

Introduction

Developing a Critical Integral Praxis for Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

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The question of what it is to be a gendered, sexual human being is one that is of central concern for many of us. To question our gender is to question who we are. It is neither a light question, nor one that has proven fast or easy to resolve. When the early feminist movement took up the mantle of this inquiry more than 200 years ago, they were fueled by a desire to break through the gendered assumptions about who they were in order to engage with the yet unknown possibilities of who they might become outside of prescribed gender roles: to more fully explore, know, and inhabit themselves and their world. The same fire of that inquiry burns through these chapters. Speaking from across the spectrum of personal and political backgrounds, academic and practitioner orientations, and male and female perspectives, the voices in these chapters are insightful, angry, inquisitive, and hopeful. Calling across chasms of misunderstanding, they ask to be seen and heard by one another, each desiring through this inquiry to bring forward a more complex understanding of what it means to be woman, man, human.

Thus this collection dives into the deep end and engages with the complex developmental edges of contemporary gender and feminist theory. The role and place of men's studies is interrogated against feminism, critical social theory is reintroduced, and our understanding of masculine and feminine is repeatedly questioned. Through a diverse range of historical, feminist, psychological, sociological, spiritual, and artistic viewpoints, these chapters reflect on, reveal, and

invoke new understandings of the gendered and sexed self. As Integral academics, educators and practitioners these chapters also aim to deepen and broaden the conceptual containers that currently hold our understanding of sex, love, and intimacy. This means widening our perspective to include the biological, psychological, sociocultural, and spiritual dimensions that inform our sexuality as well as situating current views on sex within the larger context of human evolutionary and developmental history.

A Brief History: An Emerging Lineage of Integral Approaches to Sex and Gender

Integral Theory has its roots in the works of scholars such as the Indian mystic Sri Aurobindo and Bengali philosopher Haridas Chaudhuri, who sought to bring together the insights of Eastern and Western spirituality and philosophy in order to create a more comprehensive, integrated, and evolutionary understanding of reality. Integral Theory has found its most contemporary prominence through the work of American philosopher Ken Wilber. Wilber's own perspectives on sex and gender, expressed across many volumes of his work but most extensively in *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (1995) and *The Eye of Spirit* (1997), can be found in this volume in his dialogue with men's activist Warren Farrell.

In *The Eye of Spirit* (1997), Wilber posed what he believed to be some of the core questions facing the field of sex and gender studies as a whole. The opening of his chapter "Integral Feminism: Sex and Gender on the Moral and Spiritual Path" reads, "Does Spirit manifest as male and female? Is there God and Goddess? Do men and women therefore have different, if complementary, types of spirituality? At what point, if any, do we cease to be male and female and start being human? Has feminism outlived its usefulness? Or does it simply need a more integral approach?"

These and many other questions from the field are engaged within this anthology with responses drawn from the scholarly lineage of feminism, emerging explorations of the men's movement, as well as insights garnered from the fields of sociology, biology, history, art, psychology, and spiritual practice. Our book builds on the wealth of knowledge already available within each of these traditional academic and applied domains of inquiry and works to integrate their insights into a more complex developmental vision of sex, gender, and sexuality through the use of the integral framework.

An Introduction to Wilber's Integral Theory

The overarching aim of Wilber's integral approach is to establish a model that is inclusive of all the world's knowledge domains, an aim reflected most suc-

cinctly in *A Brief History of Everything* (1996) and *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality* (2000). Wilber argues there is a truth claim to most things, subject to where that claim originates, and proposes new ways to organize and honor multiple ways of knowing. He draws from fields as diverse as psychology, philosophy, art, religion/mysticism, politics, and economics.

For Wilber, the arc of evolution is the trajectory on which all partial truth claims are located, whether in the evolution of humanity from premodern, to modern, to postmodern times, or in the evolution of consciousness within each individual from egocentric, to ethnocentric, to worldcentric, and beyond. Wilber argues each stage of evolution “transcends and includes” the previous level, thus it is essential that we honor the partial truth claims revealed within different theories and practices while also recognizing their limitations.

