A post-metaphysical approach to second tier skill and belief

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Abstract: This article offers several perspectives and tools to support more integral, post-metaphysical, or second tier approaches to building, holding, and disseminating integral ideas. I describe several concepts, including negative capability, embodied realism, epistemic drives, and meaning-generative claims. Taking a more fully post-metaphysical approach makes integrally-informed beliefs and knowledge more portable and flexible as it flows into other communities and discourses, and enhances the ability of integral theory to be positively influenced by ideas outside its current scope.

Keywords: integral theory, post-metaphysics, negative capability, epistemic drives

Introduction — post-metaphysical approaches to belief and knowledge

Current developments in Integral Theory (including "Wilber-5," Wilber, 2006, and allusions to post-Wilberian integral theories) are fundamentally concerned with epistemology, ontology, and method—i.e. questions such as "How do we know?" "What can we know is true or real?" and "How do we justify and promote what we think is true or good?" In a precursor companion article to this one titled "On the development of beliefs vs. capacities" (ODBC) I explored the mental models and narratives the integral community uses to describe human development, and suggested more focus on skills-based models and more caution when promoting belief-based models. Stepping back to explore the nature and limitations of belief and knowledge is one aspect of second tier or integral level capacity, and in this article I explore these themes more deeply, including introducing the concepts of negative capability, epistemic drives, embodied realism, and meaning-generative claims. An important higher order skill is the capacity to holds beliefs flexibly and reflectively, with an awareness of their indeterminacies.

Integrally-informed beliefs (models, principles, claims, etc.) can be complex,

controversial, perspectival, metaphysical, and speculative. Integrally informed knowledge includes models and frameworks such as AQAL that proposes a set of primordial essences that compose reality.[2] The integral cannon includes models such as Spiral Dynamics that purport to explain a large part of the human condition. It contains esoteric and spiritual beliefs such as "God is also evolving [through us]" (Cohen & Wilber, 2006, p. 69). And it uses a variety of controversial metaphysical constructs including Eros and Agape, involution, collective consciousness, morphogenetic fields, Omega Point, Authentic Self, and non-dual ground of being.[3]

Readers may have struggled to explain integral concepts to friends or colleagues, trying to share the value of these ideas without coming across as a dogmatic believer or a new-age flake. The community as a whole struggles to appear legitimate to audiences that are scientifically oriented and pragmatically grounded. Doing this skillfully requires more than a simple shift in attitude toward humility (thought that is useful)—it calls for a deep understanding of why and how concepts and beliefs are fallible in the first place—unavoidably and ubiquitously.

Integral theory is, of course, wildly interdisciplinary (or trans-disciplinary). It draws from and speaks to scientific disciplines including cosmology, anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Yet it also includes ideas sourced in mystical experience and esoteric tradition. Post-rational knowledge points to the ineffable and the paradoxical, where language and rational argumentation become increasingly problematic. While not wanting to challenge the validity of mystical and esoteric experiences, I claim that in the post-post-modern or post-metaphysical milieu one can and must be cautious about the truth claims and interpretations drawn from such experiences and intuitions (states and stages).[4]

In this article I discuss some ideas and perspectives useful to formulating an integral, second tier, or post-metaphysical orientation to integrally-informed beliefs. Most integralists take care not to assume that people "should" be at, or be encouraged to attain, higher developmental levels in every situation; and similarly take care not to prioritize vertical development over horizontal development. Still, it can be assumed that those applying or disseminating integral theories will be most effective if they have second tier skills and embody second tier modes of action and interaction. Second tier skill is not one thing, but, as indicated by the wisdom skills list, a system of co-evolving skills, or lines, that tend to emerge together (though more basic research is needed to determine how and when they correlate).

The description of "wisdom skills" in ODBC is one possible model for illustrating second tier skills, which are also called integral, vision logic, post-rational, post-formal, and post-metaphysical skills (overlapping but not always synonymous terms). Wisdom skills were described in terms of: construct awareness, relational awareness, construct-awareness, and systems-awareness. Our discussion in this article primarily involves construct-awareness, which includes the meta-cognitive capacities of understanding the limitations of knowledge and beliefs. However, it also involves ego-awareness because the invitation is not just to take an objective, reflective, or critical stance on *some* (or *their)* beliefs but to do so on *my* or *our* belief(s).[5] The reader will undoubtedly have encountered individuals who have strong analytical skills with regard to others' beliefs but are weak in questioning their own (including not being able to see some of their "truths" as "beliefs").

