

Introduction

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A work of art is never finished, only abandoned.

—Paul Valery

Do you ever feel like something is wrong? That's the feeling a lot of people share in psychotherapy sessions. For some it is a subtle unease like the "splinter in your mind" referred to by philosophers and movie characters like Morpheus in *The Matrix*. For others it is a sense of anxiety or despair that they numb with alcohol, consumerism, or *Sex and the City* reruns. For still others it is an inexplicable sense of guilt or embarrassment about being alive. As sages have instructed us for millennia, psychological pain does not have to cause suffering but let's face it—without a concerted effort to shift one's psychological state or stage of development—suffering happens.

Psychological pain can birth suffering so great that people turn to medication or hospital treatment. Others try self-medicating with everything from nicotine to heroin. Still others end their lives by their own hand. Of course, nobody comes to psychotherapy because everything feels right with their life. Even therapists can be plagued with a nagging sense that something is wrong. I certainly number myself among those who can't shake the suspicion that, where life is concerned, some mistake has been made. We engage in psychotherapy to explore this sense of something being "wrong." If there was a mistake made we want to know who made it and how to address it (as well as whether insurance will pay to fix it).

Most suffering arises from what we psychologically identify with and psychotherapy helps us make our identifications objects of awareness. What we identify as "I" can be found at the root of much suffering. Some of us define "I" in a way that makes demands on others ("I'm the boss here"). Others of us identify "I" in a way that is based on a transitory circumstance ("I'm the toughest or most beautiful one in the room"). Still others mistake temporary

pain for a sign that they aren't even worth existing ("I suck," "I'm a fat pig," "I'm a loser"). From the perspective of psychotherapy (and most spiritual practices), all of these are mistaken identities. They are more like stories that we tell ourselves—stories that may be hurtful or even lies. However you regard them (stories, lies, or both) the stories we tell ourselves evolve and psychotherapy may be thought of as someone sharing their story with a hope of rewriting the ending. If we use psychotherapy to change the stories we tell ourselves it can decrease our suffering.

There are three ways we explore the self in this book that are related to how we identify what is "I." First there is what you call "I" at any stage of your development (the topic of Chapter 3). This "I" is what is differentiated from the rest of the world; what for all intents and purposes feels like a "real self" at any particular stage ("I am this, not that; I am married, not single"). Second, there is a possibility at every stage that you may disown a part of yourself leaving a false or at least incomplete "I." This disowned part of self that is related to what we call "shadow" in Chapter 3 is frequently made up of aspects of ourselves that we pretend are either not there or belong to someone else because they are related to our weaknesses ("because I am married I never get attracted to people other than my spouse"). Finally, there is something that is the ground of the awareness that allows any identification of "I" to take place and in Chapter 8 we discuss that as the true self (who is it who is aware of a self that identifies as married?).

Our psychological experiences; real selves, disowned selves, maybe a true self are artistically crafted in the larger context of an ever-evolving "work in progress" called life. If life is a work in progress perhaps mistakes (suffering, false selves) are part of a design or a part of evolution. But whose design; whose evolution? Some clients feel there is an intelligent design to the universe, whereas others will only go as far as an intentional design. Whether or not the design is *well* intentioned, mean as hell, or indifferent is another issue that may relate to psychological pain.¹ Psychotherapy is one way we explore the universe, our place in it, and increase our awareness about what is really going on. In the best of all situations, psychotherapy can shift your focus from what seems wrong to what is going on and there a richer life begins for those willing to take the journey.

If there is such a thing as spirituality,² where psychotherapy ends and spiritual realization begins is unclear. One idea we explore in Chapter 8 is that if one can and does transcend (and include) their sense of "I" to identify with the awareness that the sense of "I" arises in, is working with that awareness really psychotherapy? One view is that psychotherapy ends and a deepened spiritual practice begins at the point where you are participating fully in the joys and pains of life without being attached to either. Knowing what you want, feeling a purpose in life, becoming the author (rather than recipient) of your

rules for life—these can all be results of psychotherapy that may even lead to spiritual growth. This is a book about a new approach to therapy called Integral Psychotherapy. Integral Psychotherapy is an integrative framework for exploring these questions and understanding how to unlock the richness of your life using Ken Wilber's Integral Model.

This book was initially aimed at the layperson but, as the writing progressed, David and I realized that we couldn't write to a layperson without also addressing psychotherapists. Because there is no introductory text on Integral Psychotherapy proper, my hope is this book will fill that need while also being accessible to the interested layperson. As far as nontherapist readers, it is important to note that psychotherapy is ideally done in person with a trained therapist who can meet you face to face. Despite the proliferation of online psychotherapy, there is still much to be said for an embodied presence with the client that we can never capture beyond a physical distance of more than 10 feet. For the 21st-century client, Integral Psychotherapy offers a broader deeper map of change processes available. That said, many of Integral Psychotherapy's features can be understood and worked with from the printed page for reflection and personal growth. Readers without a background in psychotherapy proper can use this book for self-exploration, as a warm-up for therapy or as an adjunct to therapy. This chapter is divided into seven parts as follows:

- **What is Psychotherapy?:** This section introduces an Integral description of psychotherapy
- **Rules, Tools, and Development:** This section introduces the idea of tools that you use to navigate life and the rules you work from and how both change over the course of your life in what we call you center of gravity.
- **Expanding Integral Psychotherapy and Introducing Integral Theory:** This part elaborates on the description of Integral Psychotherapy while giving a quick tour of the Integral Model. This section also explains why psychotherapy done in an Integral way can be a work of "Kosmic" proportions
- **Getting Started—Breaking Taboos:** This part of the chapter describes how psychotherapy requires a willingness to break the taboos against changing the story you tell yourself.
- **A Primer on the Integral Attitude:** This section describes the Integral attitude we use in therapy and you can use to learn to trust yourself. The conundrum presented is that if you can't trust yourself you really can't do anything.