Integral Theory aims to include and honor multiple truth claims by integrating them into a postdisciplinary integral map that can help us begin to organize the multitude of conflicting perspectives facing us in a postmodern world. This map is often referred to as the AQAL matrix, which is an acronym of “all quadrants, all levels,” including all lines, all states, and all types. While the latest iterations of AQAL discerns viewpoints (or kosmic addresses) that occur all the way up and all the way down, to best understand this later complex position familiarity with Wilber’s earliest iteration of the integral map is required.

Within the AQAL matrix elements arise within four quadrants. The Upper-Left quadrant (UL) refers to the subjectivity or experience of interior-individual phenomena such as sensations, inner states, and emotions (the “I” of experience). The Upper-Right quadrant (UR) focuses on objective exterior-individual observations, such as observable and measurable facts about physical objects and is thus described as the “IT” perspective. The Lower-Left quadrant (LL) or interior-collective is the domain of cultural values and shared collective worldviews, otherwise known as the “WE.” And the Lower-Right quadrant (LR) refers to the exterior-collective, which includes all the systems and social exterior manifestations of interior collective values, such as observable organizational structures or codified laws. This inter-objective perspective is otherwise known as “ITS.”

Four recurring elements are observed within the quadrants. The first of these is “states,” which refers to states of consciousness including waking, dreaming, meditative, and altered states. “Levels” refers to stages of consciousness or evolutionary waves of development as they emerge over time in cultures and individuals. “Lines” refers to the development of multiple intelligences as they unfold through stages. Lines can include cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, or kinesthetic development, and so on. “Types” refers to the different typologies within individuals that will cause them to traverse levels of consciousness in a unique way, which for Wilber includes “masculine” and “feminine” types and can include any other number of typing systems.

By using the three principles of nonexclusion, enfoldment, and enactment, and acknowledging that each practice discloses different aspects of reality and each mode has its own validity claim and modes of investigation, AQAL strives toward more comprehensive understandings of its subject matter. Thus the AQAL matrix maps a large and complex territory and offers a valuable potential tool for orienting, discerning, and honoring the many perspectives on sex, gender, and sexuality that exist today.

With the inquiry into sex, gender, and sexuality having become so broad and the range of approaches to the inquiry so diverse, the necessity to be able to sift through and make sense of the contradictory theories and agendas that seek to stake their ground in this collective conversation has become imperative. This collection confronts and responds to this dilemma: it reflects the scope and depth of the postmodern discussion while locating it within a larger integral developmental inquiry.

Beginnings and Personal Reflections: Creating the Context for a Critical Integral Inquiry

The idea for this anthology emerged out of the international First Biennial Integral Theory Conference in 2008. It was at this conference that we, the editors, met in person for the first time. It was also at this conference that we met many of the writers and practitioners who were later to become contributors to our book, as they gathered to share their emerging visions for sex, gender, and sexuality in an academic setting specifically dedicated to the application of Integral Theory.

The conference itself felt for many of us like a historic moment. Sarah, from Sydney, Australia, was in her early thirties finishing work on her Ph.D. focused on an integral approach to feminist studies, and Vanessa, a Canadian, then in her early twenties, was publishing work on the intersections of beauty, feminism, and Integral Theory. At the time that we conceived of writing this book together, we were both full of a great deal of youthful idealism about the potential we felt Integral Theory could bring to the study of gender and sexuality on a broader scale, and we wanted to play some role in facilitating that conversation.

We were also aware that amidst the many presentations and panel discussions we attended at the conference, there were very diverse and sometimes strongly conflicting views on what an integral approach to gender and sexuality would really look like, both in theory and practice. These differences in approach were also reflective of larger trends, tensions, and conflicts within the field of feminist and gender studies as a whole. Thus, our youthful idealism was soon tempered as we realized the difficult, complex, and dynamic nature

of the conversation we were attempting to facilitate. As a result, our book became an arduous, humbling, exciting, and challenging six-year process from conception to publication.

