

Lines of Development (2nd in a 5-part series on Integral philosophy)

A service celebrated at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Grand Traverse on 16 December 2007
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HOMILY I

“integral life practice” How many of you have heard me, or another UU minister, preach about Ken Wilber and his integral vision? How many have gone to a store or the library and come home with a book by Ken Wilber? How many of you were satisfied with the book, when you put it down?

Especially in his earlier works, written 30 years ago, now, he was pretty thick. His more recent books, especially the newest, a little blue book, *The Integral Vision*, are more easily digestible. This is because he has learned to write better, and because his understanding of his own theories is better.

Wilber talks about creating “maps” to help us understand our world. All of us have a map in our head, of how we think the world works. Philosophers and theologians and cognitive behavioralists and many other people spend much of their time trying to create better maps for people to use. The more accurate, and appropriate to the terrain, our map is, the more likely we are to have success navigating our life. We don’t want maps that are too cluttered, nor do we want maps with big vacant spots, and we especially do not want maps that contain lies, or half-truths.

Wilber’s genius is in creating accurate, appropriate maps. This is partially because he was fortunate enough to be born just as the world opened up, and we had access to the wisdom and knowledge of all cultures and all times. It is also because of his orienting principle: that every human map ever used has at least some truth to it. By taking the best of all human knowledge, and teasing out the patterns that can be found there, he discovered that the best maps have five critical components. These five components are quadrants, lines, levels, states and types. We’ll have a quick overview of each component, before focusing more deeply on lines, later.

We spoke about “Quadrants” two months ago. That was the insight that there are both “interior” and “exterior” aspects, and “singular” and “plural” aspects, to virtually everything. In the meditation group that will start in January, for example, my individual, interior experience of meditation would be my feelings and thoughts, as they arise in me. An exterior view of my individual experience could be a measurement of my heart rate, or an electroencephalogram of my brain waves. “Interior” refers to my own, subjective, experience; and “exterior” refers to the objective, verifiable aspects. Similarly, an internal *collective* understanding might focus on the group dynamics as the people who meditate together feel closer and more friendly together. And an external collective approach could involve research exploring whether people in meditation groups live longer lives or earn less money than non-meditating people in control groups.

By recognizing that there are four aspects to everything we do or experience, we can use all of our resources and improve our lives. For example, in treating mental illness, we need to work in all four quadrants. Drugs or medications may help treat the symptoms, and stabilize brain chemistry; that is an exterior individual approach. An interior individual approach might include a spiritual practice and/or work with a psychologist. Interior collective approaches focus on how a culture understands mental illness; and the exterior collective viewpoint addresses nutrition, genetics and stresses such as poverty. No one approach is sufficient for every person; we need to consider all four quadrants to find the best approach for each individual.

We’ll address “Lines” in a few minutes.

The concept of “Levels” comes from the insight that we all develop through stages in our lives. As children, we may believe in magic at first; then we demand concrete answers. As we age, those answers may appear too rigid or prove inadequate in dealing with a complex world, so we learn to deal with ambiguity and shades of grey. No one level is “better” than the others; it all depends upon how well they help us function as humans. We’ll discuss levels in more detail in February.

“States” refer to states of consciousness, like awake, dreaming, deep sleep and peak experiences that provide feelings of oneness and joy.

Finally, “Types” reflect the reality that human experience can be categorized with different typologies. There is a continuum of male, female and intersexed beings; there are typologies such as the Myers-Briggs, which registers people as introvert and extravert; or the Enneagram, which details nine general personality types. Businesses often send their employees for training in such types, because people of different types really do experience the world differently. For a company to succeed, it must acknowledge and adapt to different personalities, in both its employees and its customers.

And for us to live up to our potential, as growing, evolving, living persons, our maps must embrace Quadrants, Lines, Levels, States and Types. So may we be.