In other papers I have written extensively on the application of these skills to knowledge building within the integral community. In Murray (2011) I explore what it means to take a post-metaphysical stance to Integral Theory; in Murray (2013) I discuss how the post-metaphysical

approach can untangle the potential problems with disseminating mystical and metaphysical ideas within the integral community. In Murray (2015A in press) I explore how these themes relate to embodiment and the findings of cognitive science (including Embodied Realism); and in Murray (2015B in press) I apply these ideas to the debates in ontology and epistemology ongoing at the intersection of Integral Theory and Critical Realism. Below I will summarize and adapt the themes from these papers to the focus of this article: second tier approaches to belief-holding.

Negative capability and idea portability

There are many approaches to taking a second tier attitude to integral theories and beliefs. One, mentioned above, involves how one rigorously goes about justifying and refine beliefs. This amounts to developing what I will call the "positive capability" to increase the clarity and confidence of beliefs. This is of great importance, and the major thrust of Integral Theory is toward such positive capability. But here we are more concerned with the skills needed to approach one's beliefs' with more humility, self-critique, and openness—the skills of "negative capability." These skills expose and allow for indeterminacy (uncertainty, fallibility, paradox, and dissonance) in human beliefs. The evolving understanding of mind and thought that constitute second tier reasoning reveals ever higher layers of positive knowledge (increasing abstraction and nuance through reflection, differentiation and integration), but *also* reveals ever deeper unsettling territories of unknowing and fallibility that call for the "*negative* capability" of being able to tolerate and work within this indeterminacy (see Murray, 2006, for more on negative capability, and Murray, 2015C, for a discussion of the relationship between the evolutionary upward reach of positive capabilities vs. the evolutionarily downward reach of negative capabilities).[6]

Negative capability includes becoming familiar with the sources of belief certainty and the sources of belief indeterminacy and uncertainty. Indeterminacies might be safely ignored within "the choir" of a particular community or world view, but become problematized when one wants to: (a) *cross* disciplinary boundaries to interact with other communities, (b) *apply* these ideas and *explain* one's purposes to stakeholders, or (c) have a constructive *dialogue* with others who don't agree with some aspect of the theory or model—that is, when the integral world view needs to reach across and communicate with other worldviews or conceptual frames—then indeterminacies and limitations are critically important to understand (and ameliorate or cope with). I call this the Idea Portability Principle: that understanding and dealing with the indeterminacy of ideas is more important the greater the distance between the worldviews or beliefs of interlocutors. And of course, reaching out to, positively affecting, *and being affected by* individuals with other world-views is the real end goal of Integral Theory and practice.

Negative capability has ethical as well as a cognitive import. As pointed out by Hans Kögler (1999, a Habermasian scholar), taking a reflective stance (which he calls "self-distanciation") involves the intersubjective encounter with other, and a radical openness to the unknown (sometimes called beginner's mind). Kögler says "the self…abandons itself…to a process of understanding those results and challenges it cannot foresee or determine" (p. 272). Such an authentic and sometimes unsettling hermeneutic encounter can expose beliefs or values previously hidden in shadow, and thus add to one's own self-understanding (and the reduction of what Bhaskar calls the "demi-real", Bhaskar 2000).

The idea portability principle may seem obvious but is not easily enacted. Achieving a critical distance and flexibility with our beloved, useful, and powerful integral ideas can require a significant amount of effort and skill. Enacting this certainly takes more than intoning "the map

is not the territory" or mentioning "the myth of the given." It requires an *attitude* of vigilance and gentle self-critique and a deeper *understanding* of the types of errors of thought that we wish to avoid—i.e. knowing more about exactly how and why maps differ from territories. The concepts and principles described here are intended to support that deeper understanding.

