



INTEGRAL RECOVERY

SURFACES AND DEPTH

by **John Dupuy**



One of the main insights of the great mystics, and one of the essential truths of Integral Recovery is that all suffering comes from identification with surfaces. This is not a dogma that one has to believe or buy, based on what I or anyone else is saying, this is an experiential given that one will discover as one practices and plunges again and again into the depths of one's own being in daily contemplative and meditative practice. And yes, again, daily contemplative interior practice is an essential part of Integral Recovery practice. Someone recently defined practice as "cultivation through repetition."

This is the best short definition I think I've heard. What are we cultivating? Through exercise and nutrition: strength, health and vitality; through our cognitive work: new perspectives, knowledge and wisdom; through our emotional and shadow work: freedom from the dysfunctional aspects of our past programming, and the freedom not to get lost in our current drama; through our spiritual practice: the ability to live our lives from our core, which means our best and truest self. This means going beyond the apparent to the essential. We cultivate all of these qualities by the constant repetitive exercise of these four essential aspects of our selves: body, mind, heart, and soul.

As Marco Morelli once told me, daily practice is equivalent to keeping the fire going under the pot. To keep the fire of transformation and growth going, one has to keep the heat up. If one approaches the project of transformation and transmutation piecemeal, or sporadically, the desired changes simply will not happen. Again, the call and challenge of Integral Recovery is daily Integral Practice.

One of the main problems that I have seen for people on this path is the fear that arises often when one is doing the work. The problem is not that “oh, this doesn’t work,” but “this is too much!” When the darkness and the pain and the chaos and the dark nights emerge, the natural tendency is to run as quickly as possible from the darkness, and even the light. It was this same attempt to avoid unpleasant and unwanted states that lead to using drugs and subsequent dependency in the first place. As Bill Harris has said for those using Holosync and facing the chaos that necessarily comes up, “you should high five your partner,” because chaos is the mother of evolution and when chaos kicks in, you are getting ready for what Prigogyne called the “escape into higher order.” If one does not short circuit the process and stays with it, one will transform and grow. How do we do this? By continuing to expand, invite, and allow the process of going from chaos into higher order to continue. We can’t control the chaos, but we can invite it: from caterpillar, to chrysalis, to butterfly. Not just once, but over and over again: the constant process of recreation (death and rebirth), expansion, evolution and growth.

A teaching for me in this regard happened when I was on retreat at a Benedictine monastery in northern New Mexico. It was an unstructured retreat, so I was on my own. I was doing Holosync meditation for three hours a day and was experiencing a tremendous darkness that was scary as hell. It was all I could do to stay with the meditation: my nose seemed barely above the water line. During a break, I was helping out in the monastery bookstore and came across a pamphlet by the great American monk, mystic, and writer Thomas Merton. My eyes fell on a passage that said

“To be changed, transformed, to move to the next level or stage we must “let the darkness come upon us,” and let ourselves move through the darkness”

something to the effect that the mystic recognizes that God is in the darkness as well as the light. This was just the Zen slap I needed. I returned to my interior work with a new acceptance for the

darkness, fear and pain, and soon the darkness turned to heat and warmth, and then brilliant clarity.

And again I emerged from this period into what seemed like a new plateau, or level of emotional healing and spiritual understanding. A line from one of my favorite poems illustrates this point brilliantly: T.S. Eliot's "East Coker."

I said to my soul, be still, and let the darkness come upon you, which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre, the lights are extinguished for the lights to be changed.

To be changed, transformed, to move to the next level or stage we must "let the darkness come upon us," and let ourselves move through the darkness of the birth canal in which our old ideas, beliefs, and identities die and are reborn again and again. How do we do this? By continuing to expand and become identified with the context, the Witness, and not the objects that arise. We suffer and get stuck when we identify with objects, mistaking them for subjects, or our self. Meditation is not a process of ceasing to think. This has led to great misunderstanding and often a hurtful anti-intellectual stance. The mind does not cease to think, but the thoughts arise as

objects in the vast sea of pure awareness that is our original face. Our former subjects become objects, until eventually even that dichotomy disappears and there is only the One and you are IT, always have been and always will be. But even this is misleading, because You do not exist in time, time arises in You. I think this is the vital living core of the spiritual work that we do.

