

## Session 6 Guide

### Deepening Practices and Questions

### Chapter 5: The Integral Revolution

This week focuses on **Chapter 5** of *A New Republic of the Heart*. As always, there are more questions here than you'll have time to discuss, so I suggest you select a manageable few to deeply consider, journal about and/or discuss.

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Integral philosophy has an ancient lineage, but it has advanced rapidly and dramatically over the last few decades, and now an international community of discourse has come into being, focusing on “integral”, “post-postmodern”, “evolutionary” and “metamodern” thought and philosophy. This reflects the inherent nature of the evolutionary impulse that is the central driver of new expressions of human understanding and culture.

Recognizing how everything evolves, and seeing that evolution unfolds in discernable stages, integral philosophy looks at how our own evolving interiors are shaping our knowing right now. And it names some of the structures at play in our own perspectives and those of others. Thus, when it is applied with a wise heart, it offers panoramic meta-perspectives, opportunities for self-understanding, and a host of insights into others and society. It also offers a grounded intellectual basis for more rigorous approaches to personal growth, creative organization development, more enlightened public policy, and grounded hope.

This chapter not only teaches the map itself, and how it applies to our world. It also identifies some of the many ways that integral thinking and attitudes can work to clarify communications, heal polarization, create more effective group dynamics, and help us take a “long view” — to name just a few of its benefits it confers. It also looks at how integral culture and philosophy are evolving, what's next for integral scholars and practitioners, and what their promise is to the human future.

#### **Deepening Questions:**

1. Highly specialized fields of study—an increasing tendency of our times—result in fragmented expertise that is high in detail but often lacking in context. Fragmented knowledge can be dangerous, because it sets up goals and actions that are often divorced from the larger picture. The integral approach can result in a more inclusive and coherent approach to all aspects of life. *How might the integral approach change the ways you think about a specialized knowledge domain? Politics and culture? How might you act differently to organize cross-disciplinary conversations? Do you see some implications that can help you reach across political and cultural barriers? Can you apply any of its implications in a particular philosophical controversy (e.g. to help participants go beyond zero-sum (I win, you lose—or vice versa) to non-zero dynamics (win-win)?)*

2. Integral theory does not ask “Who is right?” but instead asks how we can make sense out of (and integrate) apparently contradictory perspectives (or conflicting “truths”). In the words of Ken Wilber, “Every perspective is both true and partial.” *Consider the implications of this insight for you personally. How might this insight shift how you relate to your relationship to knowledge—yours and that of others? Does this imply relativism, or does it imply that truth is multifaceted and multileveled? What’s the difference? Contrast a relativistic perspective with an integral perspective — how are they similar and exactly how are they different?*
3. Wilber’s integral theory provides “orienting generalizations” that enable us to see how differing perspectives relate to one another. A key feature is that each new “higher” level *transcends and includes* what went before. *How does this integral insight demonstrate itself across the course of human cultural history? Are there any ways it manifests in your everyday life? (Consider your personal experience.)*
4. In terms of cultural development, most cultures reflect *premodern (or traditionalist), modern rational, or postmodern* worldviews (and usually a combination). *These worldviews are described on pages 114–24. (a) How are each of the three predominating worldviews (traditional, modern and postmodern) reflected in politics and culture today? (b) What aspects of each worldview would also be important aspects of a truly integral worldview? (c) How is the most advanced of the three most pervasive worldviews (the postmodern relativist view, at least in its most negative manifestations) complicit with the lowest (the opportunistic “warrior” consciousness that preceded traditionalism, and which manifests as the populist and extremist political right) in bringing about the post-Truth era we seem to have entered? (See page 121.)*
5. In at least one critical area—that of recognizing the ecological crisis as the critical defining issue of our time—postmoderns tend to “get it right” even more than some integralists (see page 123). *What are the “good reasons” integralists resist this sense of urgency? What are the “better reasons” for not just transcending urgency, but including it? (See the “Radical Integral Ecology” section, starting on page 126.)*
6. “Higher” is not necessarily better. (See page 127.) More “primitive,” indigenous cultures, for example, implicitly embody a way of life that embodied a permanently sustainable relationship to the living earth. They are also generally more rooted in the body and the natural world, and less prone to the many pathologies of urbanized, dissociated living. They are able to see and feel things that we can’t. Integral theory ought to, but does not always, see the two-sidedness of these categories. *How might we — as a budding integral culture — take this more fully into account? How can we begin to restore our care, relationship and rootedness in the natural world without sacrificing the insights and knowledge that our integral evolutionary worldview bestows?*
7. *How can Wilber’s four domains or “quadrants” (involving interiors and exteriors, individuals and collectives; see pages 110–14) be used to understand problems and situations and provide solutions? What quadrants do various common subject areas (e.g., the physical sciences, psychotherapy, the*

*arts, social sciences, and systems sciences) primarily focus on? What cross-quadrant dynamics tend to elude the grasp of these differentiated domains of knowledge and study?*

8. *Both postmodern deep ecology and radical integral ecology recognize the sacredness of the web of life. But radical integral ecology claims that it adds something important to deep ecology. What exactly, then, does it add? (See page 128, bottom.)*
9. *How does a mature radical integral ecology go beyond the tendencies of immature integral culture? (See page 129.)*

### **Group Practice:**

Begin your book group meeting with a reading (from this book or from another source) that evokes awakened awareness and awakened mutuality.

Then, sit in silence together, eyes closed, deepening into a felt experience of that coherent field for ~3 minutes.

Then, discuss one or more of the questions above. Bring your intellect to the process. Take notes beforehand if possible. Really engage with the ideas.

Close with a checkout round, then expressions of mutual appreciation, and then a moment of shared communion or gazing.

### **Personal Practice**

Continue to do the practices assigned in the previous session:

1. In random moments throughout the day, at least for a moment, remember the radical “okayness” of existence, relax the chronic tendency to experience life from the conceptual mind, and allow yourself to enjoy each micro-moment of experience. To whatever degree you are able, inhale and exhale the living energy of existence, allowing it to refresh your being, and feel the inherent pleasurableness of existence.
2. Do another (very different, but complementary) practice this week, responding to the implications of Chapter 2’s discussion of activism. Reach out and do something (however small) that is practical and concrete to positively influence politics in the place where you live.

If you live outside the USA and would like to influence US politics (which are in crisis and influence the whole world) even though you can't donate to candidates or parties, you can consider donating to US nonprofit organizations focused on the environment, civil liberties, gun control, indigenous communities, women's rights, racial justice, and/or many other key issues.

If you are in the United States and you have no ready connection to how you can help, consider going to <https://postcardstovoters.org> and register. Do you know anyone whose vote might help make a difference but who might NOT vote? Reach out such people. See if you can get them to commit to voting formally on <https://iwillvote.com>. Make a bigger or more regular political donation than you otherwise would. In whatever ways are congruent for you, start doing something, moving your body through time and space, to make a difference to our upcoming midterm elections. This will not only make a difference in the world, it will change your relationship to the larger issues we are discussing.