Negative capability can be supported in knowledge-building communities through what I call "indeterminacy analysis" (Murray, 2008, 2011). As explained in more detail below, all theories and models make use of concepts that admit to indeterminacy, from fuzzy boundaries, sliding signifiers, metaphorical pluralisms, and perspectival meaning shifts. The meaning of a concept or term used in a context is not usually containable in a simple definition, and what is taken to be a valid example of a concept (e.g. democracy, vegetable, truth, ego) often has significant variability. An indeterminacy analysis of an idea or theory involves supplementing or wrapping it with a layer that discusses key concepts, assumptions made about definitions and central exemplars, and how the conclusions or claims degrade or change as exemplars or definitions vary from central assumptions. The final section in ODBC provides an example. I began with a clear-cut categorization of beliefs vs. skills and made an argument using those categories. Then near the end I circled back to nuance the argument, including pointing out where it was weak or indeterminate, based on how one interprets the categories. In its efforts to connect solidly and softly with other communities, the integral community would benefit by including more indeterminacy analysis, discussions of known limitations, assumptions, and alternatives, within its body of ideas.

Negative capability can be approached from several additional angles. First, beliefs are essentially validity claims about what is true (or probable), meaningful, or right (ethical). Beliefs are espoused using language (words, concepts, etc.), and language has significant limitations in

its ability to represent meaning and truth. To hold onto an idea too tightly is to assume that the categories it refers to are well defined (determinate), when in fact they are far from that, as explained below. A post-rational approach to belief holding must include a construct-aware understanding of the fallibilities inherent in language, reason, and meaning-making. Second, how we hold beliefs is related to what we consider to be real, or how we treat the real-ness of ideas. Integral themes often involve metaphysical and even mystical themes, and second tier skillfulness includes avoiding the "misplaced concreteness" of treating abstract or esoteric ideas as if they were (overly) real in a concrete sense. Third, the holding and sharing of beliefs usually involves emotional and motivational processes related to one's desires, needs, and drives. Negative capability includes an awareness of how these factors, including what I call "epistemic drives" might bias thought and influence one's beliefs and belief-sharing. I expand on these three themes below.

Post-metaphysics and falliblism

The more reflective relationship to beliefs described above essentially constitutes taking a *post-metaphysical* stance to belief-holding, which we address because the concept of post-metaphysics figures large in contemporary integral discourse. Wilber describes his latest work ("Wilber-5") as AQAL plus post-metaphysics.[7] Post-metaphysics constitutes a post-rational and post-post-modern approach to epistemological and ontological questions about what is real or true. In *Integral Spirituality* Wilber says that "[arguably,] metaphysics…ended with Kant [who realized that] we do not perceive empirical objects in a completely realistic, pregiven fashion; but rather, structures of the knowing subject import various characteristics to the known object…Metaphysics is then a broad name for the type of thinking that can't figure [out that] reality is not a perception, but a conception…thinking that falls prey to the myth of the given" (p.

231). In terms of philosophy, Wilber says that post-metaphysical approaches avoid "postulating fixed, eternal, [ahistorical,] independently existing archetypes" [or Platonic Forms] (p. 247). In *Integral Ecology*, Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman emphasize the multi-perspectival and participatory nature of integral post-metaphysics, which "avoids positing realities independent of the viewer" (2009, p. 65). Integral Post-metaphysics (Wilber, 2006; Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman, 2009) follows from Schumacher's (and, earlier, Plotinus') notion of *adequatio* which says that "the understanding of the knower must be adequate to the thing to be known" (Schumacher, 1977, p. 39). It shifts the blunt question of *whether* objects (e.g. Santa Clause, past lives, Agape, morphogenetic fields) exist, to *in what way* do they exist *for whom*?[8] Here we will focus more on the Habermasian interpretation of post-metaphysics because Integral Post-metaphysics supports positive-capability in its ability to rank claims, but is weaker in supporting negative capability and exploring belief fallibility.[9]

Habermas is the philosopher most recognized for articulating post-metaphysics as an umbrella concept for a number of advances characterizing the leading edge of sophistication (i.e. development) in human reasoning (Habermas, 1992). Cooke (1994) summarizes Habermas' meaning of post-metaphysis as: replacing foundationalism with falliblism with regard to how knowledge is understood and argued for; focusing on intersubjective and dialogical exchange, rather than, for example, references to authoritative sources or individuals, as the source of valid knowledge; and it situates reason in the lifeworld, subordinating theory to practice and abstraction to experience. Within this post-post-modern frame there is no privileged perspective, no philosophically pure "view from nowhere," and no truth claim can be taken as absolute.

