

The Integral Storycreator

USING INTEGRAL METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM TO CREATE FICTIONAL, NARRATIVE PROSE

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The intention of this paper is to explore using Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP) to construct a fictional, narrative story as part of a greater consideration into using the distinctions of Integral Theory in creating any kind of story or character driven work of art. The key component is using the mixed method information, especially the developmental knowledge, in combination with one's own experience to make up the personality content of the characters and the moments of decision, discovery, and tension of the story; making sure to touch all the dimensions of the character's life and the story's world. The paper begins by discussing how and why IMP works for story creation, moving into a story I wrote using it. The second half of the paper is an in depth look at the process of locating and utilizing information and knowledge to craft the story, the characters and the relationships.

Introduction

Integral Methodological Pluralism can be effectively employed in the creation of a fictional, narrative story. It is a process that could easily be applied to the creation of any piece of art because it skillfully informs an artist of the many perspectives that make up moments of decision, discovery, and tension. An author or artist can create a piece that is more effective, more moving, and more resonant to people's lives by using modes of inquiry found within the eight zone framework of Integral Methodological Pluralism; essentially creating a narrative that contains as much truth as possible or "truth to life." Resonance then, as pointed out by Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, "increases because the more of reality we acknowledge and factor into a project the more the project will respond to the complexity of that reality."¹ In this case, the project is a fictional, narrative story illuminating the complexity of the female/male relationship.

Summary of Integral Methodological Pluralism

Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP) is the name of a set of social practices that correspond to the AQAL model, as set forth by Ken Wilber. IMP takes the practice of using the AQAL framework to a deeper and more complete level by creating a "respectful compilation, without judgment, of the major methodologies for enacting, illuminating, and bringing forth various worldspaces or ways of being-in-the-world."² AQAL is short for "all-quadrants, all-levels" and is a metatheory that attempts to unite the most time honored methodologies and their experiences into a concise and practical framework. "All-quadrants" refer to the four aspects in which reality or any one thing or holon (a whole/part) happens. The four quadrants correspond to the interior and exterior of the individual and the collective and encompass perspectives such as first person, second person, and third-person, or "I," "You/We," and "It/s," respectively. "All-levels" refer to the levels, stages, or structures of development any one thing or holon evolves through. Moreover, each quadrant is a realm made up of two zones of perspectives, the inside and outside,

totaling eight zones. Within this eight-zone framework are modes of inquiry that illuminate the inside, first-person, *experienced* perspectives of the quadrant as well as the outside, third-person, *structural* perspectives of the quadrant, generally speaking. In considering and thus honoring the most number of perspectives possible, the methods and experiences of each zone manifest a more complete and less partial view of a situation, event, or being.

Integral Methodological Pluralism is also guided by three principles: nonexclusion, unfoldment, and enactment. These principles are based on the belief that “‘Everybody is right,’ which generates a meta-practice of honoring, including, and integrating the fundamental paradigms and methodologies of the major forms of human inquiry.”³ In other words, an analysis employing IMP as a method of discovering truth works to not exclude (nonexclusion) any valid practice, mode of inquiry, or zone while then including into its fabric the resulting worldspaces, phenomena, or information in order to offer deeper and wider truths (unfoldment). This involves an analysis that directly understands and “brings forth” each worldspace perspective (enactment).

A storycreator informed by the methodologies or modes of inquiry found by IMP and following the principles of nonexclusion, unfoldment, and enactment can create characters, events, and relationships containing the most “truth to life.” These stories can be a powerful tool in understanding and connecting the endless sea of perspectives and therefore be deeply significant to the reader or viewer.

Purpose of the Story and Why IMP Works for It

“Stories are equipment for living” and living is an evolving transcension and inclusion of perspectives.⁴ As writers or storycreators pushing into Second Tier, we owe it to ourselves, our characters, and our readers to discover the most complete and true equipment we can. Second Tier is different from First Tier in that one has grown into a mind that can see more, hold more, and connect more aspects, insight, and perspectives (i.e., more complexity). In this awareness of growth lies a desire to continue transcending and including and a motivation to include the translative health and transformative potential of our fellow beings. By being aware of widening networks of connection between perspectives, a Second-Tier storycreator is in the unique position of nudging the reader into translative changes towards health or a legitimation crisis. Integral Theory and IMP provide the most complete framework and process that maximize success to those ends. *Reconstructive* science presented by the methodologies of the eight perspectives provides the *constructive* story elements that inform the natures, behaviors, tensions, and social backdrops of the characters and relationships. Located within those story elements are various worldspaces, levels of development, pathologies, and truths connecting the reader directly to the realities of daily life. Making sure to use nonexclusion, unfoldment, and enactment in the mechanics of constructing story offers the least judgmental and most palatable way of increasing the likelihood that the reader will find a sense of themselves in the work.

Storycreators must accept that all perspectives from every character or entity in the story are at least partially right or not completely wrong. While the need for conflict in the story most definitely can come from the intrusion of judgment from one practice or paradigm or –ism on another, the storycreator must reserve judgment and remember how right each practice is for that level or worldspace. Awareness is key to ensure the fair nonexclusion of all perspectives. Yet

the storycreator has to be aware of and comfortable with where healthy worldviews end and pathological worldviews begin so as to manifest genuine authentic and inauthentic relationships between a character and their own self as well as between characters. This intersection is where the depth of a character or relationship is revealed and is one of the most fascinating aspects of a story. A storycreator informed by research located in each zone can construct events, characters, and relationships based on actual human issues and traumas and make them visible to the reader by remembering nonexclusion and unfoldment.