FIRST READING Marvin Bell was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1937. He was Iowa's first Poet Laureate, and is now at Pacific University. This is his poem, *The Campus in Wartime*

Sweet corn sweetens the air by the gas station as the Torah students hurry by to Hillel House, the coatless short-skirted social butterflies totter toward happy-hour double-drink specials, the rabbi adjusts his tallis and the bartender lines up the pints, half-pints and pitchers. Three thousand of ours and thousands of theirs are too many body bags to bury in the mind, so while the gas of rotting bodies seeps up from the ramshackle coffins and folded flags, the young seek books or booze to soften the ache. This year's few stalks of corn are one small businessman's salute to the land. He may need to fuel the air with toxic waste to earn a living, but he has in mind the purity of original desire, which some call sin but the half-Hasids know as the life force, and the barflies toast. Let us study the future, for it shall be the cradle of the past, siring a blue abyss aflame in the lamp we call a sun.

SECOND READING Nikki Giovanni was the first poet to ever be awarded the Chicago Public Library Foundation's “Carl Sandburg Literary Award for Lifetime Achievement.” Born in Tennessee, in 1943, she is now a professor of English at Virginia Tech. Professor Giovanni is a sports fan, and she cheers on the Virginia Tech “Hokies” as they play other college teams—especially the Syracuse Orange. This is a letter she wrote to the Virginia Tech football coach, Frank Beamer:

Dear Frank:

Last year was the most thrilling time for Hokie fans! That 11-0 season just did our hearts proud. But, Frank, I had to ask myself: “How will 2000/2001 go?” I know what you're saying: You're saying “Hey, our guys can take anyone anywhere!” But, Frank—there is *Syracuse* at *their* place. I've cheered against Syracuse since they were so disgraceful in their treatment of Patrick Ewing. You remember that time. John Thompson had to take his team off the court. And finally, when Syracuse faced a forfeiture, the crowd settled down. Sure, I know that was basketball, but poor sportsmanship is, well, poor sportsmanship and I don't much cotton to that. So you are saying, “Why are you writing this letter?” Well, Frank, we seem to have a hard time when we go up to the northern Orange country. I am just a smidgen worried because this could, well, ruin a great season. I know, you are saying we have [lots of great players] who will do their job...” But, Frank, what if there is some sort of magic up there that they employ? What if there is some sort of juju? You know, like Boston had when teams played the Celtics? I know the Celtics are basketball but, Frank, that little green man would sit on the basketball rim and bat the other teams' balls away. Even the commentators would talk about it. Now, I know Syracuse is not Boston but it is a lot farther north than most of us go. There may be an Orange man or someone like that sitting on the uprights to swat our field goals off; or swing down and blind the refs to our touchdowns. Like the thing that happened to Tennessee last week against Florida. Somebody brought something into that contest to make the refs make that call. It pays, Frank, to be cautious.

So here's what I started thinking last year: We should help out. Sure we are all in the stands cheering but maybe it's time we Hokie women did a bit more. Frank, *I recruited a team for you*. Since the men have had so much trouble with Syracuse, we women are ready. I know, I know—You are saying: “Well, that's great but where will we find shoes that small?” Frank, we all mostly play golf so we have our own cleated shoes. A few of us also still wear high heels and those will dig in just fine. Not to worry; we are ready footwear-wise. So, some smarty, Jim or somebody, will say, “But, Frank, they will need helmets.” We thought of that, too. We all ride bikes or know folk who do. We have all, all twenty-two of us, gotten our bike helmets straightened out. So now I'm sure you're thinking: “Twenty-two?” But what about Special Teams? Hokie ball is Beamer Ball and Beamer Ball is Special Teams but Frank, we won't need it. The main special thing we will be doing is dyeing our hair blue. We are all middle age or actually in four cases

old women. We are dyeing our hair blue because no one can tackle a blue-haired old lady. I, as you might have guessed, have volunteered to play quarterback. I have been practicing...I have my appointment already to have my nails painted a nice soft pink just like my grandmother used to wear. I will be looking good, Frank; don't you worry about that. I wanted us all to have the same color nail polish but the other women pointed out that different colors will be more distracting and I think they are right. We will be going on the twentieth to have our manicures.