Habermas' post-metaphysics can act as our ground, but Integral Theory treads deeply into spirituality and state-experiences where metaphysics seems unavoidable and Habermas'

framework is insufficient. There will always be questions and experiences within the human condition that are unexplainable with the concepts, reasoning capacities, and scientific principles of the day. As we are compelled to make meaning about these evolving liminal territories, metaphysical claims and hypotheses are unavoidable. Along the further reaches of the spiritual or psychological path to radical stages of freedom from conditioning one encounters certain types of well-documented experiences. These include profound states of emptiness, bliss, boundlessness, expansiveness, one-pointedness, oneness, and/or compassion. Philosophers and spiritualists through the ages have described insights and pointing out injunctions sparked from deep encounters within this terrain. Post-metaphysics is not non-metaphysics—it is rather an approach to all ideas that is property aware of fallibility. And metaphysical ideas, though often highly meaning-generative, are particularly fallible.

In *Mysticism and Logic* Bertrand Russell describes metaphysics as "the attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought" (1917, p. 6). In philosophy this is usually done through the application of rational arguments, including transcendental arguments, to make very abstract or generalized ontological claims about foundations, essences, totalities, or universals. *Mystical* claims, on the other hand, purport a direct access to universal knowledge of reality based on experience. Ideas within Integral Theory have both mystical and metaphysical elements. Mystical ideas are more susceptible to the problems inherent in authority-based modes of belief and justification, but they also enjoy more permission to be poetic, metaphorical, and paradoxical. Bertrand Russell says that "logic used in the defense of mysticism seems to be faulty as logic" and "[renders such] philosophers incapable of giving any account of the world of science and daily life" (p. 15). Metaphysical clams have different (though overlapping) challenges. Foundations, essences, and universals (e.g. consciousness, life, Spirit, Eros, Ground

of Being) are abstractions subject to significant indeterminacy. Metaphysical claims occupy an uncomfortable ontological position between subjective interiorities and concrete exteriorities. Like Platonic forms/ideals, they seem to "exist" in a realm that is not fully real and yet not fully idea(l). They do not exist in space and time and yet are claimed have an objective existence independent of mind. Also, because they often relate to themes of "ultimate concern," they can attract increased certainty, in contradiction to their substantial indeterminacy. At the extreme, ideas containing flavors of totalization, fundamentalism, or essentialism can be "dangerous in the wrong hands" and susceptible to distorted interpretation. Even in 'the right hands' they have a seductive pull on the ego, and should be dispensed with reflective caution.

Embodied Realism

Post-metaphysics is a philosophical orientation to the problem of belief fallibility. Hard science has also uncovered knowledge about the sources of belief fallibility. Concepts are the building blocks of all explicit ideas (and much tacit knowledge as well). Research has shown how the nature of concepts differs from what we normally assume about them. In what could be called the "symbolic impulse," conceptual categories split the world into parts, simultaneously joining parts into categories. When we employ the knife or the glue of the concept, important truths or nuance can get left on the cutting room floor, so to speak, and troublesome grey areas can be ignored. There is something deep and strong within cognition that wants to treat abstract concepts and models (e.g. democracy, freedom, god, ego, compassion, spirit, evolution, Eros, subjectivity) as if they represented a-priori nature-determined categories in well-defined boxes that things either fall within or outside of—but this is almost never the case.[10] Lakoff and Johnsons' research into Embodied Realism reveals concepts to be "graded," meaning they have fuzzy boundaries and admit to a "metaphorical pluralism" in which different metaphorical senses

make up the full understanding of a concept (Mervis & Rosch 1981; Lakoff & Johnson 1999). The metaphors that underlie a particular concept can be incompatible or contradictory and yet we unreflectively jump from one metaphorical basis to another. The deeply metaphorical nature of thought causes one to imbue abstract ideas with traces of the properties of concrete objects, such as clear boundaries, and ignore their fuzziness, malleability, ephemerality, and indeterminacy (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; and see Murray 2015A for a detailed treatment).