The process of enactment gives the storycreator a way to look inside themselves and create a story, character, and relationships that draw on their own experience and increase the “truth to life” that affects the reader in cognitive, emotional, and spiritual ways. When a writer sees phenomena illuminated by a mode of inquiry and strives to understand that perspective, the writer can work the phenomena into the fabric of the story in an effective way. When storycreators deeply understand phenomena, they connect with their selves and learn something about their experience, which gives writers a unique and illuminating look at their own life. It is from here that a writer can create a story that is illuminating to the reader in the way it presents both objective truth and subjective feeling about humans and relationships, thereby creating authentic story tension and the ability to affect.

Moreover, writers want their readers to feel safe to see themselves or aspects of their own perspectives represented in the experiences portrayed. By understanding the major modes of discovering truth, a writer can include a representation of inquiry, research, and discovery into a character’s own self, relationships, and world. Proper enactment on the part of the storycreator ensures the audience recognizes their subject *and* sees themselves as an object with a sacred place in the scheme of life and development. Thus the readers may be inspired by the story-created lessons available to them.

The Method, Story, and Author

The process in which the following story was created began when I chose the topic of a man and his socks. Because I am interested in male/female relationships, and it is such a natural topic in which to find authentic tension, I decided the story would be about a man, his socks, and his wife who wants him to pick them up. I wanted to look into the dynamic of a relationship that was unhealthy, where the members of the relationship expressed varying degrees of relational pathologies, developmental arrests, and health. This plot is based on an actual fight a wife and husband had about socks on the stairs that the husband would not put away, as interpreted by Tekaye Gujral in her forthcoming book. I then accumulated every source I had at my disposal that could shed light on males, females, and their relationships and confirmed their validity and credibility. I went through each source and identified which zone(s) the source represented. Then I picked out any piece of information that would inform who my characters were, what the nature of their relationship was like, and what kinds of exterior influences affected them. After that, I went back to the story and wrote the plot and developed the characters based on the information I found. All the while I would tailor the events around my own experiences or experiences of people I know. I found this process to be incredibly illuminating of men and women and of my own experience as a person who has been a male partner to a woman and been challenged by relationships (and socks).

This story and article are focused only on the differences between a man and woman in the context of gender. There is no focus on race, class, ethnicity, geography, nationality, generation, disability, or anything else. I have chosen this partially out of considerations of time, space, and clarity but also because it is one of the most fundamental differences between humans and arguably the most maddening.

I am 35 years old and a Caucasian from the state of Wisconsin. I was raised a Congregationalist but have not practiced any religion since I was 19. I consider myself a Buddhist for lack of a better descriptor. I have lived in Indiana, Chicago, Colorado, and British Columbia, Canada. I have lived with my partner and her son for the last 8 years and have been a parent to him since he was 9. I have a BA in History and have studied Elementary Education as well as Integral Theory. I consider myself to be at a Second-Tier center of gravity. All these things (and more!) in one way or another support and hinder my approach as the storycreator of the following story about how an inconsequential moment—dealing with laundry—can become the stage upon which a developmental drama takes place. Upon presenting this short story I will provide an AQAL analysis using types and then IMP to unpack some of the dynamics I was keeping in mind as I crafted this integrally informed story. So as you read this all to common tale see if you can find yourself on both sides of the developmental chasm.

The Story: “Socks?”

“Yes...yes... Mother, I know.... That’s a bit of a touchy subject but I will tell her again Mother.” Andrew sits on his couch rubbing the back of his neck trying to subtly hide his voice from Sara, his wife. Andrew’s mother is complaining to him yet again about Sara and her skills as a wife and mother.

“We’ve been over this, Mother,” he says trying to pacify her while making sure she knows he is not disagreeing with her.

Andrew repeats this pattern every Sunday: listen to Mother complain, pacify her, try to not let Sara hear, pacify her. It is an annoying arrangement he has made, but it keeps the peace. And today Andrew is eager to enjoy that peace and get on with his day off, a day where a man should be able to forget about work, talk to his mother, hang with the family, and bumble about or whatever.

“Okay, but you are going to have to try too, Mother. Relationships are a two way street, you know, they have to be co-created,” says Andrew, throwing his head up. This posture was something he learned from his father and Andrew displays it whenever he thinks he has just been oh so aware and uttered a universal piece of wisdom.

Sara listens to the tail end of the call, staring at him with a look of tired disbelief she knows all too well. Why does he keep patronizing her, sitting there tucked in his position straddling the fence on the couch as his mother spends the entire phone call insisting how wrong Sara is for him? Never mind the fact that they have been married for four years now and Marley has been with them for two and a half years. It seems like a long enough time for Andrew to know that this is what he wants and tell his mother that. Besides, what does she know what is right for

him? Sara takes good care of Andrew, cooking, cleaning, and being a good mother. She runs this household. Why doesn't he just shut her up and tell her that this is how his life is going to be and this is the woman he wants to be with and this is their child he wants to raise with her. Unless, Andrew...no...but....

“Okay then Mother.....Oh nothing..... No not today, its Sunday, day off day....un-huhOkay, talk to you next week.” Andrew says his good byes and hangs up, none too soon: he's got some relaxing to do.

Sara feels blood rushing to her head while she listens to Andrew. “Oh, nothing,” she repeats to herself. Nothing. Something about the way he said that did not sound right, as if his day off is sacred, so sacred that it's more important than her or Marley or....Sara stops mid-thought and remembers that she has a training session today for the triathlon, her first triathlon, next month. Is Andrew saying that he is not available to be with Marley this afternoon while she goes? Sara's stomach cramps. She knows that Andrew's mother is telling him how bad she is for him. How she is not a good enough wife or mother and she knows he never stops her from thinking that. Can she ask Andrew about watching Marley? Is he going to see that his mother is right? Can she risk that? But her training, it feels so good....