Let me tell of a recurring dream that I had when I was very young, perhaps seven or eight years old. This is the last part of a longer dream but it is illustrative of what I have been talking about, the constant repetitive plunging below our surfaces into the depths of our being through daily meditative contemplative practice. In the last part of this dream I am standing in front of this huge pit. I look down into the pit and see darkness and horror, like looking into the mouth of hell. At this point I awake completely freaked out and terrified. Sometimes it took a long time for the fear to leave me. Years later, when I was attending graduate school, we were doing a process group and a woman was speaking of some deep traumatic experience that she had experienced. While she was talking I closed

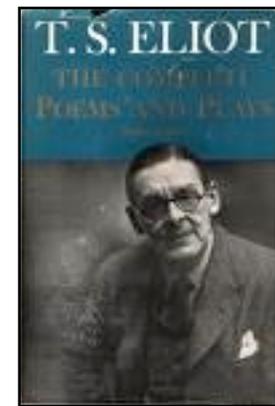
my eyes and had a waking dream or vision. In the vision I am standing before the pit of darkness again, and this time I do not recoil in terror but dive into the pit and the darkness. And I feel myself going down and down into this pit of darkness. I feel the gore and slime as I plunge deeper and deeper into this pit... suddenly I am through the darkness and find myself swimming through this beautiful blue-green water and all the filth and gore is washing off me. I then surface and see the beautiful blue sky and billowy clouds and I am in between two islands with palm trees and immaculate white beaches. It felt like a glimpse of paradise. I quickly returned to the group and realized that I had found the meaning and resolution of this terrifying dream from my childhood. The meaning was clear, the only way out of my darkness was through it, and the darkness is not deep or infinite but a thin and shallow surface compared to the immensity of the beauty that was underneath the surface. It is the hero's journey. We must be willing to cross the threshold from the known into the unknown. We must enter the dragon's lair, the dark cavern and face our own demons to find the treasures that lie beyond our

darkness and fears. By our willingness to take this journey we find our medicine, and power: that is our gift to the world, our payback to life. This is a journey that we must be willing to take again and again, through fear, darkness, and chaos, into wisdom, strength and compassion. Over and over again. Not just once (that would be nice!), stress, chaos, crisis, the mother of evolution. The good news is that as we embrace this chaotic rebirth process we can do it with equanimity and confidence in the ultimate goodness of the process. The more we do this with time and practice, the more that we can do this, and the more we can take on. First, just for ourselves then ultimately for all sentient beings, and, as Wilber succinctly put it, "we suffer more but it bothers us less."

Again T.S. Eliot:

"I said to my soul, be still,
and wait without hope.

For hope would be hope for
the wrong thing; wait
without love,



for love would be love of the wrong thing;
there is yet faith,
but the faith and the love and the hope are
all in the waiting.

Wait without thought, for you are not ready
for thought: so the darkness shall be the
light, and the stillness the dancing.”

This passage from Eliot’s “East Coker” is not just pretty poetry but an accurate description of the interior journey, of the inner work. We must be still and wait. There can be great activity both emotional and intellectual as we “be still”, because being still does not mean freezing the universe, it means holding it in the greater context of emptiness and pure awareness. Imagine a wiggling bug on the surface of a vast, still ocean. From fifty thousand feet looking down on the ocean we would say that the ocean is still indeed, even though our little bug is shaking all over. In the context of emptiness, this vast endless spaciousness, no matter what the ego or mind is doing, it happens in stillness: the Witness is always still (or as Ken Wilber says, “emptiness is

simple – it has no moving parts.”) To further look at this, imagine you are a hundred meters under the ocean in still calm water. There could be a tsunami passing over your head and at that depth all will be still. In our daily meditation, as we plunge ever deeper into this vast spaciousness that is our true Self, we are less perturbed by the disturbances on the surfaces, the peripheries. This does not mean that we ignore the surfaces either, but we can, for the first time, perhaps, become really effective in dealing with these surface manifestations, because for the first time we can hold them in their true context, and we can do so with lightness, wisdom, and compassion. We can dance the dance of life with beauty, skillfulness, and grace because we have seen and know our original face: the vast consciousness from which all arises.

We don’t “hope” or “love” because we have “faith” in the waiting. Because as things, emotions, thoughts, and feelings arise in the vastness of our true Self, they will arise, release and self-liberate, and the understanding and wisdom that arise from this waiting is of a nature and order that seems to be from a different altitude and magnitude than our

formerly contracted state could have grasped. This is just one of the reasons that “cultivation through repetition,” or daily practice is so vitally important to our future as individuals, a species, the planet, and so on. Because from these states of expansion and transcended awareness, a creativity and intelligence that we are perhaps just beginning to realize, can burn through the fog of our separate, isolated, little self-dreams and can allow us to truly create the world anew in all quadrants, lines, stage, states and types.