The symbolic impulse is closely related to *misplaced concreteness,* a term coined by Whitehead (1929) referring to the tendency to treat an abstract concept as if it had physical reality. Misplaced concreteness underlies the "myth of the given" and the "map/territory confusion" often mentioned by Wilber.

Lakoff and Johanson's work on conceptual structures shows that the indeterminacy of concepts becomes progressively worse the more abstract they are, i.e. the further removed from concrete sensory experience and exemplars. Similarly, Chris Argyris says that "the likelihood of differences in the interpretations of different observers increases the higher one goes on the ladder of inference" (1995, p 58). Rungs along this "ladder" are inferential steps that can represent increases in abstraction, complexity, or contingency that lead one ever further from concrete facts. Esbjörn-Hargens (2010) uses the term "epistemological distance" (from Carolan, 2005) to describe differences along this ladder of inference or abstraction. Thus, the shock (or irritation, or plague) of indeterminacy is more significant for more abstract ideas, and philosophical, metaphysical, and mystical ideas are among the most abstract of all.

Abstract categories and strong categorical distinctions are burned deeply into Integral Theory. Through the compulsion of the symbolic impulse, strong categorization can precipitate over-reaching claims that ignore territories in-between or outside of the category's definition.

What gets ignored when we assume that phenomena must be subjective vs. objective, or a state vs. a stage, but not both or neither? What gets marginalized when we attempt to classify a human capacity in terms of the canonical set of developmental lines when the phenomena in question may more accurately be said to exist between categories, outside of them, or in more than one category?[11] Paul Marshal speaks to this in describing the "pathology of the paradigm of simplicity [of] Cartesian clear and distinct ideas, analytical reductionism of whole into parts, and isolation of objects from their environmental contexts" (2012, p. 21).[12] In the best cases, such critique can be appreciative and corrective, and does not repudiate an entire theory—almost all prominent theoretical frameworks and models will have this type of shadow.

Embodied Realism is based in scientific findings about cognition in all humans, but its principles can also be used to support the self-understanding implied in the skills of negative capability and construct-awareness. Cook- Greuter says of construct-aware thought: "[One becomes] cognizant of the pitfalls of the language habit [and starts] to realize the absurdity [or] limits of human map making. [The] linguistic process of splitting into polar opposites and the attending value judgments can become conscious...[one becomes] aware of the pseudo- reality created by words...aware of the profound splits and paradoxes inherent in rational thought...Good and evil, life and death, beauty and ugliness may now appear as two sides of the same coin, as mutually necessitating and defining each other" (Cook-Greuter, 2000, p. 21-30).

Epistemic drives

Misplaced concreteness and the symbolic impulse are tendencies that I call "epistemic drives"—natural and universal tendencies of thought that influence what one thinks is true or real (see Murray, 2011). The drive to make meaning and maintain certainty in the face of dissonance and indeterminacy is also an epistemic drive. Epistemic drives include "confirmation bias" and

other cognitive biases. Negative capability (including construct-awareness and related second tier, post-rational or post-metaphysical skills) is supported by a felt-sense or phenomenological appreciation of epistemic drives.

The term *drive* calls attention to the embodied nature of reason. Epistemic drives are unconscious and pervasive, yet manageable. As with biological drives to eat (or over-eat), sexually flirt, protect territory, become angry when challenged, etc., our lives are improved when we reach a stage of development in which we are aware of and can control or compensate for epistemic drives (i.e., when subject becomes object for any given drive). As with biological drives, one never completely outgrows or eliminates epistemic drives; since they can raise their heads unexpectedly in many contexts. This calls for attentiveness and responsiveness. One becomes aware of and learns to manage them at ever deeper and more nuanced levels, as they reveal themselves in ever subtler ways—so the developmental learning process continues indefinitely. As was clear in the discussion of mystical and metaphysical knowledge, epistemic drives are as forceful in mystics and geniuses as they are in the rest of us.

