for the trait score.

The score for significance refers to the statistical probability that the relationship is due to sampling error. 0.05 is a common measure of significance, indicating a 5% chance that the correlation between variables is due to error, or some factor other than the one being studied. In this case, the 0.921 and 0.658 scores for the control group indicate a very low level of significance for the changes in scores between the two tests. The 0.002 score for the state test with the experimental group indicates a 0.2% chance that the guided meditation exercise did not influence their change in score. The 0.068 score for the experimental group's trait scores indicates a reasonable level of significance, with only a 6.8% chance that the change in score was due to something other than the class.
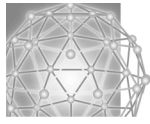
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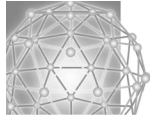
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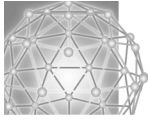
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