Integral Theory is proposed as a way of facilitating more cohesive and integrated ways of understanding a subject. And yet over the course of compiling this collection we found, as editors, that the question, “What do we mean by ‘integral’ and how can its application to sex and gender research contribute to the field as a whole?” has proved to have no simple or easy answers. As we worked with our contributing authors, we confronted the problem of definition, often finding ourselves in conflict about what integral meant and how we wanted to contain our inquiry into its meaning. As a theory, the map was elegant, but in practice, our attempts to apply the integral framework to sex and gender often left us with more questions than answers, more conflicts of perspective than cohesive understandings.

Any attempt to pioneer a new inquiry at the edges of culture and consciousness is bound to lead to conflict, confusion, and difficulty. As integral thinker and a friend of ours, Elizabeth Debold, says, “Any inquiry that is new and worth doing is bound to be messy!” Editing this book therefore led us into a complicated matrix of divergent perspectives, challenging us to navigate, integrate, and honor multiple visions of what integral meant to the individuals who were each approaching the topic from different disciplines and entertaining diverse frames of reference.

We were conscious that we did not want to fall into a relativistic “free-for-all” where perspectives were included without any real distinctions about what might be more or less valuable to advancing the larger inquiry on these issues. After all, the integral impulse was born out of the experienced limitations of postmodern culture and consciousness, where deconstructive approaches at times went too far in equalizing all perspectives to the point of nihilistic relativism. The proposed gift of integral consciousness is its ability to move us beyond a purely relativistic approach to knowledge by restoring the integrity of value distinctions and the importance of natural hierarchy, thereby illuminating the fact that although all perspectives have their place and value, not all perspectives are necessarily equal.

Thus, although we believe the integral framework offers tremendous potential in being able to construct new and flexible epistemological models, we continue to stress the need for constant critical reflection on Integral Theory itself to be conscious of the shadows and power dynamics that always come into play with any new attempt to construct knowledge and assert truth.

As editors we came to realize that if we wanted to engage a truly new inquiry into sex and gender issues, one that could really begin to reflect a radical liberational approach to knowledge, an integration of both authoritative and critical voices within the integral community, we had to be willing to engage,

and sit with tension. We thus offer this book as a first step rather than a final one on the road to developing new integrative approaches to sex, gender, and sexuality. Rather than attempt to propose a pristine unitary model that everyone could agree on, our offering to this inquiry might most accurately be described as that of providing a container of curiosity and receptivity for the conflict, mystery, and paradox that inevitably arise with any attempt to engage with the powerful and chaotic energies that drive development and change.

What we felt to be most original about this anthology was in our willingness to include such diverse and sometimes deeply conflicting viewpoints (even views that we may have sometimes personally disagreed with) and allow them all to be given voice in one book. In many ways, this was an ambitious project. It proved difficult for us not only to put aside our personal biases, but also to create a cohesive container that could hold such diversity and conflict in one space with a sense of openness and respect. We were clear that we did not want to offer any final answers. We wanted to put everything on the table and let scholars and practitioners engage, support, and critique the work in innovative ways that would build on and facilitate larger connections and insights for the field as a whole, trusting that while the views are quite diverse and at times conflicting, everyone included has a deep commitment to a more integral approach to sex, gender, and sexuality. We were aware that this is an area of our lives that tends to be one of the most charged because sex and gender relates to our sense of identity and our sense of the other in such a deep and fundamental way. Thus, it is never easy to be integrally inclusive on issues where we often have a big stake in the outcome, whether consciously or not.

Functionalist versus Critical/Conflict Views on Sex and Gender

While we have made a conscious choice as editors to avoid stating any final conclusions about the future of sex and gender, we did find that over the course of working on this anthology significant themes kept repeating. These recurring themes within the writing of our contributors are also central to the larger discourse on sex and gender within the culture and academia. These recurring themes and conflicts centered most specifically around functionalism versus critical/conflict theory analysis of the nature of patriarchy itself, questions about the relationship between dominants and subordinates in gendered society and how this impacts social identity formation and our understanding of history.