- A Closer Look at the Quadrants and Related Treatment Issues: This section elaborates on each quadrant or perspective as it relates to psychotherapy.
- The Integral Heuristic and *DSM*: This section discusses the implications of Integral Theory for improving *DSM* and as a framework within which to understand some of the changes that will be part of *DSM-V* in 2013.

What is Psychotherapy?

I'll "cut to the chase" here—I do not find the question "What is psychotherapy?" very useful however it is important that I address it in a book on the topic. We know that psychotherapy is a relationship in which a therapist uses certain techniques and processes to assist in the unfolding of the client's self, the identification of disowned selves and (in some cases) pointing clients toward what seems a more fundamental or "true" self. No insurance company will pay for that, however. We therapists have to be able to explain to insurance companies what it is we do but asking "What is psychotherapy?" gives the illusion that there is a simplistic answer. Some brilliant therapists have tried to answer this question but each one eventually concedes that the question is too general. The best you can do with an overgeneralized question is offer an overgeneralized answer. Ericksonian hypnotherapist Jeffrey Zeig³ began his answer to the question "What is psychotherapy?" by quoting Mark Twain ("if the only tool you have is a hammer, an awful lot of things will look like nails"). Zeig went on to say that you couldn't answer the question "What is psychotherapy?" without describing a context in which the answer is given. The closest Zeig gets to an answer is defining psychotherapy as

a change-oriented process that occurs in the context of a contractual, empowering, and empathic professional relationship. Its rationale . . . focuses on the personality of the client, the technique of psychotherapy, or both. The process is idiosyncratic and determined by interaction of the patients' and therapists' preconceived positions. (p. 14)

If you're anything like me you find this answer is a good start but doesn't touch on the details and it is in the details that we unlock the richness of psychotherapy. I am going to offer an integral description of what psychotherapy is and then spend the rest of the book unpacking that description. The initial description is this. *Psychotherapy is the scientific and artistic process of helping clients make aspects of themselves or their lives objects of awareness,*

*helping them identify with and own these objects and then integrating them through a process of disidentification.*⁴ Making difficult or painful aspects of your life objects of awareness, owning them and integrating them is one of the keys to unlocking the wealth of possibilities in your life.

Rules, Tools, and Development

To help clients with the process of psychotherapy, therapists must meet clients where they are developmentally, which is one way of understanding what “rules” the client has for living. In therapy we help clients use these rules to make sense of (translate) the world in as healthy a manner as possible given the “tools” they have in their developmental “toolbox.” So here we have two concepts—tools and rules—that we come back to frequently in this book. Your tools and rules are the basis of how you translate (make sense of or “metabolize”) reality. You use your tools and rules in the story you tell yourself about who you are and what is going on in your life.

A complete answer to the question “What is psychotherapy?” requires a framework that includes the depth of what it means to be conscious, what it means to be in relationship, and what the *Kosmological*⁵ context is for being human and being in relationship. Imagine having treasures buried in your own backyard but never suspecting that they are there. Imagine that digging up even one of these treasures would increase your life satisfaction tenfold. Now imagine someone shows up with a map that not only tells you “hey—there are treasures buried in your yard” but shows you where to dig. Integral Theory provides such an integrative map.⁶ I offer a summary of Integral in a moment but first a bit more about tools and rules.

Center of Gravity: Tools and Rules Again

Who are you? How do you experience life? How do you want to “show up” in the world? What are your gifts? What are the rules you have for life? These questions give focus to self-exploration, psychotherapy, and this book. There is an exercise you can do alone or with a partner that consists of asking, “Who are you really?” over and over again (and answering each time with whatever comes to mind). You can do the exercise in a mirror for that matter asking, “Who am I really?” It is simple but powerful. The idea is that you answer the question each time until you begin to exhaust the obvious responses and are driven to closer examination of the “gap” between who you think you are and who you “really” are. For some this “gap” points the way to who you may consciously become.

Your initial answers to the question “Who am I really?” depend on what I refer to as your center of gravity.⁷ Your center of gravity is an important

component of what in Chapter 7 I call your “psychological address.” Your center of gravity includes what I call your “developmental toolbox,” your worldview, self-sense, and your values⁸ and is the underlying force for the rules you make for yourself. You may not think you make the rules but you do—that is an important component of self-knowledge. As is seen in the forthcoming pages, I try to use valid and reliable constructs when describing aspects of our center of gravity but let me complicate this by adding that there may be no such thing. A *center of gravity* is a therapeutic metaphor that may be resourceful for some (but not all) clients. Some Integral writers refer to a center of gravity as if it were as valid as constructs like ego development or cognitive dissonance. It is not and I would no more speak about center of gravity with ontological certainty than I would claim to have seen a pooka⁹ at the local tavern.

Like the story you tell yourself, your center of gravity and your rules evolve as you grow. The *content* of consciousness changes as your center of gravity broadens and deepens. Put simply, self-identity is “drawing the line” between what is self and what is other. This “line” then leads to rules we make to defend it and to what we think is “wrong” when our life breaks our rules and rudely crosses that line. Who we think we are, what rules we make and what seems wrong at one stage of our development is frequently not a problem at later stages. Of course our rules are not just those we’ve made consciously. We spend our early years in families soaking up whatever rules that family has and many of us never question those rules as adults. So rather than rules we’ve made, these are rules we’re embedded in.