In case you are thinking there will be no one to run, that is not the case. The Volunteer Hokies, which is what we have been calling ourselves, since the Lady Hokies are basketball and since we were not officially recruited, are a lot of ages. Sure, I'm a bit past half past fifty but we have plenty of excellent women's studies people who believe in good health and, actually, a couple of exceptional English majors who can sit up all night writing an excellent paper get up in the morning grab a cup of coffee and come to class and make sense. Not many students can do that, so we are very proud of our ability to stay the course.

Here is my proposal: We can either go up to Syracuse with you or we can spring a Hokie surprise. If we spring the Hokie surprise, my team and I will gather at the airport. We will need only two [planes] in waiting. If, by halftime, you decide you can use our expertise, we will board the [planes] and we'll be up there and on the field by the end of third quarter. Plenty of time to turn things our way. If you don't need us, we'll be at the field to cheer you all when you get back. See? A win-win if ever there was one. OK. You are asking: "Why a Hokie surprise?" Because we figure Syracuse players most likely have mothers and grandmothers, too. We don't want to give them a chance to have their women-folk suited up to face us. Whereas the boys can't tackle blue-haired women, it would be nothing for other blue-haired women to huddle up and crowd the line and we don't want that because of the money we have spent on our hair and nails. I'm sure you understand that.

So, Frank, we just want you to know you are not alone. We will be ready to do whatever it takes to stand by our men. We are ship sharp and Hokie ready!

Your Number One Fan, *Nikki Giovanni*

HOMILY II

"lines of development" How many of you remember the perfume commercial that featured a woman singing, "I can bring home the bacon...fry it up in a pan...and never, never let you forget you're a man"? How many know the phrase, "Renaissance man," meaning someone who is intelligent, handsome, successful at sports and business, and assumedly many other things? How many of you tire yourselves out, trying to live up to those standards?

One of my mentors told me that ministry is composed of five general areas: preaching, pastoral care, teaching, social justice work and the business of church life, such as management and finance. She related that most ministers are really good at one of those things, maybe two; and they're competent at two or three of them; and virtually all of us struggle with at least one of them. We can work to compensate for the area or areas where we have difficulty, and/or we can work to further enhance our strengths, but if we try to achieve the same high level of accomplishment in all five areas, we will mostly just frustrate ourselves.

I submit that the same is true for all of us. The Integral Institute identifies over a dozen developmental lines that we humans grow and evolve in. Recognizing that these aren't strict lines, but more like spirals or streams, that we move up and down, and back and forth and through, we can separate human development into cognitive, moral, emotional, kinesthetic, spiritual, aesthetic, psychosexual, selfhood, values, needs, and interpersonal lines.

We may be advanced in some of these arenas, and lagging in others, but every one of us has a measurable competency in each of these lines.

This is probably not surprising to many of us—we know the stereotypes of the dumb jock, the creative but financially incompetent artist, the friends who always listen and help with our troubles, but cannot seem to figure out their own lives.

However, until Wilber put all this research together, most scientists were trying to collapse all these lines into a single theory. Piaget, Maslow, Fowler, Gilligan—all of these pioneers did important work, but they didn't yet know to incorporate the research of the others. Wilber's insight is that they simply will NOT collapse together. You cannot derive Maslow's hierarchy of needs from Piaget's work with childhood development. Fowler's work on spiritual growth complements, but does not predict, Gilligan's research into human morality. We humans do not develop along one set path, but along a dozen independent tracks.

One implication of this is that we need to work to help ourselves and our children grow along *all* these lines of development. It is not the case that if they just get smart enough, they will also become more moral (witness Nazi scientists, for example). We need broad cognitive education *and* training in moral virtue. And physical fitness, and art, and religion, etc. None of these aspects of human life can come from any other topic, and they are all important.