When considering the views on patriarchy and gender relations within our anthology, one of the central conflicts that stood out was the difference between a more functionalist versus critical/conflict theory approach to understanding sex and gender history. Although there is no single strict black-and-white definition of functionalism and/or critical theory today (some theorists have

tried to cross-fertilize between these schools of thought, and others have tried to minimize or negate the conflict between them entirely), some fascinating orienting generalizations can be made about these two significantly different schools of thought that add an important frame to the conversation contained in this anthology on sex and gender history.

Those with a functionalist's preference in their understanding of history tend to see society comprising an interconnected web of relationships, social contracts, and institutions where each "part" plays a role in the functioning of the larger whole of society. Functionalism has tended to interpret the value of each "part" of society in terms of how well it contributes to the stability of the whole, as it is a social theory that puts primacy on the need for order, stability, and productivity in healthy societies. Even social inequalities are most often regarded as necessary for the proper functioning of society, and history is framed, and often justified, by how each part is able to functionally fit within the larger system at any given time.

In contrast to functionalism, critical theory (sometimes referred to as conflict theory) sees society and history built on continual interplays of power relations. For critical/conflict theorists, violence, dominance, and active oppression are seen as core to the way social organization is formed. The emphasis on the "critical" component of theory was derived from a desire to overcome the limits of purely descriptive, positivist, functionalist, materialist, and determinist views of history and human nature. Those in the critical tradition viewed history as a constant struggle and clash between competing interests and believed that societies eventually formed in favor of the interests of the dominant group. Inequalities were seen as foundational to how societies are built and were the result of domination and subordination rather than "functional fit." Conflict/critical theorists also believe that "order" has always been constructed on an unequal playing field and thus the goal of critical theory is one of liberating human beings from circumstances of oppression by opposing the dominant order. It is believed that only in becoming aware of the dialectic of power struggles throughout history and in contemporary social formations that individuals would be able to liberate themselves and change the existing social order toward one of emancipation for all.

Though functionalism and critical theory are themselves complex theories and traditions that cannot be fully appreciated as generalizations, a fundamental tension point in their basic general world views can be located. At root, they are arguably fundamentally oppositional views of history and social relations. Not only are these two theories built on distinctly different views of social order and how societies form, but if you scratch the surface they are also based on two fundamentally different views about human nature. For those who either explicitly or implicitly hold a more functionalist viewpoint on human relations, human nature has to be regarded as fundamentally neutral or good (or

not regarded at all): we evolve and relate with others and within society based on what is the best functional fit for everyone and the whole. For those who explicitly or implicitly hold a critical/conflict view of human relations, human nature is conceived as driven by conflicting worldviews and power relationships, often resulting in the dominance of certain groups over others.

As a first volume working to apply an integral lens in this context, when chapters are juxtaposed, some of the fault lines in the field are noticeable. As integral work continues, perhaps the tensions across these chapters will be integrated in a new way. We hope by offering a space for the conflicting views of each of these orientations to be heard, repeatedly questioned, investigated, challenged and reevaluated through varied lenses, it will lead to better clarity to the partial truth each holds with regard to history, power relations, and gender oppression. And ultimately we believe that giving space to these conflicting voices is also part of the work necessary to integrate dichotomous positions without reducing one to the other such as these.

Overview of the Book's Contents

As the first edited collection of work in this field, this collection includes chapters that provide background to these disciplines of inquiry and discuss the place and role of the emergence of Integral Theory to these fields. Opening this collection, Nicholson's chapter, "Defining Woman: From First Wave to Integral Feminism," offers a scholarly historical overview of the development of feminist thought with regard to the definition of woman from the first wave through to contemporary third wave scholarship and lays the ground for an Integral feminism. From the critical perspectives of both feminist and integral scholarship, she asks the question, "What is it to be a woman?" and examines both the gifts that Integral Theory offers to contemporary feminism in this endeavor as well as its limits.