As our rules and tools evolve, so does our self-identification. The sliding nature of self-identification is the focus of Chapter 3. Self-identification undulates between stabilization and moving on to a new, broader, deeper identity. In psychotherapy there are times when you have to stabilize where you are and times when you have to move on. We call stabilizing where you are *translation*. Translation is making sense of the world with your existing tools and rules in the healthiest manner possible. In Integral Psychotherapy we would say health is translating accurately from our current center of gravity. This is similar to what Carl Rogers (founder of client-centered therapy) called accurate symbolization. When we accurately symbolize what life presents us with we have the greatest probability of coping with it. If we distort or deny our internal symbols of what life is presenting then we risk psychological illness.¹⁰

An example of a client that psychotherapy helped with translating is Ann, a devout Christian who came to see me for severe anxiety. Ann’s Christian faith reflected traditional values that she was quite happy with. Her anxiety was related to her husband losing his job and becoming verbally abusive. According to her center of gravity, her rules, she had somehow failed in keeping the family healthy through this employment crisis. Although a feminist counselor may have tried to get Ann to change her rules, my sense was her rules were adequate to the

task—we just needed to make them objects of awareness and help her discern what the purpose was behind the rules. Discernment was an important “tool” in her toolbox that she learned to use in prayer and in life to refocus on what she really valued. Once she discerned her purpose was to reflect the love of Christ in family life, she was able to modify the level of responsibility she had for her husband’s feelings and confront him with *his* responsibility. When she did this they entered couples’ counseling with a Christian counselor and were able to work things out. Ann’s tools and rules worked fine once she could make the purpose behind them an object of awareness.

Psychotherapy also can help us move to a broader, deeper center of gravity. When the tools and rules we have are not enough to do the job, we are forced into a situation where we can collapse in on ourselves or move forward into the great unknown crafting new tools and rules along the way. When we begin to feel adequate with new tools and rules, we are stabilizing at a new center of gravity, a new story we tell about our life. An example of this was a colleague of mine (Sam) who was denied tenure at the university. Sam was a psychology professor and a licensed psychotherapist. Sam’s father was a university professor and Sam’s desire to be a professor seemed more geared toward pleasing his father than himself. Sam was very good at the type of narrowly defined study that typifies university departments but he did not like to write academic papers. Even worse, he despised other people critiquing his work. This is a problem in most universities where the phrase “publish or perish” is more than a cliché. Initially, Sam went into a deep depression after he was denied tenure. In therapy he began looking at his tools and rules and realized that his tools were more geared toward working with clients and his rules were more derived from his father than himself. This began a reframing process wherein Sam began to lean on his strength and see clients again. He also reformulated his rules and became entrepreneurial in building a private practice. He began to see himself as an effective and joyous free agent outside the reach of the university and living on his own terms. His center of gravity shifted as he refined his tools and made new rules for this next phase of his journey.

Co-Creating Our Rules: Magic and Effort

I always tell clients that life is a combination of magic and effort (how’s that for an invalid construct?). I offer for their consideration that if they put forth some effort life may meet them part way with magic. If, instead of effort, you coast on “autopilot,” life coasts with you but there’s not much magic. If you coast fearfully, you may “see” more fearful things. If you coast optimistically you may not get very far but the ride is pleasant. This relates in a key way to some psychological studies. Psychologists Lauren Alloy and Lyn Abramson discovered that clients who were moderately to severely depressed were also more

accurate than nondepressed peers in judging how much control they had during an experiment (they were instructed to push a button for a reward but the conditions varied on how much the reward was really linked to the button).¹¹ The more depressed clients were, the more accurate they were in judging how much control they had pushing the button.

This phenomenon is called *depressive realism* and several studies have supported the idea that depressed people are more accurate in assessing how much control they have in experimental and even social situations.¹² So what does this mean? One interpretation is that those of us who are happy are good at lying to ourselves—life really sucks but if you face that squarely you get depressed. This is only one interpretation, however. Another interpretation has to do with the fact that we co-construct our experience. This is very different from believing that you create your reality like in “new age” systems like *The Secret* which, if it were true, would lead to every 2-year-old living in a candy store. This is more like recognizing that we have choices in how we focus our attention and how we think about our choices. We can focus attention on *moving away* from painful realities (“I never want to be in another abusive relationship!”) but then as a consequence we become focused on what we don’t want (“Hmm . . . that guy looks like a jerk”). We can also focus attention on *moving toward* what we *do* want. In this case we are then focused on moving *toward* what we want rather than *away* from what we don’t want. Going back to research on depressive realism, people who are optimistic about attaining a goal are actively co-constructing ways to do that despite evidence that they may in fact fail. Although they may fail more initially, they are more likely to see the failures as building blocks they can use to move toward the goal. This might be referred to as “thinking outside the depressive box” or thinking from “within a positive box.” The latter turns a “failure” into a piece of useful information. People focused on what they don’t want often interpret failure as evidence that they shouldn’t be pursuing the goal in the first place.

Often, depressed people are not engaging life. Being on autopilot keeps basic functions working but doesn’t create anything. Focusing on what you don’t want is to live ever vigilant to disappointment rather than possibility. I had one client (Sarah) who put it to me quite clearly. She said, “Dr. I, I’m not going to get my hopes up because I hate being disappointed. If I look at things realistically, I save myself the pain of disappointment.” In working with Sarah I tried to help her shift her perspective so that she might see how she was co-constructing failure in the way she was looking at things. Sure, she protected herself from disappointment but at what cost?