Andrew sits for a moment; he can feel Sara's eyes burning a hole in the back of his neck. He knows how agitated his calls with Mother make her. He rises from the couch and slides past Sara to hang up the phone. His plan is to give Sara and Marley quick token kisses on the forehead and slip out of the kitchen to the rendezvous with his day off. Andrew kisses Sara next to her ear and mentions that Mother sends her love, then moves to Marley. Sara feels heavy, conflicted, confused, angry. She wants to just belt out at Andrew that he needs to watch Marley while she goes to practice but she is scared, desperately scared to confront him. She has buried her voice before rather easily, but today something feels ready to give. Before Andrew can lift his lips from her head, Sara says, “I have triathlon training today, I thought you could watch Marley for a couple of hours this afternoon.”

Sara can't believe it came out.

Andrew stands up and drops his shoulders with a disappointed sigh. Sara knows that look. It is the “how dare you” look.

In his best holier than thou chuckle, Andrew says, “I don't think so, Sara. It is my day off, you know I don't do anything around the house on Sunday.”

Sara stares at him, not quite sure what to do with his equating his daughter to doing something around the house.

Just then the phone rings, and Sara knows it is Barb calling about practice. Sara decides to not push Andrew just now and gets up to answer the phone. Andrew bends over to wipe some food off of Marley's face, ecstatic that the phone rang, giving him a chance to curse Sara under his breath. “I can't believe she would do this,” he thinks. As he wipes Marley's face, a sound, dark and wet, crawls out of Marley's behind, followed by a severe stink. “@%*\$#%,” thinks

Andrew. Marley looks at him with a “That was amusing. Will you get me out of this mess, right now” kind of look. Andrew peeks at Sara. She has not noticed yet. Andrew sees his chance and bolts from the kitchen, relieved to have avoided both his wife and his daughter.

Sara is telling Barb that she is not sure she can practice today when she catches the tail end of Andrew slipping out of the kitchen. Where is he going so fast, she wonders, as her nose picks up the initial assault of Marley’s stink. Something snaps. Sara tells Barb she will call her back, hangs up, and steam sneaks out of her ears. A voice, loud and strong, tells her to forget it. This is what being a good wife and mother means, let it go, do not rock your husband’s boat. Another voice way, way back screams that something is not right here. Why does being a good wife and mother feel like being a sacrificial lamb? What about her? How did it get like this? Where is the room for her growth, where can she reach...?

Once out of the contemporary, open, kitchen-living area, Andrew breathes a sigh of relief and decides he needs to have a nap. Andrew knows the one place Sara will not come and bother him with Marley and triathlon practices and poopy pants is in a nap. Flee he must up to his “den,” as he likes to call it, although Sara prefers he call it his “studio.” His dad had a den, Andrew has always wanted a den, and if he has to share his house with two females then he gets a den. “A man needs his own self-defined place of refuge,” thinks Andrew, again throwing his head back and adjusting up straight as he thinks he has just established another oh-so-nouveau truth about self-definition.

Andrew knows he probably has limited time to make his get away and hurries to the stairs, planning to perform his patented, uber-agile, panther-like leap up the stairs. He turns at the newel post and sees them lying there. A pile of clean, balled up white sweat socks; his socks fresh from the dryer and Sara’s folding able hands. A warm feeling fills Andrews heart seeing the extra fine technique Sara uses to fold his socks. Andrew thinks, “I could never do that.”

He stands over them and something happens. To a small degree, he pictures himself picking the socks up. He sees where they go and imagines himself putting them away. But it is only to a small degree. To a much greater degree his mind freezes, almost like a paralysis triggered by the image of him putting the socks away. He stands staring. A thought musters its way to the fore, cutting thru the paralysis. “I should put those away,” Andrew says to himself. Then an image faintly appears in his mind’s eye of Sara, socks in arm, opening the bureau drawer and gently moving his underwear to the side, making room for his socks. Then the paralysis is back and he thinks nothing more. Andrew yawns and the nap pops back into his head; he is ready again to bound up the stairs, sans socks.

Andrew’s body knows the routine well. Two quick steps, plant the left leg, leap over the first three stairs, land on the right leg, and continue with the momentum crouching into a streamlined dart up the next eight stairs, with his feet only touching two of them; like a panther.

He takes off. He loves the first leap, it being a moment of flight. He clears the socks with ease and feels good about himself. Andrew prepares for the landing and is thrilled moving into the dart when he hears Sara’s voice interrupting his patented and *very private* maneuver....

Sara hangs up the phone and looks at Marley. “Just hold tight Marley-baby. I have to talk to Daddy.”

Sara is not going to let this die, not today. She feels filled with resolve; she wants whatever this is to keep coming up. She needs to understand here and now and feels emboldened by the audacity of Andrew’s escape, which, Sara realizes, was an attempt to take advantage of her yet again, pure and simple. She senses he is about to do it again.

Sara knows Andrew is fleeing up the stairs, knows he is going to take a nap, and knows how to push his buttons. She calls out, “Will you take your socks upstairs please, Andrew?”

Panther. Caught.

Whoa....abort panther, abort.... Andrew’s foot touches down and he crashes to a halt, tripping over his landing zone.

Facing the dog hair collected on the stair just above him, Andrew gets that weird feeling, like guilt but different, when Sara reads his mind, which Andrew hates because he usually has no idea what she just read.

“*What?*” snaps Andrew, hoping a voice of dominance with a splash of frustration will be enough to get off the hook.

Sara approaches him like soft fury and stops at the base of the stairs, pointing at the stack of socks, “Will you take those socks upstairs please, Andrew?”

Andrew does not recognize this tone or like it. It sounds like defiance.

“*Your* socks.” And with that Sara bends over and picks up a ball of socks and throws them at Andrew, hitting him in the shoulder.

Sara is in total bewilderment of what she is doing. How did it get to this point this fast? She feels like she is riding something quick, massive, and exhilarating. “Am I angry?” she wonders.

