



AQAL and the Practice of Law

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For many the practice of law is a dissatisfying experience. By providing a more comprehensive, AQAL vision for the practice of law, I speculate that lawyers can gain more satisfaction and meaning from their profession.

Introduction

In 1999, the American Bar Association released a study on the U.S. justice system. Unfortunately, the news for lawyers was not good. The public perceives that lawyers care more about themselves than they do their clients. Many believe lawyers lack a commitment to community and service.¹ It seems that the public does not trust us.

The lawyer's own experience does not fare much better. Lawyers often struggle with finding meaning in their work, or alternatively, they have meaningful work but it does not pay the bills. Surprisingly, lawyers that work for large private firms (and make the most money) are the least satisfied in their field.² On the other hand, public sector attorneys make the least amount of money but feel most fulfilled. It is financially difficult for public sector attorneys to retain this meaningful work as the cost of living rises; yet the thought of working for a private firm, for a hundred hours per week, with little meaning and satisfaction, is just as troublesome.

Because of the pressure we feel to make money, as attorneys we often focus on the exterior, material dimensions of reality and ignore our vivid interior dimensions. We seem addicted to exterior reward, and so we overlook what brings us meaning and happiness (unless, of course, exterior reward and money bring us happiness). This existence can be narrow and self-centered, and our clients suspect it. Day after day, we dress sharp, make lots of money, and yet we often feel dull, perhaps because we ignore what is going on inside ourselves, our clients, and the



people at our firm. Thus, until we connect these two dimensions of the exterior world and our interior selves, we will continue to feel fractured, dissatisfied, and unappreciated.

The Four Quadrants

To mend this fracture and create a whole and comprehensive approach for the practitioner and practice of law, I will apply the AQAL model (which stands for “all-quadrants, all-levels, all-lines, all-states, and all-types”) to the practice of law and consider its benefits.³ While there are many aspects to the practice of law, here I will introduce the four quadrants of the AQAL model and discuss how they apply to the lawyer’s life. I will then focus on the possible roles of the lawyer, the lawyer/client relationship, and the relationship between the lawyer and the firm.

The AQAL model recognizes that there are at least four basic dimensions of reality: the interior and exterior of the individual and collective.⁴ These are labeled the four quadrants. The four quadrants also represent four fundamental perspectives from which anything can be looked at. The map is divided into two sides, one representing the interior subjective (the Left-Hand side) of the individual and collective, while the other side represents the exterior objective (the Right-Hand side) of the individual and collective.

More specifically, the Upper-Left quadrant represents the individual’s subjective experience, or the “I” perspective. This perspective cannot be seen but is subjectively experienced by the individual. The Upper-Right quadrant represents the exterior-individual perspective, or the “It,” and focuses on objective manifestations that can be seen and measured. The Lower-Left quadrant represents the intersubjective “We” space, where we experience our cultural norms. And the Lower-Right quadrant represents the various systems, or “Its,” that you and I operate within.



<p>UPPER LEFT Interior-Individual “I”</p>	<p>UPPER RIGHT Exterior-Individual “It”</p>
<p>LOWER LEFT Interior-Collective “We”</p>	<p>LOWER RIGHT Exterior-Collective “Its”</p>

Figure 1. The Four Quadrants

Each of these perspectives is irreducible and reveals a different aspect of the world. The remarkable thing about the four quadrants is that they simply represent the world as it already is—nothing more. An important component of the AQAL model is that each quadrant tells a *partial* truth. No one quadrant dominates any other. The AQAL model gives equal voice to all of these perspectives. AQAL honors the vision that each quadrant has an important but partial truth to tell. When all of these truths are respected, we have a more comprehensive vision of the world.



Quadrants

Here is a view of those very same four quadrants applied to the attorney:

	INTERIOR	EXTERIOR
INDIVIDUAL	<p>Upper Left (UL)</p> <p>The Interior Perspective of Lawyer Our thoughts Feelings Ideas General state of mind</p> <p>"I"</p>	<p>Upper Right (UR)</p> <p>The Behavior of a Lawyer What we spend our days doing Physical well-being</p> <p>"It"</p>
COLLECTIVE	<p>Lower Left (LL)</p> <p>The cultures we are a part of Values of firm or group whom we interact with</p> <p>"We"</p>	<p>Lower Right (LR)</p> <p>The systems we are part of: Legal System Capitalist system Firm system Various dispute resolution systems</p> <p>"Its"</p>

Figure 2. The Four Quadrants Applied to the Attorney

First, I will examine the interior, subjective dimension of the attorney, or their Upper-Left quadrant. Our subjective experience includes the way we interpret our thoughts and feelings. These feelings and thoughts are what motivate us to be who we are and do what we do. This is where the lawyer’s level of satisfaction resides. Unfortunately, lawyers suffer anxiety, paranoia, and social alienation at much higher rates than the rest of society, perhaps as a result of our work.⁵ To develop greater satisfaction, it would make sense to explore your interior and find out what aspects of your work cause distress or bring about satisfaction. To understand who you are may have a dramatic effect on your level of satisfaction and the work you choose to do as an



attorney. Some of the techniques you might consider if you are beginning to explore your interior world are self-inquiry, counseling, meditation, or just paying attention. These are a few tools that people have used in various ways to bring greater clarity and awareness into their daily lives.