To co-create we must engage life so somewhere we need a rule that gives us ourselves permission to do that. Some of the recent research on depressive realism has suggested that depressed people actually gravitate toward pessimistic biases in their evaluations, whereas nondepressed people are freer to craft optimistic biases.¹³ We might say that depressed people are responding to one set of rules, whereas

optimistic people are responding to another. And the rules we are working with will determine the tools we employ. In Integral Psychotherapy we always want to help clients move toward what they want. We balance this of course with the legal-ethical context of the society the client lives in and with the need for the client to have at least a conventional ego (conventional meaning they understand and respect the conventions of society. In other words, if clients want to move toward destructive actions that is a different therapeutic approach). We come back to this theme but first an introduction to Integral Theory is in order.

Expanding Integral Psychotherapy and Introducing Integral Theory

At this point I want to take you on a short tour of the Integral Model with emphasis on using the model in psychotherapy. In subsequent chapters I spend more time explaining each aspect of the model but, as Mason said to Dixon, “you’ve got to draw the line somewhere” so let’s begin with this overview. Although Integral is a vast transdisciplinary philosophy, for our purposes we focus on Integral as a way to understand yourself. As you are reading right now, all aspects of your being are embraced in the Integral framework so this really is a book about you. This includes your tools and rules, your surroundings, your body, mind, spirit (if there is such a thing), and the “big ticket” items like (in the immortal words of Douglas Adams) life the universe and everything.¹⁴ Integral Theory uses the word *Kosmos* to describe life, the universe and everything. *Kosmos* includes the nature or process of all aspects of existence, including your body and psychological states, culture, society, the physical universe, and the force (or forces, gods, goddesses, etc.) underlying it.

“Wait a minute,” you might object at this point, “I thought this was a book about psychotherapy, feeling better, functioning better, that sort of thing.” I get the tools and rules thing but why get into ‘big picture’ issues?” This *is* a book about psychotherapy and it is about feeling better and functioning better. It also is different than other books on the topic because the Integral framework embraces everything. This might sound daunting but it needn’t be precisely because everything in the Integral framework is an aspect of your being. This goes back to *why* the question “What is psychotherapy?” is inadequate. Unless you first specify the framework through which you are viewing psychotherapy, you really can’t give a complete answer. By using a Kosmological view, Integral Psychotherapy provides a richer variety of tools to approach a more complete answer to the question. Equally, by attending to as many different aspects of yourself as possible, you increase the probability of feeling better and functioning better. If something really feels “wrong,” you want to have as complete a map of yourself as possible so you can pinpoint where the problem is. The less complete your map, the more likely you’ll miss an important aspect of yourself

and the more limited your tools and rules will be. As my university students say, the Integral Model helps us “not miss things.”

Another reason you want a complete, Kosmic map in psychotherapy is because, in the Integral framework, you are intimately connected with life, the universe and everything—in a way you *are* life the universe and everything. Let me unpack that a bit. For most of us, the sense that our rules have been violated or that something is wrong is rooted in alienation. As you navigate life you constantly make decisions regarding what is self and what is the rest of the world. As noted earlier, your center of gravity and sense of self evolve by making fine distinctions about what is you and what is the rest of the world. In making these distinctions, you are telling a story about who you are and setting up rules for what you want to embrace as “you” and what you want to push away as “other.” What we embrace or push away may be actual parts of ourselves, other people, places, or experiences. The more you embrace, the broader and deeper your sense of self becomes. The more you push away the greater your chances of experiencing alienation *and* the greater the chance that what you are pushing away may be an aspect of *you*.¹⁵

A highpoint in our ability to discern self and other is actually the developmental achievement of what philosopher Richard Tarnas calls “the modern mind.”¹⁶ This is a mind that can differentiate itself as subject to behold the rest of the universe as object. In Integral Psychotherapy we call this differentiation the subject–object balance and it is a colossal achievement developmentally. It is *not* the apex of development however because after we differentiate from something we next need to consistently make it an object of awareness and then integrate it. We achieve this integration through disidentification (rather than dissociation). Disidentification is owning something as an aspect of yourself while not being unnecessarily attached to what that means.

By way of example, think of a love affair you were in that didn’t work out (this example works best if you were “dumped” in the relationship). At first maybe you made rules like “I never want to see that person again!” You really wanted to differentiate from her or him and regroup as a single person. In the weeks following the break-up you may have even found yourself avoiding places where you might run into your former lover. As time passes, however, if you are getting over the break-up, you find that you can integrate what you learned from the relationship and move on. You can digest it rather than choke on it. Part of this “moving on” includes changing your rules. Maybe now the rule is “we shared a lot together and I can be civil with my former lover.” Perhaps when you can do this without feeling like you’re breaking down emotionally, it is a sign of successful integration.

