

Integral Transformative Education

A Participatory Proposal

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An increasing consensus is emerging among holistic educators about the need for an integral education that incorporates all human dimensions—body, vital, heart, mind, and spirit—into learning and inquiry. Most contemporary attempts at implementing this vision, however, fall back into “cognicentrism” in that they essentially focus on the use of the mind and its intellectual capabilities. This article introduces a participatory approach to integral transformative learning in which all human dimensions are invited to cocreatively participate in the unfolding of the educational process. The metaphor of the four seasons is used to illustrate this multidimensional approach and to suggest concrete ways in which learners can support the various stages of the integral creative cycle. After identifying three central challenges of integral education—lopsided development, mental pride, and anti-intellectualism—the article concludes with some reflections about the importance of reconnecting education with its transformative and spiritual dimensions.

Keywords: transformative education; integral education; participatory learning; spirituality; cognicentrism

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.

—Marcel Proust

Our main intention in this essay is to introduce a participatory approach to integral transformative education in which all human dimensions—body, vital, heart, mind, and consciousness—are invited to cocreatively participate in the unfolding of learning and inquiry. After some preliminary considerations about the

basic elements of an integral curriculum and the “horizontal” and “vertical” dimensions of integral education, the first part of the essay situates our participatory perspective in relation to two other approaches to integral education: mind-centered/intellectualist and bricolage/eclectic. In the second part, we present the basic contours of a participatory model of integral transformative education using the organic metaphor of the four seasons. We also stress the importance of integrating “feminine” and “masculine” principles in whole-person learning and outline several basic features of integral transformative education. In the third part of the essay, we discuss several challenges for the implementation of integral transformative education in modern academia and suggest that these challenges can be seen as precious opportunities to reconnect education with its transformative and spiritual roots. We conclude with some reflections on the transpersonal nature of human participatory inquiry.

Before proceeding further, however, it may be important to stress straightaway the eminently theoretical character of this essay. Although the following reflections emerge from many years of pedagogical experimentation at various institutions of alternative adult education—such as the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, or the ESTEL School of Integral Studies, Barcelona, Spain—the description of a specific participatory inquiry process, inquiry outcomes, and validity procedures will be provided in a future presentation.

Integral Education: Elements, Dimensions, and Approaches

ELEMENTS OF THE INTEGRAL CURRICULUM: CONTENT, TRAINING, AND INQUIRY

Before we start our discussion of integral education, it is important to distinguish among three basic elements of learning or three types of pedagogical emphasis—content, training, and inquiry—and situate them in the context of an integral curriculum.

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The element of *content* refers to the presentation, explication, discussion, analysis, critique, comparison, and/or integration of information (i.e., facts, ideas, theories, models, approaches, traditions, etc.). Historically, content-based learning has been the mark of mainstream Western education. It can be extremely creative as well as “integral” in the sense of working with or toward integrative frameworks, approaches, and understandings (e.g., synthetic thinking, multiperspectivism, interdisciplinarity, cross-cultural studies, etc.).

The element of *training* focuses on the acquisition of specific skills and capabilities at all levels: for example, technical skills, research and writing skills, clinical skills, interpersonal and emotional skills (e.g., group dynamics), dialogical and argumentative skills, postformal and complex thinking skills, somatic/pranic skills (e.g., through yoga, sensory awareness, or tai chi chuan), and contemplative skills (e.g., meditation classes).

The element of *inquiry* focuses on the facilitation of pedagogical spaces that foster individual and collective inquiry into focused topics, questions, or problems. This dimension can be accessed using (a) mental/verbal approaches, such as dialogical inquiry, argumentation, transdisciplinarity, and so on, or (b) multidimensional approaches, such as supplementing mental/verbal approaches with others that engage the voice and wisdom of the body, the vital, the heart, intuition, special states of consciousness, and so forth.

Let us now offer some general thoughts about these elements and clarify their significance in a graduate-level integral curriculum.¹ First, these three categories are not mutually exclusive, and it is obvious that most traditional and alternative educational practices engage all three to some extent (except, in most cases, multidimensional inquiry approaches). Second, all three pedagogical forms are equally important elements of education and learning, and different courses can naturally stress one or several of them, depending on their aim and focus. Third, we believe that as learners move from school to college, from college to university, from undergraduate to graduate education, and from master's to doctoral levels, there needs to be a gradual but increasing shift of emphasis from an educational praxis that is based mainly on content/training (arguably more appropriate for children and young adults requiring epistemic foundations) to one based mainly on inquiry/training (arguably more appropriate for adults who aspire to contribute new knowledge or practical service to the world). In the latter, many of the training programs may take the form of (a) acquisition of practical skills (e.g., technical skills, organizational skills, clinical skills), (b) acquisition of facilitation skills (e.g., interpersonal skills, emotional skills, leadership skills), and (c) acquisition of skills that can be used as inquiry tools once learned (e.g., meditation practice, somatic techniques, complex thinking). In practical terms, this means that a graduate-level integral curriculum might include a creative mix of a few foundational content-based courses (especially at the master's level), some training-based courses of the types appropriate to each program's focus, and many inquiry-based courses of both verbal/mental and multidimensional types.

Of course, different courses could combine these elements creatively in numerous ways.²

HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL DIMENSIONS OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

Perhaps the simplest way to start exploring the idea of an integral education is in terms of the discipline's "horizontal" and "vertical" dimensions. As Judie Wexler (2004) succinctly put it, the horizontal dimension refers to "the way we integrate knowledge" (i.e., content, training, and mental inquiry) and the vertical dimension to "the way we integrate multiple ways of knowing" (i.e., special trainings and multidimensional inquiry). These dimensions can cross-fertilize and shape each other in complex ways; for example, to engage in certain forms of transdisciplinary inquiry may call for multiple ways of knowing, and to include multiple ways of knowing in the learning process may call for transdisciplinary approaches to inquiry.³ Let us look at each of these dimensions in more detail.

The horizontal dimension is intimately connected to what, in the *1990 Special Report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*, Ernest Bouyer called the "scholarship of integration." According to Bouyer (1990), the scholarship of integration emerged from the increasing need of many researchers to "move beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries, communicate with colleagues in other fields, and discover patterns that connect" (p. 20). "Interdisciplinary and integrative studies," Bouyer added, "long on the edges of academic life, are moving to the center, responding both to new intellectual questions and to pressing human problems" (p. 21).