In Murray (2011) I list a number of epistemic drives. For example, one can experience drives toward oneness, completeness, generality, universality, permanence, perfection, explanation, and wholeness. One can also experience tendencies of thought that are in a polarity relationship with these, such as drives toward the concrete, the specific, the ephemeral, the multiple, the mysterious, and the imperfect. It can be argued that those drawn to Integral Theory have an affiliation with the former rather than the latter dives (at least as they engage in integral themes). Through introspection one can experience the drive of the inquisitive and meaning-hungry mind to know the causal root, foundation, source, or origin of things; and sense how one enjoys the tidiness and explanatory power of models such as AQAL. The constructs of the

good/true/beautiful, I/we/it, and gross/subtle/causal have a pleasing epistemic pull to them that makes it more difficult to see the manifestations of misplaced concreteness. Epistemic drives toward wholeness, completeness, essentialness, etc. not only help us accurately understand and make meaning of the world but they can also over-function to create biases, errors, and ethical problems. Phenomena such as grandiosity, hegemony, elitism, and proto-fascism are extreme cases. But in less extreme ways the subtle influence of such drives pervades the creation, consumption, and promotion of theories, models, and belief systems. A post-metaphysical stance toward beliefs watches for and dialogues about how such epistemic drives might influence the content, use, and promotion of beliefs.

Meaning-generative claims

Post-metaphysics is a philosophical orientation to idea fallibility that motivates and informs negative capability in general terms. The ideas behind Embodied Realism and epistemic drives support a phenomenological self-understanding by explaining the nature of very specific phenomena. Next I will turn to a concept that supports the intersubjective and communicative aspects of negative capability. This territory has already been touched on with the idea of "indeterminacy analysis," which is one suggestion for how to compensate for idea fallibility within a community as it builds and disseminates knowledge.

Above I have used the term "meaning-generative" several times. It is a term meant to support the serious exploration and dissemination of ideas without the ideas needing to be provably "true." For example, I can "believe in" reincarnation, the Gai hypothesis, or evolutionary spirituality, though I have no direct empirical experience supporting these ideas. Such beliefs may counteract existential despair, be held by people I admire and trust, and coordinate well with other beliefs and intuitions that I have. Though I can and should assemble

evidence and arguments to support such beliefs, I do not need to "prove" that they are real or true to be able to claim that they possess a type of validity.

As indicated above, there will always be aspects of human experience and concern that fall outside the bounds of current scientific or logical provability. Yet dominant modes of discourse tend to limit us to scientific and evidential modes of argument and explanation. Wilber, drawing from Kant, Habermas and others, points to the "big three" domains or magisteria of modern reason: the objectively true, the intersubjectively good (or morally just), and the subjectively beautiful. According to Habermas (1981), to espouse a belief is to imply that one can provide reasons to back it up, and modern rationality differentiates and sanctions these three modes of justification.

The beliefs, theories and principles disseminated by the integral community are mostly truth claims—claims about the way reality works, as opposed to merely subjective claims or strictly ethical claims. But, due to their inherent fallibility and indeterminacy, we want to espouse them as useful and valid without being expected to prove them, over even claim that they are provable. I propose that being explicit about a fourth type of validity, meaning generativity, can help do this.[13]

Integral Theory is not alone in struggling with how to claim validity for its ideas within modern argumentation frameworks. Social science and philosophy (including "reconstructive" sciences) are plagued with indeterminacies that the physical sciences are relatively immune from (Oberschall, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 2010; Wallis, 2008). Jon Elster notes that psychology, sociology, ethnography, political science, etc. have had little luck in predicting phenomena, and he views "the ideal of law-like explanation [in] the social sciences as implausible and fragile" (1999, pg. 1). He suggests that claims in such areas, even if they do not provide the predictive power of

laws from the hard sciences, provide powerful *explanatory* power. Elster suggests "explanatory mechanisms" as a term for claims that are not as provable as scientific laws, yet have more causal import than mere descriptions. Integral theories are rife with such principles which provisionally explain but can rarely predict human behavior. Meaning-generativity is a term that generalizes "explanatory mechanism."