Furthermore, recent Integral research shows that cross-training can improve human development. Just as both running and rowing will strengthen a person faster than doing the same amount of work in only one of those exercises, doing some spiritual work and some physical work and some intellectual work helps us make better progress in all of those areas.

So Professor Giovanni's suggestion, in our second reading, that her middle-aged liberal arts colleagues be allowed to play football, actually makes a little sense. I think she wrote it to protest all the attention and money that the athletics department gets, as compared to the English department. And it would still improve her students' intellectual capacities if they played a little ball every week.

Conversely, allow me to tell you a story from a football player's perspective. Brian Holloway was an offensive lineman, and team captain, for the 1985 New England Patriots. His team went to the Super Bowl that year, but one of his most memorable moments came when he signed an autograph for a woman and her two boys. He recognized her as the teacher and astronaut, Christa McAuliffe, and once he gave her his autograph, he asked for hers in return. He writes, "I knew what we had just done as a team was a triumphant life moment... Yet, this accomplishment was eclipsed in my mind by a schoolteacher with a million-dollar smile and the courage, commitment and driving passion to inspire schoolchildren, teachers, national leaders, all of America and most of the world by living her dream... A few weeks later, I was in Hawaii for Pro Bowl Week. On Tuesday morning, January 29th, 1986, I was watching the run-up to the *Challenger* liftoff, remembering Christa McAuliffe's easy friendliness and marveling at her grit... and then, my God, no! Plumes of white smoke... I sat on the end of the bed, head in my hands, and cried. After a long time, I opened my briefcase, pulled out the piece of paper she had signed, taped it to the dresser mirror and left the room quietly. I walked down the beach... for hours. When I stopped I didn't know where I was. I only knew where Christa was. I looked across the Pacific Ocean and repeated the words she had written to me: 'To Brian, Reach for the Stars. I'll be there.'"

Professors envy sports stars; football players respect teachers; enough achievement along *any* of our developmental lines can be inspirational.

In our first reading, Marvin Bell wrote of young people seeking refuge from their thoughts of war and death through study or through music and dance. We can find comfort and relief along any of these developmental streams, as well. Whether we are "reaching for the stars," or trying to temporarily forget about them, life takes place across the full spectrum of the lines.

Just as a rich life will embrace all of our human developmental lines, so should church life acknowledge and address them. In the 18th century, much of New England was swept by religious fervor. Revivals were held and emotions were high, and many people were carried away by their experiences. Our religious ancestors disagreed with much of this emotionalism, and redoubled their efforts to make reason and intellect the cornerstones of their religious experience. By the middle of the 20th century, the pendulum had swung to the other end of the spectrum, and many of our spiritual great-grandparents were emphasizing reason to the utter exclusion of emotion. Nowadays, we are seeking a balance point, trying to honor both reason and passion as authentic ways of human expression. In other words, our church services are honoring *both* the cognitive and the emotional lines of development.

Of course, we also honor other lines, too. We used to have a softball team—that is a great way to acknowledge and include the kinesthetic line in our church life. If anybody wants to start organizing a softball team for next summer, I will happily support that effort.

Honoring the kinesthetic is also why we deliberately include some movement in every service. Whether it is hand gestures, or dancing, or simply standing up and sitting down a few times, the experience of moving our bodies around is a theologically important aspect of our Sunday services. Were we to come in, sit down, and not move until we left, we would be neglecting a vital part of our human experience.

When I worked as a Minister of Religious Education, there was a grid that our Unitarian Universalist Association provided. It had a number of topics across the top, like history, theology, social justice, and community-building and a number of “modes” across the side, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. The idea was to have one Adult Religious Education offering from each of those intersections every year, so that all of our human needs got met regularly. Now, if we really want to have that robust an adult RE program, we will have to make the Director of RE a full-time position. And, at least according to the goal of embracing all of our various lines of human development, we should have that as our long-term plan.

Whether or not we have a full-time DRE, or a church softball team, let us be mindful, in our personal lives and in our church life, of all the ways that we express and evolve our humanity.

So may we be.