In general terms, horizontal integral scholarship can be of four types: (a) *disciplinary*, or aiming at the integration of models, theories, schools, and so forth, within a single discipline of knowledge (e.g., integration of object-relation models in developmental psychology; structuralism, feminism, and critical theory in sociology); (b) *multidisciplinary*, or the study of any given phenomenon from multiple disciplinary perspectives (e.g., the study of human consciousness from the perspectives of neuroscience, cognitive psychology, phenomenology, and mysticism) (see, e.g., Klein, 1990, 1996); (c) *interdisciplinary*, or the transfer of principles or methods from one discipline to another (e.g., methods of nuclear physics to medicine; somatic techniques to spiritual inquiry) (Lattuca, 2002; Nicolescu, 2002); and (d) *transdisciplinary*, or an "inquiry-driven" integrative approach that creatively applies any relevant perspective across disciplines (i.e., transcending the disciplinary organization of knowledge) with an awareness of their underlying paradigmatic assumptions and the practice of "complex thinking" (Montuori, 2004; Nicolescu, 2002).

Two important qualifications: First, any of these horizontal approaches potentially involve the integration of various research methodologies and techniques (e.g., qualitative and quantitative; phenomenology and electroencephalography), epistemic standpoints (e.g., emic and etic; first-, second-, and third-person), and

epistemologies (e.g., Buddhist and Western science). Second, all types can have two chief orientations: (a) *basic*, or aiming at the conceptual integration of two or more authors, approaches, theories, models, schools, or disciplines (e.g., the thought of Jung and Campbell; feminism and critical theory) into a more encompassing integrative framework, theory, or new discipline; or (b) *applied*, the use of already constructed integrative frameworks as a tool to study, situate, critique, interpret, understand, or develop transformative action regarding any phenomenon (e.g., using Ken Wilber's four quadrant model as a lens to study the various theories of art interpretation).

Horizontal integrative scholarship can be motivated by the following nonexclusive regulative goals: reconciliation/harmonization (e.g., apparently contradictory data or conflicting views are reconciled within a larger vision or integrative framework); holism (e.g., addressing the fragmentation of knowledge that is the fruit of the hyperspecialization of modern science and academia); multiperspectivism (e.g., deepening our knowledge about any subject or phenomenon by applying different perspectives, models, fields of knowledge); creation of new fields of inquiry (e.g., psychoneuroimmunology, ecofeminism, psychohistory, neurophenomenology); and fostering cognitive and psychospiritual development of researchers and readers (e.g., multiperspectivism and transdisciplinarity have been associated with postformal forms of cognition such as Gebser's "integral consciousness," Morin's "complex thinking," Kegan's "fifth order consciousness," or Wilber's "vision logic," some of which are considered fundamental stepping stones toward transpersonal and contemplative ways of knowing).

Although further methodological clarity about the horizontal dimension still is needed, we believe that the greatest challenge of integral education lies in the facilitation of the vertical dimension of learning: multidimensional inquiry or integration of multiple ways of knowing. It is essential that contemporary holistic educators address the vertical dimension of education for at least three reasons. First, the presence of this dimension can facilitate not only an existentially meaningful integrative framework for students' academic pursuits but also the ongoing integral transformation of students, faculty, and institutions. Second, the practice of multidimensional inquiry constitutes the real cutting edge of integral education; after all, horizontal integrative scholarship is already common practice in many mainstream educational programs, departments, and universities—as the aforementioned *Report of the Carnegie Foundation* showed almost 15 years ago. Third, as we elaborate subsequently, the incorporation of the vertical dimension can reconnect education with its transformative and spiritual potential. Therefore, although we do not underestimate the importance of horizontal integralism, the rest of this article focuses on the vertical dimension and explores a number of challenges involved in its implementation. But let us first offer a brief taxonomy of integral approaches to education.

APPROACHES TO INTEGRAL EDUCATION: MIND-CENTERED, BRICOLAGE, AND PARTICIPATORY

Although most holistic educators agree about the need to incorporate all human dimensions into learning and inquiry (e.g., Hocking, Haskell, & Linds, 2001; R. Miller, 1991; J.P. Miller, Karsten, Denton, Orr, & Coladillo Kates, 2005; O'Sullivan, 1999; O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002; Rothberg, 1999), the practical efforts to materialize this vision tend to crystallize in three different approaches: mind-centered/intellectualist, bricolage/eclectic, and participatory. We will look at each of them independently, but it should be obvious that, in actual practice, these approaches can be combined in multifarious ways.

The mind-centered/intellectualist approach. This approach is based on the intellectual study and/or elaboration of integral visions or understandings. It uses the intellectual tools of mainstream education (e.g., logical analysis, rational argumentation, synthesis of the literature) to reach a more integrated understanding of the topic of study and can include fundamental questions such as the nature of the human being, life, reality, or the cosmos. It is usually—although by no means always—offered in the context of a traditional pedagogical methodology (i.e., magisterial lectures, textual research, teachers' assessment of learning through written essays, etc.). In other words, the mind-centered approach to education is “integral” in its object of study but not in its pedagogy, methodology, or inquiry process. In terms of the conceptual distinctions offered previously, we could say that the mind-centered approach focuses on the horizontal dimension of integral education and neglects the vertical one.

Although the intellectual engagement of integral understandings is clearly an important corrective to the usually fragmented nature of Western education, the reduction of integral education to merely intellectual activity generates a deep incoherence that can effectively undermine its transformative and emancipatory potential. Essentially, an exclusively or eminently intellectual approach perpetuates the “cognicentrism” of mainstream Western education in its assumption that the mind's cognitive capabilities are or should be the paramount masters and players of learning and inquiry.⁴ A common consequence of this reduction is the confusion of an expanded intellectual understanding with genuine integral knowledge. Most phenomena studied in the human and social sciences (and arguably in the biological and physical sciences as well) partake to some extent of different nonmental dimensions (material, energetic, emotional, spiritual, etc.), and therefore an eminently mental approach is likely to lead to partial understandings and even significant distortions.

This problem becomes heightened in the study of human spirituality. Most spiritual traditions posit the existence of an isomorphism or deep resonance

among the human being, the cosmos, and the Mystery out of which everything arises (“as above so below,” “the embodied person as microcosm of the macrocosm,” etc.) (see, e.g., Chittick, 1994; Overzee, 1992; Saso, 1997; Shokek, 2001). Therefore, the more dimensions of the person that are actively engaged in the study of the Mystery—or of phenomena associated with it—the more complete our knowledge will be. In our view, this “completion” should not be understood quantitatively but rather in a qualitative sense. In other words, the more human dimensions creatively participate in spiritual knowing, the greater will be the dynamic congruence between inquiry approach and studied phenomena, and the more coherent with or attuned to the nature of the Mystery will be our knowledge (Ferrer, 2002, 2005; Ferrer, Albareda, & Romero, 2004).