One of Sigmund Freud’s greatest insights was that we frequently differentiate by psychologically pushing things away from awareness to make them unconscious but, if all goes well, once we’ve achieved differentiation we can return to those unconscious contents, make them objects of awareness, identify with

them or own them, then begin integrating them.¹⁷ The final step of integration is a *disidentifying* from the very things we made objects of awareness and *identified* with. Failed integration is when disidentification becomes dissociation and the things brought into awareness are pushed out of awareness again. This has consequences for more than just our mental health. In the case of your former lover, dissociation might include psychologically pushing into unconsciousness any thoughts or feelings related to the relationship so you don't have to deal with them. In this state if you run into your former lover and your defenses fail, you have an emotional meltdown as the "pushed away" aspects of the relationship come flooding into awareness like ice water into the Titanic.¹⁸

Now consider the implications of a more Kosmic vision in the example about your failed love affair. If you are *only* an isolated individual in a mechanistic universe the damage is limited to your own psychological suffering. If, however, you are deeply connected to life, the universe, and everything, then differentiation that derails into dissociation sets up a dangerous tear in the fabric of the Kosmos. In his second book *Psyche and Cosmos*, Richard Tarnas alluded to this writing "in the history of Western thought and culture, the community and larger whole from which the heroic self was separated was not simply the local tribal or familial matrix, but rather the entire community of being, the Earth, the cosmos itself . . . we have not understood yet that the discovery of the unconscious means an enormous spiritual task, which must be accomplished if we wish to preserve our civilization." Integral Psychotherapy recognizes this enormous task. Because each of us is connected to life, the universe, and everything the work of psychotherapy can be a work of Kosmic proportions.¹⁹

In the psychotherapies of the modern era we used to think that a healthy person had simply made the most of what Alan Watts called the "skin-encapsulated ego." Basically, the healthy person reached adulthood with an adequate ego and sallied forth into the marketplace of humanity to function as an isolated entity until death. Postmodern currents then began deconstructing this notion of the skin-encapsulated ego to the point where individuals were seen as nested in biological, psychological, cultural, and social contexts. Although many postmodern thinkers stopped there and gleefully announced the death of the individual, Integral Theory proclaimed the birth of a far more complex individual. This more complex, expanded map of the self included the impact of relationships, shared beliefs, and meaning-making. In addition, we include the revival of the wisdom traditions and decades of studying the relationship between spirituality and psychology.

Experiencing Your Being Through Perspectives

Before reading on do the following exercise in your imagination.

1. Make an "I" statement that pertains to what you are experiencing at the moment you read this.

2. *Talk to yourself about a problem in your life supplying dialogue for two points of view (e.g., "I'd like to buy a motorcycle." "No, bad idea—they are dangerous.")*
3. *Reflect on a time when you felt so overcome by emotions it was as if you were possessed.*

The first stop on this quick Integral tour is perspectives. Your being is complex and elegant. Part of the complexity includes the three perspectives represented in the exercise. That each of us shifts between first-, second-, and third-person perspectives makes our psychological world stunningly complex. Our first-person perspective refers to the one speaking ("I"), second-person refers to the one spoken to ("you"), and third-person the one spoken about ("him," "her," "it"). In the last exercise, your "I" statement illustrates your first-person perspective. The internal dialogue in Item 2 reflects your capacity to take first- and second-person perspectives within your mind. Finally the reflection on overwhelming emotions should illustrate your ability to take an aspect of yourself and make it "other."

We use these perspectives psychologically everyday as we own parts of our being ("I feel better with a lower body weight"), disown parts of our being ("I'd feel better if I could lose *the* weight"), and dialogue with parts of ourselves ("I want a doughnut." "Doughnuts are fattening and you're trying to lose weight." "Well I worked out today, I'll just have one" "Well, ok, you've earned it"). As Wilber has emphasized, the fact that almost every language known to humankind has first-, second-, and third-person perspectives is elegant.²⁰ These perspectives would not occur in every language if they weren't part of our psychological reality—our being. As part of our language, these perspectives appear in every psychotherapy session as signs along the road to self-knowledge. Chapter 2 details how these perspectives relate to the quadrants of Integral Theory and the practice of Integral Psychotherapy. Chapter 3 explains what I call the "wiles of the self"—the various ways we can deceive ourselves and how this comes out in our language. In that chapter I describe how psychotherapists listen to first-, second-, and third-person language to understand which part of the self a client owns and which part the client pushes away.

Lines and Levels of Development

Our second stop on the Integral introductory tour is lines and levels of development. In addition to perspectives, psychologists have reason to believe that you embody several lines of development, some of which are more developed than others. A line of development is an aspect of your being that unfolds in

a predictable sequence. The various plateaus in the sequence we call stages or levels. This is a thorny issue in academic psychology because it requires enormous rigor to support the hypothesis of a stage theory. That said, there are many stage theories in existence but only a few with rigorous support. Chapter 4 introduces levels and lines of development. One example of a developmental line is our sense of self called “ego.” Our self-development occurs dialectically through differentiation and integration.²¹ As infants, we learn to differentiate our body from our caregiver’s body and establish a physical self. The integration of a physical self takes us to a new level. In the “terrible 2s” we differentiate our emotions from our caregivers’ emotions, develop an emotional self and move to yet another level. If things go well, our sense of self develops through stages that encompass more and more of the world. In each differentiation we use cues we get from others around us that introduce dissonance. We resolve the dissonance by redefining who we are and who we are not (the dialectic component).