Andrew just looks at her, silent. He has never seen her like this before and a moment of disbelief gives way to laughter. She seems so ridiculous, Sara and her throwing of socks.

Sara moves toward Andrew. She has decided to see this through and needs to know where this is heading, where this marriage is heading, where she is heading....especially now that he is LAUGHING at her. She picks up another ball of socks and throws them at him.

“Stop laughing!!!!”

“Sara, it’s MY DAY OFF!!!” It comes out of Andrew like an explosion.

“I know. And those are your socks!!!!” Sara screams back.

“So.”

“So can you take them upstairs and put them away.”

In a pause, Andrew stares at her, bites his lip and shifts tactics to petulant sarcasm.

“No I can’t.”

Sara just looks at him.

Andrew shifts again to innocent pleading.

“Baby, it is my day off. You know I take it easy on my day off.”

“What about every other day? You never take the socks up any other day either.”

And with that and seeing Sara’s hands stationed firmly on her hips with the “I’m ready to battle stance,” Andrew sees that this is not about the socks. This is something else, something about him. He hates it, *hates it*, when she has a “problem” with him. His mouth opens and before he realizes that he did not think before speaking, he says, “Oh Sara, don’t give me some woman’s lib sob story. You have it real good here.”

“Andrew...”

“No, Sara!” Andrew feels fire behind his forehead that has replaced thought, “I worked all week, remember? I go to work so you, we, Marley have a home and food and SOCKS?! And I deserve one day where I don’t have to think or be bothered with this HOUSEWORK CRAP. Our deal is that I work and you take care of it. I work, you do the socks and the poop and whatever else has to be done!”

He rubs his forehead and tries desperately to calm himself. She is just looking at him, giving him a look he has not seen before, like she is worried about him. But he is so wrong.

Sara is afloat in her mind. That voice is back pleading with her to stop and smooth things over immediately. But she can’t. Sara feels a conflict in her belly she has not felt for many years, and it is making her sick that the feeling is back. A feeling of vulnerability sweeps over her and she knows for her sake, for her sanity, she can’t back down from it. An image takes over her mind, one of her younger brother riding in the sidecar of her grandfather’s motorcycle in the Veterans Day parade. Sara is 14 and she is crying. Her mother told her she could ride in the sidecar but then her grandfather said only the oldest grandson could ride in the Veterans Day parade. Sara is beside herself. Her father tells her to quiet down, that she is making a scene and goes back to taking pictures of her grandfather and brother. When Sara pleads to her mother that it is not fair, her mother grabs her by the arm and says, “Sara, stop it. You’re being absurd. Life is not fair, you have to get used to that. I don’t want to hear another word.” The image fades but the feeling, the betrayal, lingers as Sara looks into Andrew. She is so unsure: will he remove his love too if she does not shut up and be good? Sara is not prepared for this. Her hand comes to her forehead as if to keep her brains from falling out, thereby losing her mind. But she cannot contain the fathomless tears that follow.

Andrew is enraged by Sara's display of emotion, "Just %*&-ing cry, like that %^%-ing solves anything," he thinks. And he is caught totally off guard by it. One second she is angry, the next minute she is balling. Sara wails and Andrew feels a sting and panics, "Sara, don't you think you're getting a little carried away? This is not that big of a deal. I am not going to pick up my socks!"

Sara suddenly stops crying and looks up at him and Andrew sees what looks to be a deeply hurt woman. "But come on! over socks?" he thinks. Then, for a moment, Andrew sees his mother sitting on a toilet seat cover. He is 5 years old and it is her birthday. They are supposed to be going to church in a few minutes and Andrew is all dressed, but his mother, who has been having a particularly brutal fight with his father all morning, is not dressed and she is on the toilet crying. His father is standing at the end of the hall. "Andy, let's go. She doesn't want to go with us." Andrew turns from his mother and walks to his father. He has started to cry. His father says, "Stop crying, Andy. They won't let you in church if you are crying. Big boys don't cry." Then he is in the kitchen and his mother is standing at the counter in her robe. She is holding herself saying, "I will never forgive...." And then silence, as Andrew finds himself staring at Sara again. Andrew looks away, distressing over what he just remembered, confused over why, and it quickly leaves his mind.

Sara stands up and says calmly, "I did not sign up for this, Andrew."

Perplexed, Andrew shakes his head and holds up his hands, "What do you mean, Sara? I distinctly remember the both of us vowing before everyone to fulfill our duties as man and wife in this marriage. Do you not remember your wedding vows?"

"Andrew, this goes way beyond wedding vows. I love you, I wanted to be with you, but I thought we had something more than just this, something that gave us a place to be ourselves and not just man and wife. I know what our vows were but don't you remember under the bridge, what you said to me?"

Rain is falling and they are wet, holding each other for warmth. Sara and Andrew were biking when the storm came in. Andrew was going to ask her on the beach but now seems like the right time. He looks into her eyes and tells her that everything he thought about himself went out the window when he met her. He feels like he can be bigger than ever before when he is with her. She tells him she feels safe to be herself around him and he accepts her for who she is. They both feel if they are going to grow into their best selves, it is going to be because of the other. Andrew gives her a ring and asks her to be with him forever, and she says "yes."

"What happened to that, Andrew, where did that go?" The question floats out between them.

Andrew looks down and can think of nothing to say.

From the kitchen, Marley is wailing and the house stinks.