The bricolage/eclectic approach. What characterizes the bricolage approach—by far the most widespread in “alternative” educational institutions—is the incorporation of experiential moments or practices (e.g., movement, meditation, ritual) into an essentially mind-centered education or the eclectic curricular offering of courses that engage the other human attributes (e.g., tai chi for the vital/prana, somatic techniques or hatha yoga for the body, meditation for spiritual consciousness). Note that although some classes may engage, and to some extent develop, the nonmental dimensions, these dimensions rarely if ever are part of the substance of the educational process (e.g., inquiry tools into subject matters, evaluators of inquiry outcomes), which is mainly planned, conducted, and assessed from the perspective of the mind. The bricolage approach can take place in the context of both traditional education (not aiming at integral understandings) and mind-centered integral education (which studies or attempts to develop integral visions).

In terms of the conceptual distinctions offered above, we could say that this approach engages the horizontal and vertical dimensions of integral education in an unintegrated and ultimately deceptive way. It is unintegrated because the intellect is not working in collaboration with the other ways of knowing in the context of a creative cycle of integral learning and inquiry (see next section for an illustration of how such a collaboration may look). And it is deceptive because it can create the false impression that one is actually engaged in integral learning simply because of the relative attention paid to other dimensions of the person—especially in contrast to traditional mind-centered education.

Although the bricolage approach constitutes an important advance in relation to mainstream education, it is important to distinguish between genuine integral growth and a process of integral training regulated by mental parameters (see Ferrer, 2003). Most important in the present context, it is crucial to distinguish between the eclectic engagement of the nonmental human attributes as supplements of learning and their integrated creative participation at the various stages of the inquiry and learning process. The bricolage approach, despite its many advantages over a purely intellectualist education, remains fundamentally cognicentric.

The participatory approach. The participatory approach seeks to facilitate the cocreative participation of all human dimensions at all stages of the inquiry and learning processes. Body, vital, heart, mind, and consciousness are considered equal partners in the exploration and elaboration of knowledge. In other words, this approach invites the engagement of the whole person, ideally at all stages of the educational process, including the construction of the curriculum, the selection of research topics, the inquiry process, and the assessment of inquiry outcomes.⁵ The novelty of the participatory proposal is essentially methodological. It stresses the need to explore practical approaches that combine the power of the mind and the cultivation of consciousness with the epistemic potential of human somatic, vital, and emotional worlds. In terms of the conceptual distinctions offered above, we could say that the participatory approach aims at the synergic integration of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of integral education as well as at the coherent alignment of the verbal and multidimensional inquiry modalities.

As should be obvious from this brief presentation, we do not consider the participatory approach merely one more alternate perspective. On the contrary, we passionately believe that, if skillfully implemented, it constitutes a richer, more natural, and more transformative integral educational praxis. In the same way that Sri Aurobindo—the originator of integralism in India—distinguished between a spiritual liberation of consciousness *in* consciousness and an integral transformation that entails the spiritual alignment of all human dimensions, we differentiate between an educational process regulated by the conscious mind and one organically orchestrated by all human attributes. What is more, we propose that a participatory approach is not only more satisfactory but also more natural and coherent with the multidimensional nature of the human being. If it does not look natural at first, we suggest that this may be attributable to the dissociated “second nature” historically embedded in the modern Western self. We will return to this crucial issue later in this essay.

But the fundamental question, of course, is how to implement in practice participatory approaches in modern academia.⁶ To begin exploring this question, the next section uses the organic metaphor of the four seasons to illustrate a possible way in which the various human dimensions can participate in a complete cycle of creative academic inquiry. Our intention in this presentation is not to offer a paradigmatic model for others to follow but rather to provide a possible general orientation whose ultimate value needs to be assessed by both teachers and students as they attempt to cultivate more integral approaches to academic work.

A Participatory Model of Integral Transformative Education

THE FOUR SEASONS OF THE INTEGRAL CREATIVE CYCLE

Whether in nature or in human reality, a creative process usually unfolds through several general stages that correspond roughly with the seasonal cycle of

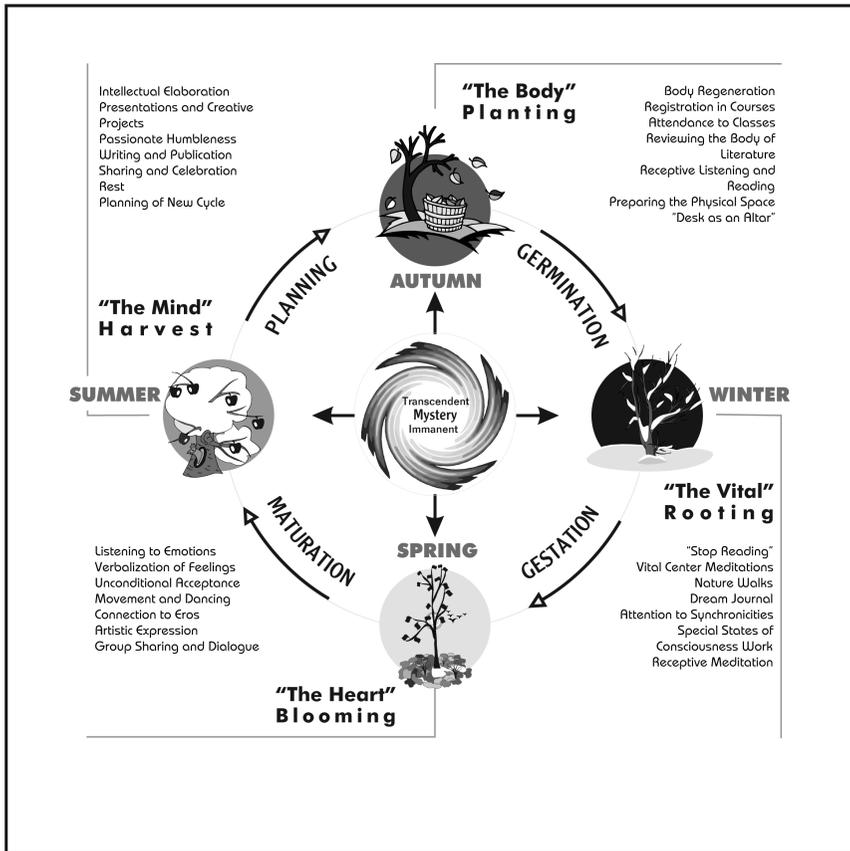


Figure 1: The Four Seasons of the Integral Creative Cycle

nature: action (Autumn, preparing the terrain and planting the seeds; the body, studying what is already known about a subject matter, i.e., the body of literature); germination/gestation (Winter, rooting and nourishment of the seed inside the earth; the vital, conception of novel developments in contact with unconscious transpersonal and archetypal sources); blooming (Spring, emerging toward the light of buds, leaves, and flowers; the heart, first conscious feelings and rough ideas); and harvest (Summer, selection of mature fruits and shared celebration; the mind, intellectual selection, elaboration, and offering of the fruits of the creative process).⁷ Let us briefly look at each of these seasons and how they can be appropriately supported in the context of academic work (Figure 1).