To apply this principle, in discourse one can note explicitly that one holds or promotes an idea simply because it helps one make sense of the world. If one can speak in terms of meaning generative potential one gains some freedom from the straightjacket of conforming to modernist/quasi-scientific justification modalities and has more flexibility in talking about beliefs that might be called metaphysical, quasi-scientific, or speculative. The suggestion here is not to de-valorize rigor, but to provide valid an alternative justification mode that allows one to more rigorously and reflectively when scientific rigor (or modernist forms of rationality) is or isn't applicable.[14] The concept of meaning-generativity can help one assert and promote metaphysical and mystical ideas with sufficient forcefulness while still communicating a post-metaphysical or reflective stance that acknowledges the fallibility of ideas. Explicitly using meaning-generativity as a way to justify metaphysical beliefs may help ease the important dialogues that need to take place between the scientifically-oriented and the spiritually/mystically-oriented. It removes the hard claims about reality that repel the scientific minded and gives them a palatable frame for considering the wisdom available in metaphysical beliefs.

Conclusion

Beliefs are powerful things—they drive behavior and shape culture. In the 21st century all beliefs are available to all, to taste and ingest and embody, in a superfluid marketplace

competing memes. Increasingly we see that *how* one believes is as important as what one believes (or knows). Integralists track in very powerful ideas: meta-theories proposing to tie together all human knowledge, philosophical theories of the underlying nature of reality, and spiritual beliefs about the furthest reaches of human potential and purpose. In a sense they are ideas "whose time has come" in that they address questions of deep importance by tapping into the leading edges of human needs, curiosity, and development. At this leading edge are also so-called second tier capacities to hold beliefs in more flexible, reflective, and complex ways—skills for navigating the territory between hypothesis, belief, and commitment with wisdom. With the owning of powerful ideas comes a moral responsibility in proportion to their meaning-generative power, and integralists are called to spead their powerful ideas with great care and skillful means.

In a panel discussion on Integral Theory and spirituality at the 2015 Integral Theory Conference panelists noted how the mystical and metaphysical beliefs and pronouncements found within Integral Theory often hamper attempts to gain legitimacy for Integral Theory in the larger world. It is significant that Susanne Cook-Greuter, one of the most highly regarded elders within the integral community, choose to focus her 2013 conference presentation on critiquing the air of confidence behind much of the community's discourse. She noticed "a clear shift away from the inquiry mode that originally attracted me to integral ideas to its current pronouncements and certainty" and asks for a clearer differentiation "between what we can know and assert and what is mere conjecture" (Cook-Greuter, 2013, p. 227; this paper won an award and later appeared in this journal). She wonders how much current integral discourse is an "expression of [the] ego’s central function to tell a coherent story and to make us the heroes in it" as opposed to coming from "genuine compassion for all sentient beings." Integral Theory is said to stream from

second tier consciousness, a territory for which ego development theory is our current best map, and, according to Cook-Greuter "ego developmental theory is distinct from other theories precisely because it pays more attention to how tightly or lightly a theory is held" (p. 234). We could add that, at higher developmental levels, one also pays more attention to the usually hidden psychological and social forces of how theories are shaped and disseminated.

The mind is like a lens that reforms and colors as it constructs one's image of reality. It is useful to simply believe that some distortion of the image is always present, and to allow that belief to affect the confidence with which one espouses ideas. But we can do more than strive in some vague way to be more humble, cautious, or authentic—i.e. reminding ourselves that the map is not the territory. It is better to understand something about exactly how the lens distorts and colors reality, and how and why the map veers from the territory. In this way one can supplement the strong "positives capability" of Integral Theory with a negative capability for holding uncertainty, unknowing, and paradox, bringing on line the wisdom skills that Cook-Greuter points to. In this article I have tried to support this type of understanding from two perspectives: first, by describing theoretical and empirical findings illustrating cognitive and social mechanisms that lead to indeterminacy and fallibility in knowledge. And second, by inviting the reader into a phenomenological journey to experience and reflect on epistemic drives as they arise.

With an overly positivist and confident attitude, one risks assuming that those who don't agree with one are not operating from an adequate developmental altitude ("Kosmic Address"), and thus one misses the opportunities for generative collaboration and self-understanding that come from full participation. Employing the skills of negative capability, we can speak directly to the indeterminacies and fallibilities of our ideas, and, when ideas are highly fallible but still

important to us, we can stand with open arms upon their meaning-generative potential rather than hold tight with a sense of certainty or urgency.