A Word on Types

As is illustrated throughout this story gender roles and their associated type dynamics are an age old source of tension, misunderstanding, and connection between men and women. In order to have a guiding premise on which the story was built the concept of types was employed. Typologies refer to different types of orientations or personalities found within humans.⁵ Types can be personality types such as those found in the Enneagram or astrology or other systems. For my purposes I am focusing on feminine and masculine types. The feminine and masculine manifest in humans as differing voices with which the types engage with reality and make judgments about their experiences. The feminine type, generically speaking, is concerned with and makes judgments of care and responsibility while the masculine type is concerned with and makes judgments of rights and justice.⁶ All humans possess varying amounts of each type, and each type participates in creating the way the human operates with its world. Although the percentage of feminine or masculine type found in a person is not completely biologically determinant, generally speaking, there is more feminine type in females and more masculine type in males. Type does not necessarily determine *what* one does but it does contribute to *how* one does it. In “Socks?” I could have applied any combination of feminine and masculine type percentages to Sara and Andrew but to keep the story based in a generic man/woman nuclear family context (one that I am the most familiar with) I went with feminine=female, masculine=male.

Consistent with the “All-levels” aspect of Integral Theory, types develop through stages from egocentric/preconventional to ethnocentric/conventional to worldcentric/postconventional. Each level has its own specific version of authenticity based on the generic definition of each type. Whereas, the feminine grows to extend the circle of care to more and more people and the masculine moves to extend the circle of justice to more and more people.⁷ It should be noted that as the two types develop they inhabit the gender-neutral aspects of each stage but in their respective voice.⁸ As we will see Sara is moving into another level of her development and her voice is changing as she shifts knocking Sara, Andrew and the relationship into major drama.

A deeper investigation into the definition of authentic/healthy versions of the two types reveals that both in their generic forms are unique and paramount to existence. While any one person has aspects of both it is as if the two types represent the two key ingredients of existence each seeking the other to form a complete being. In its authentic and healthy form (generically) the feminine voice concerns itself with reaching out to the manifest realm, connecting to others, feeling emotions and holding responsibility for care and communion as evidenced by female’s “exquisite historical repertoire of emotional sensitivity.”⁹ The authentic masculine, generically, has a reduced sense of emotional awareness, which might be a pragmatic measure to avoid being emotionally inhibited as it fulfills its own unique contribution. The masculine type maintains an agentic, autonomous power and strength that serves justice and the inherent right of all beings to reach towards the ultimate.¹⁰ Remembering that types are generally connected to genders it is important to note that these definitions do not imply that type determines behaviors as much as state that type informs how behaviors are materialized. As noted above these generic definitions of authenticity change relative to the level of the individual holon in question. Where the egocentric and worldcentric versions may be vastly different while still being the same in essence and voice.

Types can also be (and usually are) inauthentic or pathological. An individual is pathological if it goes too far in its identification with its voice. Masculine agency, in its pathological form (generically), manifests as “‘power over,’ or brutal dominance and rigid autonomy. The male does not want to be a *part* of anything else (communion), he wants to be the *whole* himself (alienated agency): he fears relationship and values only autonomy.”¹¹ Pathology in feminine communion (generically) materializes in “fusion: the female fears autonomy and disappears into relationship, often destroying her own identity in the process. She does not want to be a *whole* (with its own agency), but merely a *part* of something else (exaggerated communion).”¹² Furthermore, relationships can be authentic or inauthentic depending on whether or not the relationship honors the level specific authentic nature of the members or respects the presence of the minority type in a member. “Socks?” is an exploration of authentic and inauthentic types in a relationship.

How the Zones Were Used

A distinction must be made about the use of zones. While the story can be deconstructed and analyzed using IMP, *the intention of this exploration is not to break down the story and debate the findings informing it.* This exploration is about using methodologies and information to make perspectives visible and construct and inform the story. Zones #1-7 are focused on.

The Interior Zones #1 and #2

I have put these zones together because there seems to be overlap between the research applicable to the Upper- and Lower-Left quadrants. The overlap is not just between the quadrants but also between the inside and outside of each quadrant. This can make it difficult to place methodologies and research into strictly defined zones (yet it reminds us that ultimately we are *considering perspectives* and not just different kinds of research). For instance, the research of Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan on human development and psychology is a methodology consisting of first-person interviews, which are presented as phenomenological evidence (Z1), but then classified according to structuralist patterns and stages of development (Z2). This evidence is further taken to describe cultural anthropological patterns within relationships (Z4). All of which is then synthesized into the story as self-expressed inner thoughts and dialogue and hermeneutical interpretations between two members of a we-space (Z3). This makes it all somewhat confusing and difficult to keep track of as will become evident.

These zones offered most of the insight into the creation of the characters and their relationship. Phenomenology (Z1) is the “study of consciousness as it immediately appears,” in the form of subjective, first-person experiences.¹³ Structuralist (Z2) methods can “be used to enact, bring forth, and illumine subjective aspects...such as patterns and sequential stages of experience for different individuals.”¹⁴ Hermeneutics (Z3) is the intersubjective “study of interpretation...within the interior of a ‘We’.”¹⁵ While cultural anthropology (Z4) can be used to enact, bring forth, and illuminate intersubjective aspects such as collective “worldviews and their patterns and regularities.”¹⁶

The structuralist methodology (Z2 and Z4) provided vast amounts of information for story events on how boys and girls develop and mature into men and women and then relate to one another.

In a book by Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan called *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girl's Development*, interviews were done with girls age 8-18. While the book is full of what is zone-#1 phenomena directly from the mouths of the young girls, the authors then arrange the information into a presentation of zone-#2 patterns that girls experience, which is juxtaposed with the zone-#2 patterns the researchers believe about boys and men. The zone-#1 and -#2 research reminded me as the author to listen deeply to my own self and approach my childhood and relationship experiences and patterns with nonexclusion and compassion that can extend toward the character of Andrew.