Autumn: The body, planting, action. In many lands across the globe, Autumn is the time to prepare the soil for the new harvesting cycle. The soil is scabbled, cleansed of old roots and stones, and, if necessary, fertilized. Then the new seeds are planted in the soil.

In the human creative cycle, Autumn is the time for preparing the *physical body* to be a solid and porous receptacle for the germination of new vital seeds.⁸

It is important to release the body from accumulated tensions to make it more open and permeable. It is also essential to relate to the body as a living organic reality that holds meaningful contents that cannot be intentionally accessed through the mind or consciousness.

Academically, this is the time to take actions such as enrolling in stimulating courses, attending lectures, and reviewing the body of the literature—which can be approached as a set of potentially *seminal* works with the power to impregnate the vital seeds of many individuals. During lectures, dialogues, and readings it is crucial to cultivate an attitude of receptivity, as if one were planting seeds in one's inner soil. This is also the time to prepare the physical space in which the creative process will take place; for example, cleaning and organizing the office space and, as Deena Metzger (1992) beautifully put it, preparing the desk as an altar—as the bride chamber for the beloved (i.e., the muse, the *daimon*, or the creative well-spring within).

The task of the mind at this stage is to support appropriate action by engaging behaviors such as those that create optimum conditions for listening to the body, actualize physical structures, and search out new resources. This is also a time for the mind to let go of old ways of thinking so that it can support and recognize the novel fruits of the new creative cycle. During Autumn, the mind can stagnate the creative process if it spends too much time wondering about the ultimate outcome of the inquiry or tries to predetermine its development or arrive at its own answers before the stages of the creative process have had the chance to unfold. Autumn is the season to trust the body, to support the structural dimension of reality, and to rely on the power of action.

Winter: The vital, rooting, gestation. Once the seeds have been planted, there is not much else for a cultivator to do. Winter is essentially a time of waiting, of darkness, of silence, and, most important, of gestation. It is imperative to stop the activity of Autumn so that the planted seeds can do their own autonomous work: splitting open, rooting in the soil, and getting fed by earth's essential nutrients.

In the same way that a germinated seed first grows toward the darkness of the soil to be nourished and develop roots that are the necessary base for the upward growth of the plant toward the light, in the human being an activated vital seed first plunges into the depths of the personal and collective unconscious. Like the roots of the trees in a forest, human vital depths are interconnected in the unconscious, where they can be nurtured not only by the collective wisdom of human heritage but also by the generative, immanent dimension of the Mystery. This contact between the *vital world* and immanent Mystery makes Winter an especially sacred season that needs to be properly honored. As with the dormant appearance of nature in Winter, it may appear to the conscious mind that “nothing is happening” at this juncture of the creative process, but it is important to remember that tremendously powerful and creative forces are actually at play in the darkness—forces that will eventually catalyze in Spring not only the regeneration

and blooming of life in nature but also the emergence of the creative impulses in the human soil.

In academia, Winter is a time in which it may be important to stop reading or assimilating further information in any other way. The process of creative gestation requires its own inner space, which is facilitated by silence, interiorization, and stillness. Not knowing how to accompany appropriately this stage of gestation, too often students—especially at their dissertation stage—paralyze the creative process by their inability to stop reading. (This obviously has implications for the sequence of readings required in academic courses.) The conscious mind, not able to “see” in the darkness of this stage, can easily believe that in order to move ahead it has to continue incorporating new theories and ideas. Obviously, there will always be important essays or books to be read, but in the same way that we need to stop eating to facilitate an effective and nourishing digestion, it is necessary to stop reading in Winter for an adequate gestation of the creative impulse. Appropriate activities during this season are not those seeking to find immediate answers but those that support the alignment of the mind/consciousness with the process of gestation. It is crucial to cultivate a sense of trust in the natural processes that are taking place within our creative matrix during this season, much as a pregnant woman must trust the gestation of a fetus. Some examples of supporting activities include keeping a dream journal; taking nature walks; working with special states of consciousness; practicing receptive forms of meditation such as *vipassana*, *wu-wei* (“without doing”), or *shinkan taza* (“sitting only”); cultivating visionary imagination; doing symbolic work; paying attention to synchronicities in everyday life (including “that book that fell from the shelf!”); and engaging practices that facilitate an embodied contact with the vital center or *hara* as the physical/energetic container of the creative pregnancy.

In Winter the mind needs to cultivate an attitude of patient receptivity, not-knowing, and humble respect. It is important to develop patience and receptivity toward stages of the creative process whose rhythm and unfolding elude the mind’s intentional control. Respect and not-knowing naturally emerge from the mind’s recognition that “something” is happening beyond what it can see directly. And humility is borne out of the awareness that, although the mind can be present to the process, the creative dynamism has no need of its powers at this stage. During Winter, the mind can abort the creative cycle if—out of ignorance, impatience, or mistrust—it attempts to take control of the process and/or get to know prematurely the nature of the still embryonic creative drive. It is as if a farmer, not trusting the chthonic process of the seed, anxiously digs the soil to “see” what is happening or to actively help the seed to grow. Winter is the season to cultivate a patient receptivity toward the unknown and to trust in those aspects and stages of life that transcend the intentionality of the human mind and consciousness.

Spring: The heart, blooming, diversity. Spring is the season for the shameless blossoming of newly regenerated life. It is a time of spontaneity, contrasts, and celebration of diversity; a time for the sprouting of buds and the blooming of

flowers; a time of tremendous fragility and intensity and, if the conditions are appropriate, of countless surprises.

In the creative process, Spring is the season to open *the heart*, breathe deeply and widely, listen to one's affective world, and make room within so that the raw sensations associated with the upwelling creative energy emerging out of the gestation process can be organically incorporated as emotions and feelings. This is the stage of first contact with and embodiment of those creative impulses gestated in Winter. This can be a time of joyful exhilaration in the wake of the fresh contents emerging from within—a time in which it is crucial to avoid the mental temptation to prematurely assess what is emerging. At the end of the season, it is important to let go of those developments which, like Spring flowers, were temporary manifestations of the creative process and start contemplating those that remain and may become fruits in the Summer.