For most of us, things don’t always go smoothly and instead of integrating a differentiated aspect of self (e.g., the emotion of anger) we split it off and pretend it is not part of us, a process of disowning that we call dissociation. When we split off aspects of our self it is as if we have taken out a credit card with a really high interest rate. We get what we need in the short term, but the pain of re-owning what is now foreign to us grows and grows with each day. Eventually, we must hunker down and repay the debt (a debt that we owe ourselves), or we risk permanent emotional bankruptcy. I elaborate on this later but for now suffice it to say; you can’t disown parts of yourself forever. The disowning takes psychological (or psychic) energy and sooner or later you’re going to want that energy for other things. To reclaim it, you’ll then need to make the disowned parts objects of awareness, own them and integrate them. For example, people who disown anger may do all right for a while but often they will find themselves lacking in passion in general and not having enough energy to take on new projects. Integral psychotherapists assist these people to free up the energy they are using to push away the disowned anger, help them make the anger an object of awareness, then own and integrate it. In some ways the therapists help clients retrieve these disowned parts of self somewhat like a shaman retrieves lost souls.²²

Types or Styles

Our third stop on the Integral introductory tour is types or styles. In addition to perspectives, levels and lines of development, and the wiles of your self-system, you have a *style* of moving through life—what is sometimes called a *type*. You might have taken a “type” test (called a typology) like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or the Enneagram. In a less formal sense you may think in terms of masculine and feminine types. These are covered in Chapter 5. Although we don’t have what are called valid or reliable tests to help us understand types of

personalities, we can learn through dialogue with people what style they like to lead with in certain situations. One client I treated tested out at a very late, postconventional stage of ego development referred to as Magician. This same client though preferred to blend into the background and work more “behind the scenes.” In terms of type or style we might say he was more an introvert than extrovert. Another client who tested at the solid conventional level of Diplomat could enjoy leadership positions if those positions required her to assist others in being team players. Although her ultimate concern was the team (in this case her church), her style was more outgoing. When we hear a client’s life story we can come to an understanding of the complexity of type through that story.²³ Thinking in terms of styles is more fluid than types and thus my preferred label for this aspect of Integral Theory.

States of Consciousness

The final stop on this introductory tour of Integral Theory is states of consciousness. We all experience different psychological states daily. Everyone has access to waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states. Recall your last dream and the differences between that state of mind and the state of being awake reading this page. You may have suffered from states of depression or anxiety. Perhaps in peak moments you have experienced states of sexual ecstasy or nonordinary states induced from things like fasting, sleep deprivation, or meditation. All these states are part of the human experience and their relevance to psychotherapy is covered in Chapter 6.

That is Integral in a nutshell—perspectives (what I describe later as quadrants), lines, levels, types, and states. In this psychotherapy book, we focus on how the model relates to our tools and rules as well as our wiles and styles. As you become reacquainted with dimensions of yourself through the pages of this book, I hope your focus will broaden and deepen from what is wrong to what is going on and what is actually available to you in living a human life. Awareness is a primary tool but to open to it, you have to be willing to break some taboos and that is our next topic.

Getting Started—Breaking Taboos

I won't know myself until I find out whether life is serious or not . . . it's dangerous, I know, and it can hurt a lot. That doesn't necessarily mean it's serious.

—Kurt Vonnegut

To know yourself sounds easy but we all have a knack for erecting obstacles to accomplishing easy tasks. If you doubt this, remember that hot dogs still

come in packs of 8 while hot dog buns come in packs of 10. Recall in my brief description of Integral Theory I noted that most of us disown aspects of ourselves. Usually the aspects we disown are things that conflict with an ideal image we have of ourselves or what authorities in our lives (like parents) have told us we should be. The combination of idealized images and internalized authorities is what Freud called the “over-I” (mistranslated as *Super Ego*).²⁴ Part of the conventional game of being human includes this “over-I” and results in us pretending there are parts of ourselves we shouldn’t own *or* look into—parts we should in fact dissociate.²⁵ Because our “over-I” contains introjected²⁶ authority figures, our process of dissociating can be reinforced by our cultural norms and social structures making it even harder to reclaim or even investigate these dissociated pieces of “I.”

I intuited this at about 12 years old in one of my many “trainings” in the world’s spiritual paths, all of which are ripe with taboos to experiment with. At age 12, I was being prepared for what is called “confirmation” in the Anglican/Episcopal church. Confirmation is serious business. Where baptism initiates infants into the church, confirmation is when the pubescent (or “barely pubescent”) initiate must “decide” for him or her self to make a conscious, lifelong commitment to the faith. Of course no 12-year-old is ready for such a decision but that’s part of the fun—asking the bewildered possessor of new intellectual abilities and a budding sexual body to make a life-altering decision they aren’t ready or informed enough to make. I recall the priest talking about the decision to accept Christ and how Christ saves us. One boy (whose parents must have been Communists) asked, “If we choose to accept Christ and Christ saves us don’t we really save ourselves?” It seemed like a good question to me and I perked up to hear the answer. The priest furrowed his brow and sternly replied, “There are some things we aren’t meant to question.” That was that.

One woman with whom I worked, who now goes by her Pagan name Brigid, was raised in a household where the adults used religion as an excuse for violent behavior toward the children. Although she genuinely identified as Christian in her formative years, life in her “Christian” family raised more questions than she could answer about a personal God. Growing up she learned how important her family’s taboos were by being physically struck each time she questioned them. At one point, her father said she should consider herself lucky because in the “Old Testament” or Torah book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 21: 18-21), disobedient children could be stoned to death (but to be fair, the editors of Deuteronomy did not have access to good day care). As a reminder, Brigid’s father kept a large rock as a paperweight on his desk. Brigid had an aunt, uncle, and three older male cousins who sympathized with her plight and supported her by inviting her to spend summers working on their farm. These were like real vacations for Brigid and, although she still had to go back home in August, she felt the support of this extended family. It was her aunt who pointed out that in learning the family taboos, Brigid also learned a great

deal of what some might currently call “emotional intelligence.”²⁷ She learned to “read” other people’s emotional states and her aunt coached her to use this ability to avoid her father’s anger.