The characters of Sara and Andrew were developed based on Brown and Gilligan's interviews of the girls and their deductions as researchers. As we will see in zone #6 of the Upper-Right quadrant, females have a biological propensity towards connection and relationships that also manifests in the interior zones as the ability to emotionally connect with others. Sara's character is founded on that tendency. Beginning in early adolescence, females oftentimes find they have to muffle their own identity (which maybe made up of feminine and masculine essences) to preserve or have relationships (consistent with voice) with adults, boys, or ever-increasingly competitive girls.¹⁷ Based on the tendency of adolescent girls to "struggle to authorize or take seriously their own experience"¹⁸ and internalize this tendency into adulthood Sara was created to display doubt over her feelings and be hesitant to trust herself. This translated for Sara into doubting the validity of her identity with a new level of voice and her relationship with Andrew becoming inauthentic. Where Sara and Andrew's relationship may have originally been authentic reflecting their mutual understanding of each others level of type, now as Sara grows into a new definition of her type the relationship is becoming inauthentic: not honoring her new authentic nature. Sara as a wife finds herself displaying "reluctance to know what (she) knows and the fear that one's experience, if spoken, will endanger relationships and threaten survival."¹⁹ This leads Sara to having made a "compromise formation" within herself, a compromise between having and trusting her emerging voice and having her relationship (based on the former position of her voice) with Andrew.²⁰ The story picks up with Sara being faced with this aspect of herself as Andrew's behavior and attitude push her into a crisis between her identity with a new voice and her relationship.

Males display a zone-#6 biological predisposition toward individuality and away from emotional closeness of the interior zones, which served as a basis for Andrew's character. Andrew is also the product of the inclination for young boys to maintain a strong masculine voice that continues into adulthood. It should be noted that this inclination for boys is an egocentric inclination and reflects a need to orient the masculine power and strength to serve one's own self. Andrew is concerned with his "day off," which he is dedicated to preserving over all else representing a pathological holdover from his egocentric period into his ethnocentric present self Andrew is living with two females, which his inauthentic masculine typology senses as a threat and this feeds his reluctance to compromise his own maleness in order to have relationships founded on equality that transcend the differences in biology. As one man in the research I found stated, "Men want relationship, sure, but the bottom line is we don't want to give up our power to get it."²¹ I would add that men ought to not give up their power as it is authentic to the masculine type, but when it becomes power *over* another the masculine type has slipped into pathology at any level. Andrew's attitude and demeanor are indicative of using power over another and Andrew displays the classic behavior of what is referred to as male privilege, which desensitizes

men, blinding them to how their behavior impacts others. Male privilege, as a dysfunction of an inauthentic masculine type in males, “permits both a ravaging of relationships and an insensitivity to the ravaging.”²² The way in which Andrew participates in the argument with Sara is based on his dysfunction and informs his relationship with her in general as inauthentic as he denies Sara’s emerging level of feminine. Andrew’s sense of strength and power have mutated into dominance and control and privilege, culminating in refusing care to his own child’s need (i.e., forgoing sanitation and immediate diaper change). A man and a woman living together in an inauthentic relationship is far from the exception and a solid platform on which to base conflict in a story.

It has been found that generally girls suffer psychological wounds in early adolescence and boys in early childhood (Z2).²³ Both Andrew and Sara find this particular situation to bring up for them painful memories of a trauma that touched off a life of experience culminating in this event on the stairs over socks. Based on their types and the construction of their characters, it follows that Sara possesses a will to sit in the pain and see into it, where Andrew seeks to avoid and shut out the pain, along with whatever insights that may come from it.

In the context of Sara’s flashback, her conflict is illuminated. She struggles with trying to preserve her relationship while finding a place to honor her feelings and identity. As Brown and Gilligan point out, females both young and old

struggle as their strong feelings come up against a relational impasse that shuts down their loud voices, a wall of shoulds in which approval is associated with silence, love with selflessness, relationship with lack of conflict. Here their strong feelings are associated with danger and disruption.²⁴

While Sara possesses the desire for relation that the feminine embodies her experience as a girl was one where her identity as a female was valued less than the maleness of her brother smashing fully into her authentic desire for relationship and compounding the pain. Sara carried this pain into adulthood where it lied dormant until now as she is poised to move into a new stage of feminine type that includes her increasing individuality. Her identity and relationship are again being challenged.

Andrew’s childhood trauma also informs the man. Andrew’s memories are “memories of love and its loss, often experienced as traumatic,” which the experience with his mother and father certainly was (Z1).²⁵ The experience also “reflects the openness or out-there quality of the boys, which leads them to pick up the emotional vibrations and thought waves of other people” (Z2).²⁶ Here we find the possible source of Andrew’s pathology. As a sensitive child he was poised to form an authentic, healthy egocentric masculine type. Yet he is faced with a powerful and decidedly pathological masculine role model in his father. Andrew’s mental images of how to embody the masculine type were informed by this experience. The brutally dominating and controlling legacy was passed on.

In constructing the story, consideration had to be given to the general developmental level of Sara and Andrew, respectively as well as to the change in Sara and the change in the dynamic of the relationship. Here I found insight in the zone-#2 psychological structuralist work of Robert

Kegan and his findings that consciousness develops through five orders of consciousness. An order represents the mind's ability to make meaning and changes in order to represent a "qualitative change in the complexity of our minds..."²⁷ In essence, a positive change in orders of consciousness means one is seeing, holding, and connecting more perspectives. While acknowledging that they have widely varying levels in various lines, the nature of the story and its particular form of conflict seemed to dictate that Sara is approaching a change from 3rd order to 4th order. She is moving away from being "uncritically, unawarely identified with external sources of ideas..."²⁸ where she once found her self-meaning in her relationship with Andrew, and towards a "psychologically independent' self emerging..."²⁹, yet still within the context of her feminine typology. Andrew, on the other hand, is at a point in *his* life where he is maintaining a 3rd order level of complexity. This is best represented by his dependence on the idea of their relationship and on their gendered roles in the relationship as the generators of meaning in his life. In line with the 3rd order, Andrew's pathology of overly identifying with his power and strength finds its materialization in his relationship and gender dynamic. While this is an isolated incident we can still see that Sara is shifting orders of consciousness and adding deeper complexity to the panorama of perspectives she engages with including a more individualistic sense with her feminine voice. Kegan refers to a character in an Ibsen play but may as well be referring to Sara when he says she is "not just coming to some different ideas of her own. She is coming to a new set of ideas *about* her ideas, about where ideas even come from, about who authorizes them, or makes them true."³⁰