In academic work, the first part of Spring calls for activities that support the embodied magnification of those first creative energetic blossoms, including physical games that involve movement and dance (like “dancing one’s research question”) and sensual/sexual explorations to awaken and integrate the erotic power of life into the inquiry process. The importance of Eros and sexuality in a genuinely creative process cannot be understated.⁹ Eros is the creative power of Life in its primordial, undifferentiated state, and sexuality is one of the first soils for the organization and creative development of such primary energy in human reality. That is why it is so important that sexuality is an “open” soil based on natural evolutionary principles and not on fears, conflicts, or artificial impositions dictated by the mind, culture, or spiritual ideologies (Romero & Albareda, 2001). The second part of Spring calls for activities such as somatic expression, verbalization of feelings, embodied practices that facilitate listening to emotions and feelings (see Ferrer, 2003), and artistic expression (music, painting, sculpture, plastic arts, poetry, singing, etc.). Peer-group work becomes central at this stage, because it provides a social context for nonjudgmental contrasts and cross-fertilization among incipient creative expressions.

Two qualities are essential for the mind to cultivate in Spring. The first is an attitude of genuine curiosity by which the mind looks at the emerging contents as if it were the first time that it sees them, avoiding their codification through previously learned conceptual schemes or theories. The second is an attitude of unconditional acceptance and support of all the budding contents. At this stage, the creative process can be aborted if the mind projects its previously learned schemes or theories onto what is emerging or if it prematurely judges their value. Spring is not the season of the mind but a time to trust the heart and unconditionally support its processes.

Summer: The mind, harvest, celebration. In Summer, some flowers have matured into fruits and some of those fruits become ripe. It is the season of harvest, celebration, sharing, and gratitude. It is also a time to rest, to peacefully contem-

plate the new seeds contained in the fruits, and to plan another cycle for the following Autumn.

In the creative process, the “fruits” represent the ideas or expressions selected for further elaboration and refinement. If the mind has accompanied the entire process with the appropriate stage-specific attitudes of a sensitive farmer, it will easily discern at this stage those fruits that are mature and deserve further consideration. Summer is the season of *the mind*—a time for the intellectual/aesthetic elaboration of ideas. It is also an auspicious time to open oneself to the transcendent dimension of the Mystery, which can now illuminate the mind with insights that may enrich the refinement of the creative fruits and/or offer a larger context of meaning to assess their value.

In the academic system, Summer is the season to focus on the articulation of ideas with clarity, beauty, elegance, precision, and sophistication. It is also the time to dialog with others about one’s ideas in order to polish them in both substance and verbal/nonverbal expression. Putting those ideas into writing or other expressive means is a further step in the materialization of the creative process. Ideally, the writing style should be coherent with the original creative impulse so that the words embody the message without distortions. This is the season to contrast one’s fruits with already existing developments and ideas, that is, with the fruits of the creative process of others. (In mainstream education, those contrasts occur long before the creative process has delivered mature fruits, and although this may be helpful at times, it may also endanger the process, leaving students feeling a lack of confidence that can lead to a compensatory mental reformulation of already existent ideas). It is also the time for the sharing of refined ideas through class presentations, written papers, or other creative projects—and it may be important to explore different modalities to convey those ideas (visual, aesthetic, dramatic, etc.). A further stage in this process could be the publication of the fruits of the season in magazines or journals and/or their presentation at professional conferences or public events. Finally, this is the time to raise new questions, plan a new research cycle, and explore avenues for further inquiry that may awaken new vital seeds within ourselves and others.

If the mind has been in contact with the multidimensional nature of the creative process, the attitude that it will naturally display in the presentations of the fruits will be one of passionate humbleness. It will be passionate because the ideas will be grounded in somatic, vital, and emotional experience. And it will be humble out of the recognition that the ultimate sources of the creative process transcend both mental structures and personal individuality; in other words, they are both transcendent and transpersonal. Learners can then feel that they have been both the gardener and the soil of the creative process while simultaneously being aware of the many participating elements that have collaborated in the unfolding of that process (body, vital, heart, mind, and consciousness; the personal and the collective unconscious; the immanent and transcendent Mystery). Passion without humbleness can become arrogance, and arrogance may be a sign that the person is only aware of the personal dimension of the process. Humbleness without

passion can become weak and even boring and may be a sign that the person is overlooking the personal grounding of the process. An attitude of passionate humbleness honors both the personal and transpersonal dimensions of the creative process.

Before closing this section, we should stress once again the very general nature of the integral creative cycle outlined here. Although we believe that it can serve as an orientation for integral pedagogical practice, it should not be made paradigmatic in any strict sense for all individuals. There are many dispositions and associated dynamics in the unfolding of the creative process. (Incidentally, a serious consideration of the diverse individual rhythms in the gestation and maturation of creative fruits may lead to the revision of standard academic practices such as predetermined time frames for academic accomplishment or collective deadlines for the delivery of inquiry outcomes.) Furthermore, there can be an indefinite number of seasonal subcycles (Autumn–Winter–Spring–Summer) in the context of a larger creative project. Finally, and perhaps most important, our suggestion of a rough correspondence between creative stages and specific human attributes should be taken as a didactic orientation and not in rigid fashion. A human being is a multidimensional unity: Body, vital, heart, mind, and consciousness are petals of the human flower. All human attributes are present and operative to some extent at all stages of the creative cycle. This fact does not preclude, however, that as in the early stages of human development—from organic matter and vital impulse to proto-emotions and differentiated feelings to thoughts and formal cognition—certain attributes may have greater preeminence than others at certain stages. For these and other reasons, the sequence sketched here, although we believe it accurately reflects deep dynamics of the creative cycle, admits an indefinite number of possible variations and should not be viewed in a strictly linear fashion.

INTEGRATION OF FEMININE AND MASCULINE PRINCIPLES

In this expanded educational context, we can easily recognize that modern academia (both mainstream and alternative) focuses on the Autumn and the Summer phases—action and harvest (the more “masculine” aspects of the process)—and tends to overlook the facilitation of spaces for the Winter and the Spring: germination, gestation, and giving birth (the more “feminine” aspects of the process).¹⁰ Students spend most of their time both inside and outside the classroom reading, studying, and discussing knowledge already elaborated by others (Autumn), after which they are usually expected to “produce” new and original contributions in their final presentations and papers (Summer). In other words, the deep structure of modern education tends to skip the more feminine, and more deeply generative, stages of the creative process (Winter and Spring). Seen in this context, the scarcity of genuinely creative developments in academia should not be surprising. There is much “second-order” creativity or smart mental permutation of already known ideas but very little “first-order” creativity or

organic, multidimensional emergence of truly innovative developments. Given the innumerable “abortions” of the creative process that these dynamics cause in Western educational practice almost from day one, it is understandable (perhaps inevitable) that so many students develop a lack of confidence in their own creative potential.