Situating men at a significant point of crisis in evolutionary history and development, R. Michael Fisher presents the case in chapter 2 for a radical masculinist movement. Responding to both integral and postmodern theory, Fisher's "(Are) Men Tragically Hopeless(?): A Critical Integralist's Perspective" follows the developments and struggles of men in conscious community responding to feminism by drawing on his own personal and scholarly experience and insights from men's work. He advocates for a theoretical practice with the aim of transformation and liberation of men via a praxis of social identity development that deeply recognizes the economic, cultural, and social system in which humans are embedded and the particular social oppressions that arise from this embeddedness. His is a theoretical and ethical position, one that is informed by and gathers up postmodern political and critical social theories

and one that moves toward liberation for both genders by working from the ruins of hopelessness.

Chapter 3, Elizabeth Debold's "A Deep Integral View on the Future of Gender," presents an evolutionary perspective on gender that supports Wilber's early vision for an integral future where women and men become equal partners in creating the next stage of culture. She tracks the historical stages of consciousness that have marked epochal shifts in our understanding of what it is to be a gendered human being. Her exploration of history urges us to understand the development of human consciousness and culture in relation to sex and gender so that we might more fully engage with Eros and evolution as our core motivation of being.

Next, scholar Gilles Herrada offers a comprehensive evolutionary analysis of homosexuality and homophobia in Chapter 4, "The Mysterious Fate of Homosexuality." In Herrada's desire to promote the release of homosexuality from its "victim identity," he revisits the scholarship on same-sex love with an integral lens and brings together the insights offered by various fields—biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and religious studies—into a more integrated framework, thereby illuminating the complex dynamics that underlie homosexual history. Through a sweeping investigation of homosexuality from our earliest primate ancestors, to its increasing suppression under the emergence of the Judeo-Christian worldview, Herrada offers an original perspective on how and why homophobia has taken such strong roots in the Western world, and why homosexuality today is still struggling to create a new vision for itself.

In chapter 5, "An Integral Map of Sexual Identity," Terry H. Hildebrandt, a scholar and advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights in the workplace, maps the key theories and concepts that exist in sex and gender research within an integral framework, illuminating the important but partial truths of each approach. Through his exploration of key theories, such as essentialism, social constructionism, and queer theory, as well as his nuanced unpacking of distinct concepts and terms such as gender identity, gender role, and sexual orientation, Hildebrandt elucidates the complex and multidimensional nature of gender and sexuality and offers future directions for research in the field.

After establishing these essential historical perspectives to the fields of gender and sexuality studies, this collection turns to the architect of Integral Theory, Ken Wilber. In chapter 6, "Gender Issues without Men: An Oxymoron?" Wilber speaks with Dr. Warren Farrell, men's activist and author of *The Myth of Male Power*. Wilber and Farrell position feminism as a social movement that has freed women from traditional roles. However, they agree that this same freedom has yet to be offered to men. They explain why a flaw of academic feminism is the creation of the false dichotomy of men as oppressors/women as oppressed—that we live in a patriarchal world controlled by men to benefit men

at the expense of women. Farrell and Wilber argue that the world has not been controlled by men, but by the need to survive. They discuss how virtually every society that survived did so by persuading its sons to be disposable--disposable in war, disposable at work--and therefore, indirectly, disposable as dads. They introduce and discuss Farrell's redefinition of power, which is that genuine power is control over one's own life. The goal of Wilber's Integral Theory and Farrell's plea for neither a woman's movement nor a men's movement, but a "gender liberation movement," is to pave the way for a transition in our love from that of role mates to soul mates.

In chapters 7 and 8, scholars Rebecca A. Bailin and Joseph Gelfer critically respond to the underlying premises in Wilber's positioning of feminism and the feminine in Integral Theory; however, their critiques arise very differently. Rebecca A. Bailin speaks from her personal and political background as a feminist and integral scholar in chapter 7, exploring the limitations of the use of masculine/feminine terminology in Integral Theory and practice. "Feminine, Masculine, Female, and Male in the Integral Space" tackles one of the most treasured typologies of the integral model head on and exposes a sense of gender "essence" that is directly tied to biological traits and tendencies in the definition of masculine/feminine typologies. In answer, Bailin invites the integral community to come to a deeper, more nuanced understanding and appreciation of the workings of sex and gender as it unfolds over the course of development and through this to move toward integral consciousness.