Interestingly, Sara's push into a wider order of consciousness (Z2) intensifies her typological predisposition to stay open to the pain and conflicted feelings she is having (Z1). She finds the courage to engage with her feelings throughout the event, hoping to find some clarity. Her willingness to stay in the perspective of valuing her feelings and right to self-author (Z1) is a quantitative change in number of perspectives she can see and a qualitative change in how she engages with her world (Z2).

Conversely, Andrew, having also suffered a childhood trauma, does not display the courage (Z1) necessary for a move to the fourth order (Z2). He falls back on the presence of their genders and "marriage" as the navigation landmarks of choice. He pushes the pain from his awareness as soon as the flashback images pass (Z1). While that may have been appropriate for an egocentric/preconventional human it is detrimental to a relationship that is ethnocentric and scratching the surface of a new level. Additionally, Andrew's lack of feeling is helping to render the relationship inauthentic as it is hindered in adapting to Sara's evolving self. Andrew wants to preserve the quantity, quality, and security of the perspectives he engages with, resulting in orders of consciousness in stasis: no more, no wider (Z2).

As the author of the story, I am biased in that I hold value in the desire to grow. However, the principles of nonexclusion, unfoldment, and enactment of IMP work to ensure that the perspective of Andrew is honored and included with as much consideration as Sara's experience. This allows me to see and hold the seeming paradox growing between Sara and Andrew, where as Kegan elucidates, "In the end we will find the love--however real and pure and honorable--to be suffocating because it wants to wrap itself around a smaller self than the one we have become."³¹

Research into the interior, Left-Hand quadrants of girls and boys, individually and as groups, who then grow into relationships as women and men, provides ample material to inform the construction of the characters and their relationship in the story. Let us now look at how the Upper-Right quadrant plays a part in all of this.

The Exterior Zones #5, #6, and #7

Autopoiesis is the study of the “self-making” capacity of an organism. It refers to the objective examination of the biological phenomenology of an individual and how it affects the behavior of the organism.³² Empiricism is “the study of the objective appearance and behavior of an organism.”³³ Neuropsychiatry is in part an autopoietic methodology (Z5) in that it provides insight into how humans cognize their world, in contrast to empiricism (Z6), which observes the structures and patterns in the physical functions of humans.

Neuropsychiatry, by relating cognitive behavior (Z5) to brain functions (Z6), is an objective look at how experience is anchored in the physical world. This zone also provided a lot of material with which to construct the characters and their behaviors. As was mentioned above, both men and women have physical correlates (Z6) to their cognitive predispositions towards relationship (Z5). These physical correlates do manifest in differences in the hardwiring of the female and male brain, but mostly the differences can be attributed to hormones: estrogen in females and testosterone in males. The hormones affect how men and women engage with their world and with what kind of physical foundation supports their experiences. What is most interesting is the co-manifestation or tetra-arising of exterior biology with interior self and culture in females, males, and their relationships begging the question of how much type is born from the biology of a person.

In her book, *The Female Brain*, Louann Brizendine, M.D. lays out the similarities and differences in the brains of females and males, including the zone-#5 aspects of what each can register. Brizendine points out that intelligence levels are the same between the two sexes but male brains contain more capacity for sexual drive while females contain more capacity for expressing and reading emotions, thus affecting perceptive differences. This perceptive difference is made evident throughout the story as Sara perceives and reads Andrew while Andrew has an element of cluelessness about what is happening with Sara. Men also have larger processors in the primitive area of the brain where fear and aggression are triggered.³⁴ When the argument becomes heated, Andrew finds himself resorting to anger and dominance while Sara is focused on connecting and getting answers. One wonders if the size of specific areas of female and males brains correlates to the degree to which a type is authentic or pathological.

The story opens with Sara feeding Marley, their daughter, while Andrew is removed with his back to them. This staging is representative of the basic physical differences between the two sexes as well as insight into their inner natures. The presence of estrogen (Z6) and its manifestation in connecting to others gives females the ability to read facial signposts (Z5) as a way to understand their reality.³⁵ Opening with Andrew’s back to Sara causes her an element of stress because she cannot see his face while he is engaging in subtle forms of betrayal over the phone with his mother.

The argument over the socks became a place for the physical differences between females and males to really inform the story. The fact that female brains tend to be programmed for connection and social harmony works against Sara as she is trying to overcome her need for harmony in order to maintain cognitive schemas (Z5). Moreover, when Andrew turns surly, Sara knows their closeness is threatened, which causes the female brain to “sound the abandonment alarm bells.”³⁶ When this happens, the female brain produces cortisol (Z6), a chemical released when stress or fear is perceived, which, in turn, creates the feelings of stress and fear (another physical attribute Sara must overcome). Men tend to not have a propensity for reading others³⁷ and Andrew is surprised by the emotions that come out of Sara. His surprise also matches his inability to sit with sadness and despair, leading him to feel helpless in the face of Sara’s pain as well as his own.³⁸ While a function of the authentic masculine type Andrew’s lack of access to the emotions of the moment hinder the relationship’s chance at developing.