We strongly suspect that this deeply masculinized pedagogical container may also be behind the intense (and also masculinized) reactivity of the feminine sensibility (of both men and women) that faculty and students often witness in the classroom, even in those courses where the “feminine” is honored and included in content and/or more superficial process (e.g., inclusion of a feminine ritual in a masculinized pedagogical process). The true feminine is understandably in a state of paralyzing despair that can easily burst into anger because it cannot understand why it still feels profoundly dishonored when it is apparently attended to and even explicitly championed. This situation parallels the current despair of the African American community in the United States, which, as Cornell West (1999) pointed out, at least had hopes for a future genuine integration before its members gained civil rights but today faces an increasing nihilism in the wake of the unsatisfactory alternatives of either becoming “like the white folks” or remaining in the ghetto (and the jail).

In future years, it is likely that integral transformative education will gradually restructure the pedagogical process in ways that truly and deeply integrate the “masculine” and “feminine” dimensions of the inquiry process. This may involve the facilitation of spaces not only for the intellectual discussion and production of knowledge but for the vital germination and gestation of the creative seeds of the individual.

BASIC FEATURES OF INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

To conclude this section, what follows is a summary of some basic features of integral education:

1. *Integral education fosters the cocreative participation of all human dimensions in the learning and inquiry processes.* A genuine process of integral learning cannot be directed exclusively by the mind but needs to emerge from the collaborative epistemic participation of all human attributes: body, instincts, heart, mind, and consciousness. All human dimensions need to be actively encouraged to participate creatively at all appropriate stages of the inquiry and learning process (e.g., as inquiry tools into subject matter, as evaluators of inquiry outcomes).
2. *Integral education aims at the study and/or elaboration of holistic understandings, frameworks, theories, or visions.* Whether disciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary, integral inquiry builds bridges across disciplines and searches for commonalities while honoring differences in its striving toward integrated understandings that counter the partial or fragmented current state of human knowledge.
3. *Integral education fosters the activation of students’ unique vital potentials and their creative development in the construction of knowledge.* Each human being is a

unique embodiment of the Mystery potentially able to develop a unique perspective to contribute to the transformation of his or her community or society. When learning and inquiry are grounded in one's unique vital potentials, academic life becomes not only existentially significant but also more creative, exciting . . . and fun!

4. *Integral education balances the feminine and the masculine.* It combines the more masculine elements of the training of skills and the analysis of already constructed knowledge with the more feminine element of creatively engendering new knowledge from within. As in life, a dialectical relationship between these fundamental principles exists in the creative process, and integral education seeks practical ways to honor and actualize this relationship.

5. *Integral education fosters "inner" and "outer" epistemic diversity.* Taking into account the importance of multiple perspectives for the elaboration of valid, reliable, and complete knowledge about any object of study, integral education incorporates "inner" or intrapersonal epistemic diversity (i.e., vital, instinctive, somatic, empathic, intellectual, imaginal, contemplative ways of knowing) an "outer" or interpersonal epistemic diversity (i.e., knowledge from the various human collectives, ethnic groups, cultures, classes, genders, etc., as well as from associated epistemological frameworks and stand-points), with these two types of diversity being intimately connected.

6. *Integral education promotes the integral development and transformation of students, faculty, and the larger educational container or institution.* The inclusion of all human dimensions in the learning process naturally enhances the transformative, healing, and spiritual power of education, as well as its potential to restructure academic policies and institutional practices.

Challenges and Prospects of Integral Transformative Education

In this section, we briefly discuss several challenges faced by participatory integral pedagogies and suggest that they can be seen as precious opportunities to rescue the transformative and spiritual potentials of educational practice.

FROM LOPSIDED DEVELOPMENT TO INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATION

Modern Western education focuses almost exclusively on the development of the rational mind and its intellectual powers, with little attention given to the maturation of other dimensions of the person (see, e.g., Hocking et al., 2001; R. Miller, 1991). As a result, most individuals in our culture reach their adulthood with a somewhat mature mental functioning but with poorly or irregularly developed somatic, vital, emotional, aesthetic, intuitive, and spiritual intelligences (Gardner, 1983/1993).

Given the extreme mind-centeredness of this way of life, a continued emphasis on mental learning and inquiry seems nearly inevitable, which leads to the greatest tragedy of cognicentrism: that it generates a vicious circle that justifies itself. Because modern education does not create spaces for the autonomous maturation of the body, the instincts, and the heart, these worlds cannot participate

in an inquiry process unless they are mentally or externally guided. Yet, insofar as they are mentally or externally guided, these human dimensions cannot mature autonomously, and thus the need for their mental or external direction becomes permanently justified.

Complicating this situation further is the fact that, after many generations of mind-centered life and education, often combined with the gross or subtle control and inhibition of the body, instincts, sexuality, and passions, these nondiscursive worlds not only are undeveloped but are frequently wounded or distorted and may even manifest regressive tendencies. Thus, when an individual seeks knowledge in these worlds, the first thing that he or she typically encounters is a layer of conflicts, fears, or confusion that perpetuates the deep-seated belief that these worlds are epistemically barren. What is normally overlooked, however, is an essential primary intelligence that lies beneath this layer that, if accessed, can heal the root of the conflict while fostering the maturation and epistemic competence of these worlds from within. What is needed, then, is to create spaces in which these human dimensions can achieve epistemic competence according to their own developmental principles and dynamics rather than those the mind thinks are most adequate. Only when the body, instincts, sexuality, and heart are allowed to mature autonomously will they become equal partners with the mind and be capable of participating in the cocreation of a truly integral process of inquiry and learning.

Rescuing the healing and transformative dimensions of education should not be regarded as turning education into a therapeutic process. The main goal of integral education is not personal healing or group bonding (although these may naturally occur, and any genuine integral process should welcome and even foster these possibilities) but *multidimensional inquiry* and the *collaborative construction of knowledge*. Take, for example, a hypothetical situation in which the access to nonmental worlds (e.g., through guided visualization, interactive meditation, or movement) activates in some students personal material in need of healing that may interfere with the aims of the inquiry process. In the context of a pedagogical (vs. therapeutic) container, this situation can be approached as a fruitful stage of the inquiry process. In other words, a skillful facilitator can use this situation to help learners become aware of deeply seated personal dispositions that may be coloring, shaping, and probably distorting their intellectual discernment. In a way, this stage could be seen as a kind of inner "hermeneutic of suspicion" that may lead to the critical identification of distorting epistemic blinders and standpoints. After this initial stage of awareness of personal dispositions and familiarization with the experiential access to nonmental worlds, a genuine multidimensional inquiry can gradually emerge.