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Bio

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[2] AQAL proposes "five irreducible categories of…manifest existence:" quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types, which are said to be "the five most basic elements that need to be included in any truly integral or comprehensive approach..." to understanding the cosmos as a whole or any aspect of it (Wilber, 2006, p. 31). AQALs quadrants are described in terms of perspectives, where "...perspectives are primordial, which is to say they are the most fundamental or primeval elements of reality, existing at or from the beginning of time" (Fuhs, 2010, p. 1).

[3] Wilber metaphysical statements include: "The reality, suchness, or isness of every holon is actually Spirit...a drive which ultimately wants to embrace the entire Kosmos itself. [...] This ultimate realization [is] of the ever-present, spaceless and therefore infinite, timeless and therefore eternal, formless and therefore omnipresent, Condition of all conditions and Nature of all natures and radically groundless Ground of all grounds" (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt A of the in-progress Volume 2 of the Kosmos Trilogy).

[4] Wilber's "Three Strands" model of knowledge validation (Wilber, 1997) goes only part way in addressing these challenges, as I explain in Murray (2011, p. 102).

[5] Systems awareness and relational awareness are also involved in second tier belief-holding and belief-dissemination, since the adoption and diffusion of idea memes is, to view it objectively, a matter of socio-cultural systems dynamics, and, to view it as something one is engaged in subjectively, a matter of understanding and empathizing with others. This illustrates how the four aspects of wisdom skill co-evolve and can be difficult to isolate in concrete situations.

[6] Henri Bergson said that a "a theory of [life or reality must be] accompanied by a criticism of knowledge…it is necessary that these two inquiries, theory of knowledge and theory of [life or reality], should join each other, and by a circular process, push each other on unceasingly" (Bergson 1944 p. xxii, as quoted in Graham 1981, p. 143).

[7] See Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman, 2009 pg. 564 note 38.
[8] Integral post-metaphysics locates the who/where/where of an idea using the concept of Kosmic Address which includes the AQAL-based developmental altitude and perspectival quadrant of both the perceiver (claimant) and the object of perception. This scheme may be problematic in actual dialogic encounters, since it can involve concluding that another person is developmentally not up to snuff and does don't have the capacity to engage with one's beliefs or engage at the level of discourse that is required. Such conclusions, though sometimes valid, also problematic because in doing so we (a) risk misdiagnosing the other using a simplistic categorization system; (b) miss an opportunity to connect more deeply with both the person and the ideas in front of us, and (c) miss an opportunity to more seriously reflect on our beliefs and selves in the face of an authentic encounter with another (and see Kögler, 1992).
[9] Integral Post-metaphysics may have additional problems in real application. In contentious dialogs about the validity of specific claims, will participants be able to agree on the parameters of the Kosmic Address itself? How contentious will the specification of the developmental levels or formal perspective of interlocutors become?
[10] As Gregory Bateson says: "[the] world begins by making splits, then drawing boundaries, then solidifying these boundaries. Then we fool ourselves into believing what we have made ourselves see. Solidifying boundaries is very comfortable, because it allows us to deny our experience...We miss the whole system" (1979).
[11] Graded concept boundaries make universalizing claims of the form "all X's are Y" particularly fallible, because there will always be examples of things that are not exactly X but not exactly not-X either. It would be more correct to say "all X's are Y to the extent that instances of X and Y are prototypical of the categories defined by the speaker's central examplars.
[12] When taken together and in detail, Wilber's theoretical arguments are much more nuanced and sophisticated than the AQAL categories. In his writing Wilber often acknowledges the indeterminacies of these categories and speaks to the interaction, co-definition, and co-(tetra)emergence within categorical dualities; and he references higher level constructs that transcend and include polar categories. Still, such caveats are often in Wilber's footnotes, and remains weak on the negative capability of being explicit about the limitations of foundational constructs.
[13] Wilber (1997) in moving from the big-three framework to the four-quadrant framework, has proposed "functional fit" as the validity type associated with the lower right (inter-objective) quadrant. This is compatible with my notion of meaning-generativity, which essentially claims that an idea fits functionally and usefully within a given shared territory of understanding and values.
[14] See Amanda Anderson's (2006) *The Way We Argue Now: A study in the culture of theory* for an attempt to reclaim the concept of "critical distance" from the deconstructive and relativist malaise that, she argues, overtook scholarship in the late 20th century.