The Upper-Right quadrant focuses on the lawyer's physical life and behavior. How do you care for your physical body? Are you eating well? Is your body getting the necessary nutrients it needs to thrive? Do you exercise?⁶ Regrettably, lawyers have suffered from higher rates of alcoholism and illegal drug use than the overall public.⁷ It seems that many lawyers are ignoring their physical health.

Unfortunately, many of the behaviors associated with lawyers are typically stressful. For example, your law practice may demand that you work 60-100 hours a week depending on how close you are to trial or an important court hearing. Being caught exclusively in these stressful behaviors, not to mention ignoring the other three quadrants, reflects a severe problem. A potential solution is to combine Left-Hand meaning with Right-Hand tasks. For example, if you can correlate your billable hours (Upper Right) to cases and tasks that are meaningful to you (Upper Left), then there is resonance across this often disconnected area of our lives.

The Lower-Left quadrant encompasses the shared values, cultural background, linguistic context, and collective worldview of the people with whom we interact. What is the corporate culture? What kind of cases are you or your firm taking? Does the firm take on cases only for profit? How does the firm spend its money? What values, ideals, and aspirations does it embody and elicit? Are we comfortable with the cases and causes we are taking on? Am I comfortable with the values we share inside the walls of the firm? What kind of values do we share as a workgroup?

The Lower-Right quadrant focuses on the systems that the lawyer uses, including the court system and legal framework of a society. For example, Professor Susan Daicoff mentions a



variety of systems used to promote a less disorderly form of law. This includes collaborative law, which is a non-litigative process used mostly in divorce law where former partners work out their differences outside of court.⁸ Another example is the restorative justice method. In this model, the community, victim, and offender decide together how the criminal can atone for his or her behavior.⁹ Of course, for the system to work effectively, a Lower-Left mutual understanding (or “We”) must be formed to take advantage of the particular Lower-Right system (or “Its”). For the lawyer, this understanding allows you to choose the Lower-Right systems that are congruent with either your client’s or firm’s beliefs. This can only enhance the efficacy of the process.

At the same time, the perspectives offered through the four quadrants are arising in your clients too. Thus, if we are to truly practice law in a more comprehensive way, it is essential that we consider the four quadrants as they apply to our clients. For example, it is important to understand the interior reality of your client (Upper Left). Often people come to lawyers frightened, traumatized, or dissatisfied with their life situation, and they look to their attorney for a solution. This might mean guiding your client to the appropriate resources for the support that they need, perhaps even providing the number of a community counseling center.



	INTERIOR	EXTERIOR
INDIVIDUAL	<p>Upper Left (UL)</p> <p>Interior perspectives of client</p> <p>Psychological issues</p> <p>"I"</p>	<p>Upper Right (UR)</p> <p>Behavior of client</p> <p>Behavior that clashes with law</p> <p>"It"</p>
COLLECTIVE	<p>Lower Left (LL)</p> <p>Values of the people the client interacts with</p> <p>Values of the people in judgment of client</p> <p>"We"</p>	<p>Lower Right (LR)</p> <p>Systems in which they have contact</p> <p>Legal system</p> <p>Prison system</p> <p>Capitalist system</p> <p>"Its"</p>

Figure 3. The Client's Four Quadrants

Through the interview process, you can also get a sense of your client's physical form and behaviors via their Upper-Right quadrant. Here you can pinpoint the specific behaviors that caused your client to need a lawyer. You can quickly discover if your client violated the law. In relating with clients, it becomes increasingly apparent why lawyers are addicted to exterior solutions to problems: our clients demand that we provide them with these kinds of answers. At the end of the day, this demand essentially converts us into behaviorists. The client generally just wants you to fix the behavior problem as fast as you can. They want you to get them the divorce, get the charges dropped, get them the deal, get them alimony, etc. No interior insights are demanded in the process. And we lawyers gladly oblige, using the objective result (typically money) as our measure of success. This very procedure leads one to focus exclusively on



exterior facts, divorcing them—and consequently us—from meaning and leaving us to manage the mere surface of things.