In sum, the challenge raised by lopsided development can be seen as a fertile opportunity to turn education into a process of integral transformation that can help learners to achieve adulthood at all levels, not only mentally. In the context of integral education, transformative healing opens the doors of human multidimensional cognition.

FROM MENTAL PRIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Our understanding of mental pride is not associated with what is conventionally regarded as a proud personality. By “mental pride” we mean the deep-seated disposition of the mind to believe (a) that it is the most important player or chief director of any process of knowledge and (b) that it can attain complete understanding without the collaboration of the other human attributes. Given this definition, it is possible for a person to be psychologically humble (e.g., about his or her personal talents or achievements) but simultaneously maintain a strong mental bias in life direction and the search for knowledge and therefore fall prey to mental pride.

In an academic context, mental pride manifests in a variety of ways, including (a) confusion of global intellectual visions with genuine integral knowledge; (b) difficulties in acknowledging the partiality of all intellectual visions; (c) flagrant or subtle devaluation of the epistemic value of the other human attributes, even in those cases in which such value is intellectually accepted; (d) insistence on the already developed condition of the nonmental worlds—in oneself or one’s culture—as an unconscious defense mechanism against their development that perpetuates the mind’s epistemic hegemony (of course, certain exceptional individuals may actually have reached a considerable level of maturity at all levels); (e) lack of patience with the normally slower rhythm that the nonmental worlds may require to offer their contributions to an inquiry process; and (f) a compulsive need to control the inquiry process mentally—for example, through premature conceptualization or application of intellectual constructs.

As the mind gradually lets go of its pride and opens itself to learn from the other human attributes and collaborate with them as an equal in the elaboration of knowledge, it can be gradually released from the unnecessary burden of having to do most of the inquiry work. The mind becomes humble, recognizing its intrinsic limitations and realizing that it does not need to know everything because there are greater sources of knowledge to which it can be connected. Then the mind can rest and relax, attain inner peace and silence, and become porous and permeable to the immanent and transcendent energies of the Mystery—energies that vitalize and illuminate the mind with a knowing that the mind will never be able to fully encompass with its mental structures but to which it can be attuned and by which it can be inspired and guided.

In sum, the deeply seated pride of the mind can be seen as an opportunity to turn education into a process of genuine spiritual awakening in intimate contact with the immanent and transcendent dimensions of the Mystery.

BEYOND COGNICENTRISM AND ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM IN INTEGRAL STUDIES

The critique of cognicentrism and the emphasis on the nondiscursive and spiritual elements of human inquiry can easily raise the specter of anti-intellectualism. The basic concern is that the incorporation of somatic, vital, and

emotional experience into the educational container may jeopardize intellectual rigor. In other words, if we make too much room for somatic, emotional, and intuitive knowing, don't we run the risk of debilitating intellectual standards of analytical rigor and rational criticism? Can we really escape the degeneration of educational practice into a fluffy, warm, but ultimately uncritical process that bypasses the meticulous elaboration and appraisal of knowledge?

Although it cannot be repeated too often that including the nondiscursive human dimensions in the teaching and learning process does not imply the rejection or devaluation of intellectual knowledge, we believe this is a valid concern that deserves serious consideration. This worry is certainly understandable if we look at the historically dominant tendency of the West to polarize mind and body, or reason and emotion. From certain trends in the Romantic revolt against the Enlightenment's enthroned Reason to the 1960s Esalen Institute's "awaken the body, turn off the mind" motto to contemporary New Age's emotionalism and uneasiness with intellectual rigor, most past and present historical challenges to cognicentrism flirt with or fall prey to anti-intellectualist tendencies. The abuses of the 1960s, as well as a plethora of unsuccessful alternative pedagogical experiments in recent decades, are still fresh in the minds of many in academia, and it is therefore natural that any proposal denouncing cognicentrism and advocating the incorporation of multidimensional knowing may create suspicion in some scholars.

As should be obvious, however, anti-intellectualism reactively labors in the same deep structure of hierarchical, polarizing thinking as cognicentrism does. In other words, anti-intellectualism is the back—and equally problematic—side of cognicentrism. As many holistic educators stress, the pressing challenge today is to break away from dichotomizing tendencies and explore integrative approaches that will allow intellectual knowing and conscious awareness to be grounded in and enriched by somatic, vital, emotional, aesthetic, intuitive, and spiritual knowing without losing their powers of clarity and discrimination. In other words, the contemporary challenge is to forge a middle path that avoids the pitfalls of both cognicentrism and anti-intellectualism.

But even with this recognition, the practical challenge remains. In our pedagogical practice, for example, we have repeatedly observed how difficult it is for an overwhelming majority of students to flow between discursive reason and nondiscursive experience and to engage in an integrated inquiry that incorporates both epistemic modes harmoniously. In practical terms, this means that most students are at first incapable of elaborating intellectual knowledge from emotional/somatic experience and of remaining in mindful contact with their hearts and bodies while engaged in intellectual discussion. We interpret this difficulty as a sign of the prevalent state of dissociation between these worlds in the modern Western self. (In some individuals, these worlds are not dissociated but undifferentiated, which creates a similar difficulty but may require a different pedagogical intervention.) In our view, this predicament calls for the exploration of methodological structures that systematically bridge those different worlds,

foster their collaborative epistemic competence, and lead to creative academic fruits and sound shared knowledge.¹¹

Even considering this potential risk, what is really the alternative? Is it sufficient to continue offering an educational practice that exclusively or essentially focuses on the supposedly “safer” and “less messy” levels of the mind and consciousness and keeps the other worlds either at bay or in a state of perpetual immaturity under parameters set by the mind? Can we truly say, to ourselves and to the world, that we are offering an “integral” or “transformative” education if we do not incorporate the body, the vital, and the heart into the very substance of learning and inquiry? We placed “safer” and “less messy” in quotation marks because these nondiscursive worlds—now marginalized, often repressed, and given no or very little space in the classroom—tend to reappear eventually in class dynamics under different guises (e.g., compensatory mental rigidity; attitudes of superiority; angry outbursts at the “masculinized,” “patriarchal,” or “disembodied” pedagogical container; diplomatic passive aggression; or a diffuse sense of sadness, frustration, or resentment). Using a gross analogy, imagine a house that has not been cleaned for years and whose furniture is covered by thick layers of dust. If we leave the house alone, it will look less messy and cleaner than it will when we start stirring all the dust. But this is obviously a case of erroneous perception, and there is no doubt that the neatness and freshness achieved by a thorough cleaning will be more real and satisfying than if the house is left untouched because of worries about temporary disarray.