Speaking from the perspective of men's or masculine spirituality in chapter 8, Joseph Gelfer's "Integral Spirituality or Masculine Spirituality?" is an analysis of what he perceives to be the masculine bias and style in Wilber's work. Gelfer positions himself as a controversial outside vocal critic of the integral community and questions many of the fundamental premises of integral philosophy from his own standpoint and outside observation. This chapter takes Integral spirituality's premise to include and transcend masculine and feminine spiritualities, and offers an analysis of the gendered framework of integral spirituality as constructed in Wilber's typology model and theory of evolutionary history. Gelfer addresses what he believes are the problematic implications of this masculine bias and analyzes how he sees this bias has been perpetuated in the work of other integral gender theorists associated with Wilber, such as Warren Farrell and David Deida.

In chapter 9, "Led by the Spirit of Art: A Spiritual Feminist Arts-Based Inquiry," Barbara Bickel reflects on the personal and philosophical journey of influences—integral, feminist, and artistic—that have informed and developed her spiritual, feminist artistic inquiry and practice as a professional painter for more than 20 years. Her practice of connecting with spirit through the depth of body-mind in collaboration with her subject is one that seeks to respond to the human body and particularly to the socioculturally situated ideas of gender.

In doing so she invites a spiritual consciousness into and through the art process to deconstruct the social constructions of masculine and feminine as man and woman and collaboratively reveal the naked truth of the gendered self.

In chapter 10, "Evolving Our Approach to Sexual Harassment: A New Role for Women," Vanessa D. Fisher and former director of Dispute Resolution for the Utah Judiciary Diane Musho Hamilton engage a passionate and controversial discussion about the history and role of sexual harassment policy as it has evolved over the last 50 years most specifically in the United States and Canada and how it has shaped sexual relations between men and women. Fisher inquires with Hamilton about how young women can better empower themselves in their sexual interactions, and together they attempt to lay out a more complex developmental approach to understanding and dealing with sexual harassment. Hamilton responds from her experience as a mediator in sexual harassment cases as well as from her perspective as a spiritual teacher who mentors women in becoming more conscious of how they wield their sexual energy.

In the closing chapter, seasoned sex educators Michele Eliason and John P. Elia build on what they term their "antioppressive, democratic model of sex education," by implementing the insights they have gleaned from Integral Theory. "An Integral Approach to Sexuality Education" traces the development of sexuality education from its origins in the Puritan movements of the late-nineteenth century to the development of the abstinence-only education programs that exist today. Eliason and Elia expose the deep-seated religious and scientific biases that continue to inform the construction of sexuality education in the United States. Arguing that sexuality education to date has offered little more than piecemeal approaches to address the complex bio-, psycho-, socio-, and spiritual dimensions of human sexuality, the authors propose a nuanced model for understanding the continuum of sexual experience and sexual development as a guide for future curriculum.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to Ken Wilber first, for his brilliant integral scholarship, which has allowed us to engage in a more comprehensive and integrative look at this field, and second, for the questions that his work has opened for us to follow. We are also deeply grateful to Sean Esbjörn-Hargens who has supported us as an editor for this anthology and for all his hard work bringing integral discourse into the wider world. We are also indebted to the work of Willow Pearson, who as the first head of the integral sex and gender studies branch of Integral Institute, developed some of the first seminars and workshops aimed at exploring women's integral life practice, and introduced us to one another.

We need to acknowledge work is being done by other scholars and practitioners in the integral field whom we were not able to include in this anthology, but who should be recognized within this emerging lineage. In the future we hope to see and include more cultural voices on these topics, which we know will continually expand the diversity and complexity of perspectives on these issues. The voices within this book largely represent the perspectives of white Europeans, Americans, Australians, and Canadians, which offer an important beginning, but obviously will have their own inherent biases and are not an end.

We invite ongoing challenges, critiques, and refinements of this emerging integral approach to sex, gender, and sexuality in order to continually push the edges and the conflict of this inquiry for the purpose of the greater whole. We hope this book will create an open fertile ground from which diverse and new critical integral dialogues on sex, gender, and sexuality will grow and flourish for generations to come.