The Upper-Right quadrant also focuses on the client's physical health. Do they take care of themselves? Your client might have health issues that need immediate medical attention. Behaviors that lead to health or disease have interior psychological states of mind (Upper-Left quadrant). A lawyer can also influence a client (if they are open to it) to explore their interior realities. The Lower-Left quadrant pertains to the values of the groups the client interacts with. Understanding their values and beliefs and how they collide with the legal system allows you to explore resolutions in a more efficient manner. Finally, the Lower-Right quadrant highlights the various systems the client is a member of. Have they been in the prison system, juvenile system, or foster-care system? If so, how has that affected their lives? Understanding the multiplicity of experience is our ticket out of narrow, behavioral reductionism. This allows us to consider our own internal interests, while at the same time honoring our clients, leaving everyone a little less disfigured in the process.

Lines

Lines of development are also a part of the AQAL approach.¹⁰ Humans have a dozen or more lines of development, and they grow in a relatively independent fashion.¹¹ Examples of some lines of development include cognitive, moral, interpersonal, emotional, and kinesthetic.¹² For example, many lawyers are well developed cognitively yet are simultaneously underdeveloped morally. The executives from Tyco and Enron are perfect examples of some very smart people who made some very unethical decisions.

The key here is to become aware of the different lines of development and how they operate within yourself and the people that surround you. Once aware, it makes sense to have your employees working on activities that reflect their strengths. For example, you may not want a



person who is highly developed cognitively but underdeveloped morally to make recommendations on behalf of clients without consulting an employee who is highly developed morally. A psychograph helps people understand their lines of development more easily (see figure 4).

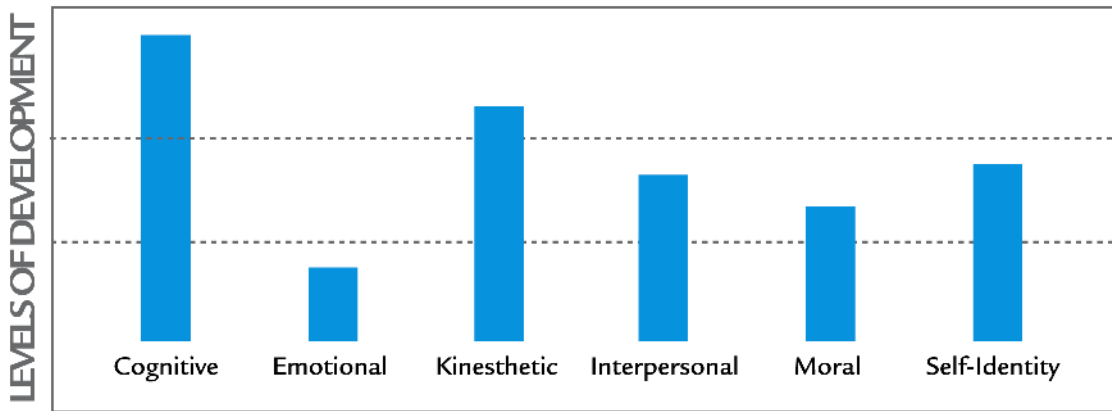


Figure 4. The Psychograph

If the firm understands lines of development, they are more likely to place employees in positions where they are most apt to succeed. For example, the firm can have the lawyer with high analytical skills write the appeals and motions to the court, while the lawyer with strong emotional intelligence can do the jury trial and the direct and cross-examination.

Your client's lines of development also have a critical impact on the proceedings. If the client were low in emotional intelligence and moral depth, it would not be wise to put them in front of a jury (situations vary, of course). You may also have to help them develop in their area of deficiency before more trouble comes. Essentially, we want to modify objective behavior with interior development and growth. However, the law only accounts for their behavior. Even so, we understand that if you want illegal behavior to change, you need interior work and growth in



those particular areas. By understanding lines of development and their rightful place at the table, the world becomes a little less murky and unclear.

Levels

Implicit in these lines of development are levels of development. Levels of development are another element in the AQAL map. If you are well developed in some capacities and underdeveloped in others, those differences reflect different levels of development. If you think back over the course of your life, you recognize that how you see reality today is not the same as how you saw reality earlier in your life. Generally, your reality today is richer and more complex than when you were younger. As humans develop from childhood to adulthood, we go through various stages of development that represent how we organize our world and our level of complexity.¹³ AQAL often uses eight to ten general levels of development. These stages are not rigid in any way but are rather fluid, overlapping waves of development.

So what is the relevance of stage development to the practice of law? The people we work with and the people we represent all inhabit various stages of development along the moral, self-identity, interpersonal, and spiritual lines of development (among others). Because our clients, opponents, judges, partners, and associates all inhabit various levels in various lines of development, they often see the world quite differently and sometimes clash. With this in mind, we can tailor our solutions to fit a particular stage of development. The key is to allow for the healthy expression of any level of development. If you are a parent of a little baby, teaching it quantum physics when it cries will not soothe your child. You must embrace the child where they are. Thus, it is crucial to create solutions for our clients and ourselves that reflect our understanding of stage development.