In sum, a participatory perspective denounces both extremes—anti-intellectualism and cognicentrism—as equally one-sided and problematic and proposes that head and heart, intellect and emotion (along with body, instincts, intuition, etc.) can be equal partners in the inquiry process and elaboration of more integral understandings. Because of the widely undeveloped, undifferentiated, or dissociated state of many of those worlds in the modern self, this process may involve temporary periods of chaos and confusion, but we suggest that they should be regarded as fertile steps toward the achievement of genuinely integrated cognition and higher orders of complexity in our creative apprehension of life and the world.

Conclusions

We believe that in future years integral education will gradually move toward participatory pedagogical approaches in which all human dimensions are actively encouraged to participate creatively at all stages of inquiry and learning. The explicit inclusion of all human attributes in the inquiry process will naturally reconnect education with its root meaning (*edu-care*: “bringing out the wholeness within”) and, therefore, with transformative healing and spiritual growth, both of which involve a movement toward human wholeness. It will also promote a genuine integration of feminine and masculine principles in learning and creative

inquiry. We believe that these two moves—multidimensional inquiry and masculine/feminine balance—are pivotal for the creative vitality of both integral studies and educational practice, and we are convinced that any institution that pioneers their systematic exploration will be remembered historically as epoch-making.

In a forthcoming essay, we will provide a report of a cooperative inquiry process carried out at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, which seeks to embody the participatory approach to integral transformative education proposed above.

We end this article by highlighting the spiritual or transpersonal dimension of human participatory inquiry. As we gradually open ourselves to the epistemic power of all human attributes, we can perhaps realize that through the exercise of our own creative capabilities we are fostering the unfolding of the Mystery's infinite generativity in the world. In other words, human multidimensional cognition channels the Mystery's outpouring of new meanings onto this plane of physical reality more loyally and completely than the isolated intellect does, and these meanings can radically change not only our perception of the world but the world itself. The world then stops being sensed as having an independently objective nature and becomes a relational and intersubjective reality that unfolds in a multiplicity of conceptual and transconceptual ways, partly depending on the human approaches and ways of knowing involved in the act of apprehension. In other words, the world is now recognized as a "hierophany"—a sacred process of divine self-disclosure, taking place in and through history, in which embodied human beings can creatively participate in intimate partnership with the Mystery. This is the wider spiritual context in which the cultivation of participatory approaches to integral education gains its fullest import. And this is the context, we believe, that is crucial for the future of education in the new millennium.

Notes

1. Although most of the following reflections are offered mainly in the context of adult graduate Western education, we believe they may also be relevant for other educational levels, practices, and cultures.

2. See J. Miller (1996, 1999) for two valuable discussions of the nature and contents of holistic and spiritual curricula.

3. In his *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*, for example, Nicolescu (2002) wrote: "Transdisciplinary education revalues the role of intuition, imagination, sensibility and the body in the transmission of knowledge" (p. 150).

4. We are using the term *cognicentrism* to refer to the privileged position that the rational-analytical mind (and its associated instrumental reason and Aristotelian logic) has in the modern Western world over other ways of knowing, for example, somatic, vital, emotional, aesthetic, imaginal, visionary, intuitive, and contemplative. By no means are we

suggesting that the other human dimensions are not “cognitive” in the sense of not being able to apprehend knowledge or creatively participate in its elaboration.

5. For several enlightening discussions of assessment and validity in multidimensional inquiry, see Anderson (2000), Braud (1998), Heron (1999), and Kremer (1992a, 1992b).

6. Space does not allow us to discuss here the crucial relationship between epistemic and political participation in academia. It should suffice to say that as education moves from its current mind-centeredness to multidimensional knowing, it is likely that the traditional unilateral assessment by teachers will need to undergo a serious scrutiny and move toward a more integral approach involving not only teachers’ evaluations but also self- and peer assessment. Our sense is that the attempt to implement a participatory integral education in the context of nonparticipatory academic politics may be not only incoherent but also ultimately self-defeating. For a provoking discussion of this fundamental issue, see Heron (2002). On the transformation of the traditional relationship between teachers and students, see Freire (1970/1996, 1998).

7. The images of the four seasons and planting a seed derive from Ramon V. Albareda and Marina T. Romero’s innovative approach to integral growth and training (see Albareda & Romero, 1990; Ferrer, 2003; Romero & Albareda, 2001) and have been adapted for an academic context by Jorge N. Ferrer and Marina T. Romero in a variety of lectures, graduate courses, and pedagogical experiments at American alternative educational institutions such as the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco and the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, both located in California. It is noteworthy that the image of planting a seed is also central in the novel research methodology called “organic inquiry” (Clements, Ettlting, Jenett, & Shields, 1998), and the metaphor of the four seasons has been used in a pedagogical context by Parker Palmer (2000) in his wonderfully evocative essay, “There is a Season.”

8. By “vital seeds” we mean here the infinite life potentials (genetic dispositions, in scientific language) stored in the vital world of each human being. Although only a limited number of these potentials can be actualized in a lifetime, others can be passed on—biologically and energetically—to one’s progeny or embodied in a variety of creative fruits (projects, art, books, relationships, etc.) that can activate the vital seeds of others in the future.

9. For several compelling discussions about the pedagogical value of the inclusion of Eros in academic teaching, see hooks (1994), Pryer (2001), and Snowber (2005).

10. We are not suggesting, of course, an association between vital/heart and the feminine and body/mind and the masculine. In our view, regardless of gender, both masculine and feminine principles can manifest in and through all human dimensions in many ways: for example, as centrifugal action and receptive presence in the body, as the capability to energetically impregnate and gestate in the vital world, as the expression and reception of feelings and emotions in the heart, as speaking and listening on the mental level, and as prayer and receptive meditation in spiritual consciousness, to mention only a few possibilities. This apparent incoherence emerges from our working simultaneously with different symbolic systems which, although helpful in expressing fundamental features of the model presented, do not have to be in total synchrony with each other. For a lucid presentation of the need to combine feminine and masculine qualities and to incorporate the nonmental worlds in integral education, see Rothberg (1999).

11. See Ferrer (2003) for a description of integral transformative practices we have used for this purpose in a number of pedagogical experiments.

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