Brigid married young to get out of the house in a “respectable” manner (leaving just to get away from adults who had the humanity of rabid groundhogs was apparently not a “respectable” reason). Her new husband seemed, by most accounts, to be loving and hard-working, virtues her family approved of. Unfortunately, he also had a temper similar to Brigid’s father and had physically struck Brigid 3 months into the new marriage. At this point, Brigid contemplated suicide but said, strange as it seemed at the time, she didn’t because she would have felt bad leaving such a mess for others to clean up. So, what to do? She was terrified of the thought of a divorce and, although it seemed the only option, she wasn’t ready. What she did do amazed even her. The next time her husband beat her, she asked her cousins to do some beating of their own. When her husband was in the hospital recovering from a skull fracture and broken jaw, she served him with divorce papers. Looking back 20 years later she marveled, “I didn’t think I had that much vengeance in me. But if I could barely see it in my ex-husband, why would I be able to see it in myself?” As satisfying as this story is for those who hate bullies, it doesn’t end there.

In looking into aspects of herself that her family claimed were off limits, in breaking these taboos, Brigid also became aware that when she was happy there was a part of her that was *aware* that she was happy. When angry, there was a part of her that was *aware* that she was angry. When being beaten by her husband or father, there was a part of her that was *aware* of her being frightened. When she served her husband divorce papers, she felt power, revenge, and was aware of a part of her that was *aware* of all these feelings as well. This intrigued her but she quickly forgot about it first because it seemed weird (“taboo”) and because she had to make some fast decisions about where to live and how she was going to earn money.

Brigid spent 3 years in what she describes as a “limbo” state. She had some money from her divorce settlement, but it didn’t last as long as she thought. She was renting a room in a house, working part time at a café, and dating occasionally with disappointing results. She decided she needed more change. She found a new job (with better pay) at a cleaning company working nights and moved in with a friend who was in need of a roommate to help pay the rent. Her new living arrangement helped Brigid get on her feet financially and had some other unexpected payoffs. Her friend (Robin) was a lesbian and Brigid discovered herself to be happily bisexual. She and Robin had a sexual relationship after 7 months of living together. Robin was also a practicing Wiccan (sometimes colloquially referred to as being a “witch”) and she began initiating Brigid into the mysteries of “the craft.” What a year! Brigid had broken more taboos than a burlesque show in Amish country. What was telling, considering

her upbringing, was that rather than feel crippled with remorse or guilt, Brigid felt a genuine coming home. In her work with Wiccan ritual, she pondered her “Goddess Eye,” which was her name for the “witness” to her emotions that she had noted then forgotten in the flurry of starting her new life. Her Wiccan friends felt this was an important porthole to her soul and that practicing awareness of this witness would aid her growth. So during ritual, after casting her circle, visualizing the earth’s energies flowing through her, she would just sit and “be” the Goddess Eye. After spending a year-and-a-day practicing Wicca, she committed herself to the craft in a ritual with a small coven of practitioners. While still primarily identifying as Wiccan, Brigid has also studied world religions and concluded that this “Goddess Eye” is a sort of Ariadne’s thread to the true self and that following this thread is possibly the biggest taboo of all because it is the path to knowing who we really are. We might say that Brigid had settled into a new center of gravity, a new self-identification that allowed for the possibility that she was more than a “skin-encapsulated ego.”

If, as Alan Watts wrote, the biggest taboo is against knowing who we really are,²⁸ then *not* knowing this is likely a huge source of feeling something is wrong. It makes sense then in psychotherapy to use an approach that aims directly at discovering who we are in as many respects as possible. Because we are complex creatures, it is also important to use an approach to self-knowledge that allows as many self-exploration techniques from as many places as possible. Breaking taboos is no easy task and having taboos about which taboo-breaking techniques are “allowed” and which are “prohibited” cripples you from the start. As becomes evident in the following section, Integral self-exploration honors the most truths from the greatest number of approaches to understanding who you really are. In this sense, it provides a framework that embraces your taboos while also providing tools to move beyond them. If you’re ready to break some taboos and look into some things you may have left unexamined, you’re ready for a primer on what I call the Integral attitude

A Primer on the Integral Attitude

Science is not enough, religion is not enough, art is not enough, politics and economics are not enough, nor is love, nor is duty, nor is action however disinterested, nor, however sublime, is contemplation. Nothing short of everything will really do.

—Aldous Huxley

For every complex problem there is a simple solution. And it’s always wrong.

—H.L. Mencken

The general approach of Integral Theory and Integral Psychotherapy is called AQAL which stands for all quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types. As I noted, each of these elements reflects an aspect of who you are—aspects we explore in this book. A good place to being is with a point that is one of the most important contributions of Integral thinking:

Everybody's right about something (but not equally right about everything).

This statement is at the heart of Integral thinking. Did you ever wonder why there are so many self-help books? So many theories of psychotherapy? So many people who are ready to tell you what is wrong and how to make it right? Because experts are legion in our quasi-free market economy, it takes some discernment to decide who to trust. Do those crystals really align energy or just collect dust? Is my guru enlightened or a “moon-muffin” who is insulated from reality by living off other people’s money? Is my therapist a genius or am I just too neurotic to see he is a quack? These are important questions and, as I know from experience, they are difficult to answer.