“We wait without thought, for we are not ready for thought,” yet. When I plunge into these depths, I cannot stop my mind from doing what it does most of the time. That is, think. I do, however, bracket my thoughts, not believing the fictions and stories that it spins about what is arising. They are just stories that my little mind creates and will keep me stuck if I pay them heed. After I do go through the darkness or whatever is arising, through the surface into the vast stillness, then I am ready for thought. In that darkness, comes the light and in that stillness the dancing. Again, the problems that we have created are not solvable from the level, state, or

consciousness that created them. At the level on which they were created, we just create more problems, more karma, more knots. To undo the knots and problems we have created on our surfaces we must go through our surfaces into the depths of our true being. From that depth we can cultivate the ability to release, unwind and untie our traumas and dramas and fictions that keep us prisoners and asleep.

Let me introduce a question that I often use in teaching that functions something like a Zen koan, that is a question that, if we struggle with it, and find the solution in ourselves, leads us to a new level of understanding of the deepest essential levels of reality and provides us a glimpse of our true self, our “original face” before our parents were born, before the Big Bang.

This is the question: How could a Jew forgive the Nazis? Given these Nazis had murdered your children, wife, husband, parents, family, friends, indeed your whole world and culture. How could you forgive this? Stop reading. See and feel this. See the doors being kicked in, in the middle of the night.

Feel and smell the stench of the cattle cars, the claustrophobic horror. See the Nazi SS guards, look at them, feel their arrogance and the cruelty. See the attack dogs, their dogs with them as they open the cattle cars and force your family out and separate them and strip them and prepare them for the “showers,” the gas chamber... See your family dying in the gas chamber, slowly, horribly, obscenely. Feel it. See it. Smell it. Hear it. And ask yourself, how could a Jew forgive the Nazis?

It is not humanly possible. It is too much, way too much. Some people say, “well you can realize that you have the same potential for hatred and cruelty inside of your self.” Maybe. But you did not do it. You made choices that did not lead you there. It simply doesn’t wash.

There is only one way out of this. You wake up. You realize, “I am the Jew and I am the Nazi, and I have been doing this to myself the whole time! My God!” You awake. The game of hide and seek is over, and you are IT. This is what we call a

“Good and evil are part of the manifestation of reality that arises out of our true essence. Emptiness is the paper that the Universe story is written on”

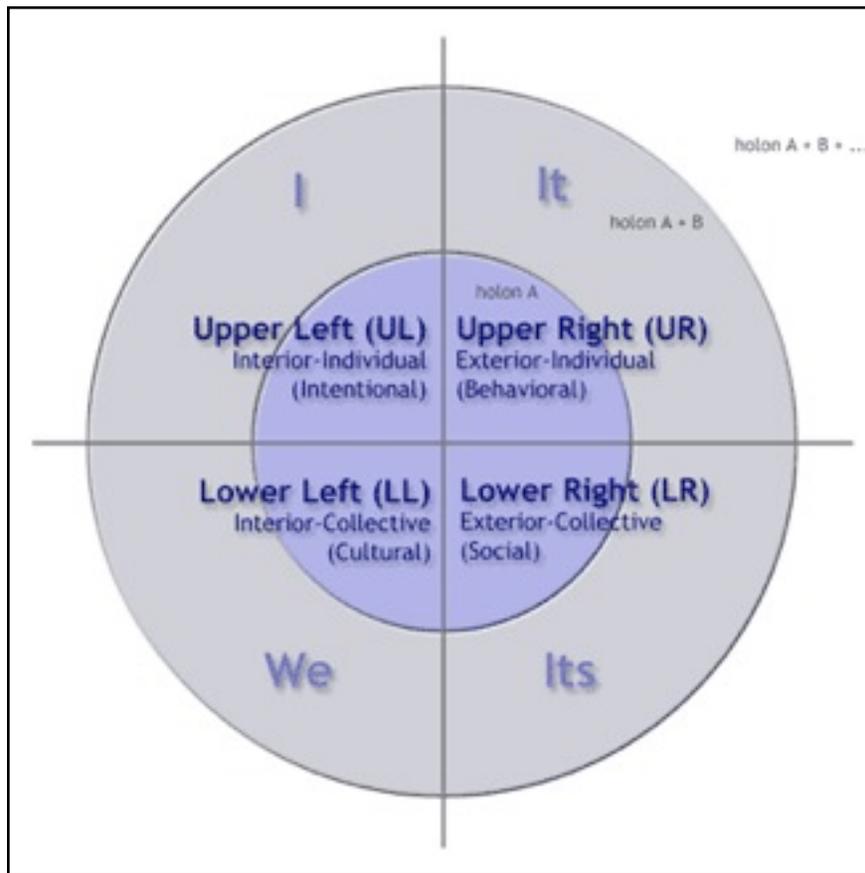
non-dual state realization. It is beyond good and evil. Am I proposing a new category “goodevil”? Am I saying that somehow such a realization or stage of development puts one beyond such moralizing categories as good and evil? Am I saying that good and evil don’t exist? No, good and evil do exist as much as clouds and rocks, trees, you and me. What I’m saying is that both good and evil arise out of emptiness, pure awareness, Spirit, You. They are forms, objects, if you will, that arise out of emptiness, pure luminescent awareness that is your “original face”. Good and evil are part of the manifestation of reality that arises out of our true essence. Emptiness is the paper that the Universe story is written on, which contains the Big Bang, the evolution of Life, good and evil, the Beatles, the internet, the 85 Chicago Bears on so on, world without end. But what we truly are, is the paper and in some sense the pen. The story can be beautiful or horrible, the story can be preserved or utterly erased, but the paper abides. What we truly are in the deepest truest sense is the paper from which all stories arise.