Beyond designing appropriate solutions for your client, understanding stage development is also important when you speak to a jury or court. The jury is comprised of people from the



community at various levels of development. To enhance the prospect of success in the trial, it is vital that you are able to speak to these divergent levels of complexity in a way that connects to them. The facts of a case may be in your favor, but if you present those facts without considering different levels or lines of development, you may be misinterpreted and end up losing the trial. Understanding various levels of development may also allow you to “market” your facts and the case more appropriately. Therefore, taking levels into consideration can make the practice of law more comprehensive and efficient.

States

We are all aware of various states of consciousness—for example, waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. While these particular states of consciousness are available to everyone, most states, by their very nature, are not permanent: they simply come and go. One state of consciousness that people are familiar with is being in the “zone”—or a “flow” state—often experienced while playing a sport or exercising. Being able to access such states allows us to go beyond our ordinary mind into potentially deeper insights and ways of being. These insights may change the way one looks at a legal transaction or trial. They may allow us to connect to the jury and court on a deeper, more profound level. These states of consciousness are again nothing foreign. There are countless stories of great lawyers often falling into “flow” states as they argue passionately on behalf of their client before the jury and court. It would therefore make sense to develop the ability to access these very real aspects of your being and use them wisely.

Types

Types are another element of the Integral model. These are horizontal in nature, meaning one can be a particular type at any stage of development.¹⁴ Examples of different typologies include masculine and feminine, introvert and extrovert, Myers-Briggs, and the Enneagram. These types can provide insight into how people handle things differently in similar situations. We might



tend toward collaboration and connection, while others might focus on individual rights and justice. An awareness of types allows each person to know what kind of law fits their natural way of being. Some might be litigators and fighters while others might be more introverted and analytical. It makes sense that the firm or individual practitioners allow each employee to work with the kind of law that reflects their personality type. This would, in turn, reflect a deeper appreciation of the diverse personality types within their practice.

It is also helpful to understand personality types when deciding whether your client should take the stand. Are they combative or meek? How will they react to a challenging attorney cross-examining them? What levels, lines, and types will resonate or clash in the attorney-witness interaction? How might that affect the jury (with their respective levels, lines, and types)? Understanding your client's personality type will give you some foresight as to how they will come across to the jury, deposer, and court.

Conclusion

The rich contours of the AQAL map provide the framework to explore what it means to practice law and create law from an Integral perspective. By acknowledging the interior and exterior along with the individual and collective aspect of every situation, we can apply the soothing, healing balm that we have been longing for. Understanding that people have different lines of awareness, at different levels of development, expressed through different types, releases us from concluding that one solution fits all. Through the use of AQAL, a meaningful and comprehensive orientation to the client and case is possible. An integrally informed consciousness allows one to distinguish each dimension of our lives without disenfranchising any part. Recognizing that material, objective facts tell a narrow story of our daily lives awakens us from the reductionistic reality we have been following.



What would our laws look like if they were debated in Congress through the AQAL prism? What would happen if the Supreme Court adopted AQAL as one of its tools for interpreting the Constitution? What would happen if our courts utilized the AQAL map in deciding the appropriate sentence for a defendant? The cultural evolution towards a more comprehensive interpretation of the law begins with the elegant actions of the wayward practitioner ready to see things more wholly. It really is so simple, isn't it? AQAL is not asking you to consider anything that is not already happening. It is just asking you to wake up and acknowledge what is already going on.



Endnotes

¹ American Bar Association, *Executive summary: Perceptions of the U.S. justice system*, 1999

² “The fruits of our labors: Dau-Schmidt studies lawyer income and job satisfaction,” 2001, Winter

³ Wilber, *Sex, ecology, spirituality: The spirit of evolution*, 1995

⁴ Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 2000

⁵ Schlitz, “On being happy, healthy, and an ethical member of an unhappy, unhealthy, unethical profession,” 1999

⁶ Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 2000

⁷ Schlitz, “On being happy, healthy, and an ethical member of an unhappy, unhealthy, unethical profession,” 1999

⁸ Daicoff, “Brief description of the vectors of the comprehensive law movement and their points of intersection,” 2000

⁹ Daicoff, “Brief description of the vectors of the comprehensive law movement and their points of intersection,” 2000

¹⁰ Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 2000

¹¹ Wilber, *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*, 1998, p. 462

¹² Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 2000

¹³ Wilber, *Sex, ecology, spirituality: The spirit of evolution*, 1995

¹⁴ Wilber, “Introduction to integral theory and practice: IOS basic and the AQAL map,” 2006



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