Just as I am among those aware of a sense that something is wrong, I am among those who have spent a lot of time and money with teachers and therapists that I thought could make things right. I have spent a good bit of my life as a client in analytical, gestalt, cognitive, and transpersonal therapies as well as a seeker in spiritual direction, meditation, yoga, and vision questing. Every one of these experiences has had its blessings and curses (remember that the Latin meaning of “sacred” includes that which is blessed and that which is cursed). The blessings come as insights into how I am co-creating my life. The curses almost always come in the temptation with each success that I have found the “one true path.” Just as there is no shortage of psychotherapists, there is no shortage of what writer Eric Hoffer called “true believers.”²⁹ The true believers are those who, out of ignorance or the prospect of personal gain, are evangelists for their own “one true path.” The primary goal of the true believers is to swell the ranks of believers regardless of truth or experience (which is at odds with every other healing endeavor where the goal is to give the “patient” what they need and then send them away back into the world). Although many of Brigid’s acquaintances insisted that Wicca was the *only* “old-time religion” and that considering others would diminish the power of her “Goddess Eye,” Brigid had no evidence that this was the case because her Goddess Eye developed while she was a battered, Christian woman. Similarly, there are true believers in the ranks of psychotherapists and the buyer must beware. Although it is common to specialize in one approach to therapy, it is not common or recommended to pretend that that one approach will fit all clients.

This is where Integral may be viewed as heresy by many “true believers” and where the Integral attitude begins (and for the record Integralists can also trip into the mistaken identity of a “true believer”). Approaching something (especially self-exploration) Integrally is to look for the gifts and the truths

offered in each experience, each framework and each encounter. In this book, David and I draw on many approaches to psychotherapy and spiritual growth assuming that they are all right about something (and certainly not everything). Because everyone is right about something, aspects of every experience can potentially be taken in, digested, and the truth metabolized. Because everyone is not equally right about everything, experiential “waste” can be excreted—“chew the meat and spit out the bone” as one of my students says.³⁰

Trust and the Integral Attitude

Trust me.

—Indiana Jones

This leads to another important part of the Integral attitude and a premise of this book (and psychotherapy). This premise harkens back to the question my 12-year-old classmate asked in confirmation training. *You have to trust yourself to take the journey.* There is a paradox here. Many of us, sensing something is wrong, seek out therapists, gurus, psychotropic medication, and so on, to guide us, to help us, to lead us to the right decisions. I have always felt it ironic that clients who had made progress working with me or with a particular treatment would make statements like “you really kept me going through that crisis” or “Prozac saved my life.” When people share such statements with me I am likely to respond “I’m wondering if *you* played a part in keeping yourself going by engaging in therapy with me?” “I wonder if it wasn’t *you* who saved your life by taking Prozac when you felt you needed it.” These are slightly different perspectives on the same issue and, as I share later in the chapter, taking perspectives is an important experience in Integral Psychotherapy.³¹

But to try on different perspectives, you have to have some degree of trust in yourself. Years ago when Fritz Perls was developing Gestalt psychotherapy, he emphasized trust in the organism, in oneself, as an important component of treatment. Without that he claimed the patient would chain himself to an endless succession of therapists rather than standing on his own two feet. Similarly, Alan Watts made the same point about the spiritual journey. Like the boy in my confirmation class, Watts noted that if we can’t trust ourselves we are in a terrible mess. It is ourselves who ultimately decide the truth or falsity of any doctrine by deciding whether we can trust our experience. If we decide we can’t trust our experience can we trust ourselves to make the decision about whether or not we can trust our experience? You see the problem. In Christianity, if Jesus only saves those who accept him then you have to trust yourself to make the choice to accept him. If a guru can really lead a person from darkness to light then you have to trust yourself to become a disciple of

the guru. If you think a given psychotherapist can help you dispel your sense that something is wrong, you have to trust your choice to go see that therapist. How we trust ourselves also has a sliding nature to it and, as our developmental altitude broadens and deepens, the way we experience trust in ourselves (and others) also changes.

The issue of self-trust requires at least a few screening tools to discern healthy groups from unhealthy groups; healthy spiritual teachers from unhealthy spiritual teachers; and good therapists from “quacks.” In research done on cults and cult dynamics, there are four common dynamics that characterize a group, leader or healer as unhealthy. In unhealthy groups or cults proper, the dynamics are as follow:

1. Emphasis on compliance with the group
2. Emphasis on dependence on a leader with no checks or balances
3. Stifling dissent with threats of banishment or ending the relationship
4. Devaluing all outsiders³²

Each of these four dynamics is directly related to decreasing trust in yourself and giving your own power away. Now, of course, the paradox is that in giving your power away whether to a self-proclaimed representative of Jesus, a guru, or a cult leader, you are the one making the choice to vest the recipient of your subjugation with the power to save you. There is no way out. At some level you have to trust yourself. It is making this trust an object of awareness, identifying with it and refining it like any ability that is important.

Starting to Trust Yourself: Three Steps

So you may be asking, “*Okay, how can I learn to trust myself?*” This is an excellent question and should be one of the processes in any psychotherapeutic or spiritual work. Ken Wilber has offered a succinct outline for three steps you can take (and that we practice with in this book) to trust yourself.³³ The first step is to decide what you want to find out and then engage in practices designed to address that area. This has been called the *instrumental injunction*. The name comes from scientific method where instruments are used to carry out experiments. As Wilber noted, this can be thought of as the “do this” injunction. Simply put, it is the instructions for how to go about finding something out. If you want to find out whether your sense of something being wrong is related to your psychological functioning, you select a therapist and begin psychotherapy. If you want to find out whether it is possible to have an experience of God,

Chapter 5: Types or Styles: Fear and Loathing in the Computer Lab

Chapter 6: States in Psychotherapy and Their Relation to Structures

Chapter 7: Psychological Address: This chapter details exactly what a “psychological address” is and how therapists can discern a client’s address using the concepts of the first three chapters

Chapter 8: Spirituality and Psychotherapy: Can Therapy Point Toward the True Self?