When we realize that we are the paper and the story as it is written, and our being does not depend on the story, but is the paper, then we are free. You are not Macbeth; you are an actor playing Macbeth.

Recently, in a series of meditations an injunction arose that went like this: “Feel the fear of the creature that has forgotten that he is the Creator.” And that was the focus of my meditation for a few days and I truly and deeply felt the existential dread, terror and fear of being a finite, isolated, self-reflecting being. “I am alive and will die and cease to exist and all that I love will also die and cease to exist.” When we go deeply and openly into that most human tragedy, that whole can of worms, it can be terrifying and profoundly awakening. “I come into this world (or as Alan Watts said, “I emerge from this world”), and now, as a self-aware being, I realize that I and my world will pass.” I stayed absolutely present with this during my interior work for the next week or so. Once I had confronted, experienced and released all this existential grief, terror, and fear, a new injunction arose. “Feel the joy of the creature that remembers that he is the Creator.” Joy indeed. Oh I remember now... I’m not

me! I forgot who and what I really am. Beyond all stories, beyond all characters, beyond all time, beyond all universes, “I am that I am”, and am that, that all arises in: “I am that I am,” and that is all that there is, and thou art that. Always have been, remember... “Oh yes, I do remember.... I’ve been lost in the dream that I created for sooo long. Does the dream go poof! At this point does the dream cease to matter or exist? Not at all. Romeo and Juliet is not any less valuable because it is fiction. It is still valuable as fiction for it’s beauty, depth, truth, and tragedy, and each one of it’s scenes and characters, and words, and thoughts were created by a character Shakespeare, that arose out of pure emptiness and inventiveness that is my own original face; the unity out of which all multiplicity arises. How then, do we live this beautiful dream, and this, at times, horrible nightmare? Lucidly. Be awake in your dream, in our collective dream. How do we do this? How do we live this dream of the relative ever-changing, evolving world lucidly and with the knowledge of the beauty, inventiveness, and wisdom of our truest, deepest self? Again we have to practice. Wilber said recently, something to the effect that awakening is relatively easy. You’ve

always really known anyway. But bringing this awakens into every fiber of our relative, manifest being and into our every action and thought is the real work. To bring the knowledge of our true nature into the relative, evolving, roller coaster that the “AQAL map” maps, is the purpose and purpose



of all our questing and work: the union of emptiness and form, heaven and earth, freedom and fullness. Once we have completed our erotic quest for transcendence and realization of who and what we really are, then the true work begins. No longer do we just create and spin more karma in our dream state, but we use the karma as energy to play off of, to fulfill our Agape inspired work to transform the world into the most beautiful reflection of our true nature. In every moment the great perfection shines through the story from Auschwitz to Assisi, from Hitler to his Holiness the Dalai Lama, from George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden to Albert Schweitzer... the great perfection blazes through all forms when we remember who we are.

And again, Eliot points us to look beyond mere surfaces...

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their
place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
Old stone to new building, old timber to new

fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.
Houses live and die: there is a time for
building
And a time for living and for generation
And a time for the wind to break the loosened
pane
And to shake the wainscot where the field-
mouse trots
And to shake the tattered arras woven with a
silent motto.

In my beginning is my end.
All this and more in every moment arises from you
and me...

The flux continues... Universes expand and collapse.
Heroes are born and die; scoundrels prosper;
masterpieces are created; garbage multiplies;
creatures die of despair, and lust for the

unattainable... until all is revealed! The curtain is
lifted, the veil is torn, all are imposters. God is
exposed, posing as you and me. Of course.

In my beginning is my end.

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