The emotional trauma that arrives in girls and boys happens to coincide with the flooding of the early adolescent female brain with estrogen and the flooding of the early childhood male brain with testosterone (Z6). This is significant and furthered the need to show the flashbacks and the respective ages of Sara and Andrew’s childhood traumas, which set in motion autopoietic dynamics (Z5). It seems the cultural influence on early adolescent girls and early childhood boys rams up against the flooding of their brains with their respective hormones, making them extra susceptible to pain and trauma that invalidates their natures. Early teen girls are being flooded with estrogen, the “connection” hormone, and young boys are being flooded with testosterone, the “sexual drive and autonomy” hormone again raising the connection of type to biology, the connection of biology to how one operates in the world.

The physical aspects of females and males are an important part of their relations and tetra-arise with the cultural influence they face. Any story created to cover important aspects of female/male relations should seek to include them. Other influences on the lives of our characters are those found in the Lower-Right quadrant of social systems.

Social Autopoiesis (Z7) is the “study of how networks of objective things, organisms, and processes self-organize and self-reproduce.”³⁹ In the context of creating this story centered around a short episode, I limited the contribution of the Lower-Right quadrant to the constructs and communications of family and marriage found in the inside perspective of zone #7. In the same context, I excluded the added complexity of the zone #8.

It is worth noting that I thought it important to include the impact of how Andrew views the arrangement of their marriage. I felt it informed his character and his worldview well. My concern was that its presence in the story could be seen as contrived and not necessarily realistic. However, considering the limitations of an isolated incident story, there are few ways to realistically include the presence of social institutions and their influence, so I chose to not exclude the wedding vows.

Andrew and Sara have set up the rules and vows of their marriage in a way that matches conventional cultural values toward family, woman, and man (Z3). It also matches the former authenticity of their relationship, one based on honoring their level specific types, as well as their respective pathologies from childhood trauma (Z1). The rules of marriage tetra-arise with the

personal, cultural, and physical differences between the sexes. These rules can be seen as “Love Laws,” a term coined by Arundhati Roy. These laws “lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much.”⁴⁰ The “Love Laws” (Z7) also determine how Sara and Andrew can communicate to each other and how through that communication they continue to reproduce a marriage that is, in some ways, in need of growth. If Andrew can accept new communications from Sara, then their we-space can change and develop. If Andrew cannot register her new communications, then she will have to choose between terminating the marriage or staying and killing part of her emerging self.

Andrew lacks a certain respect for what Sara does even though he values it. He does not equate her contribution to the family with his, as he insists that he gets a “day off” where he cannot be bothered to put his own socks away, while Sara does not. Somewhere, Andrew sees the status of inferiority assigned to Sara and her duties, yet he loves her in part because she puts his socks away. This reflects the pathology of his level of type that uses his woman as a means of power over her. In her book *Sacred Pleasure*, Riane Eisler points out that “the traditional marriage contract is essentially also one of power imbalances: one through which the less powerful woman unconditionally sells her body to the more powerful man.”⁴¹ This “further perpetuates the idea that the work women have traditionally performed in their homes is not really work, no matter how hard or how long a woman works--and therefore has no real economic value.”⁴² Again a question is begged. Is the traditional marriage contract and the communication systems that create and maintain it (Z7) based on an idea of relationship that is inauthentic? Nonetheless, Andrew mentions the vows and their “agreement” showing his enduring commitment to them over any commitment to growth for him or Sara.

Looking back to Kegan’s work on orders of consciousness (Z2), we see how tricky the Upper-Right perspectives are in one’s journey through the orders. Sara has biological and cognitive predispositions towards connection and relationship (Z5) that, while in the 3rd order of consciousness (Z2), translated into having connection through the institution of their marriage (Z7). Yet she is moving, with more or less the same biology (Z6), toward satisfying her need for connection in a way that includes the wider perspective of her self-authoring (Z2). Andrew’s firm location in 3rd order prevents him from seeing the perspective of connection outside of external meaning sources (Z2) and has left him in a place where his cognitive schemas are helping to conspire to keep him stuck (Z5). Moreover, his 3rd order dependence on marriage and its codes leads him to defend the culture’s assumed right of authorship over Sara based on gender (Z4). It is as if with the move to 4th order, Sara is experiencing a transcendence of her biology, while Andrew is rooted in it.

Sara is making a move through transformation; she wants answers about how this situation was created and where she is heading. It is interesting to see the breadth of the conflict in that not only did she suffer trauma, and not only do the chemicals in her brain and her genitalia determine her place and function in societies eyes, but her culture has rules or “Love Laws” that define the pain she finds herself in. It is equally interesting to see how the progression from 3rd to 4th orders of consciousness adds a deeper perspective to Sara that motivates her to find her self-authorship and seemingly overcome the psychological, cultural, biological, and social destiny of the previous order all within the voice of her type. Andrew is not deepening nor widening in any zone during the story. The lens he engages his world through is primarily an unhealthy

masculine lens which prevents him from even picking up his socks and he is frustrated by the new ways in which Sara is questioning her experience. Kegan refers to this kind of interaction as a “consciousness conversation at cross purposes.”⁴³ Tension in life and in story manifests from the intersections of perspectives and the differing levels in which humans experience them as illuminated by the eight zones of IMP.

Conclusion

“Socks?” was created with the intention of applying Integral Methodological Pluralism to the craft of creating a fictional, narrative story. Using IMP is not only about crafting a story that is multi-faceted or interesting but can be done for a specific intention. This intention involves looking deeply into oneself as the author and of looking deeply into the complex mix of elements that define the human experience, all for the purpose of providing a rich, complete picture of reality that maximizes the audience’s resonance with the experience they are reading about. As the analysis of “Socks?” demonstrates, the rich, complete picture of reality consists of the perspective of the developing and uniquely complex sea of perspectives that surround individuals and relationships. Once that picture has been seen, held, and engaged with, storycreators can be confident they are crafting veridical circumstances packed with intricate and sharp tension. As a result, they can serve their audiences captivating tales with love and integrity so as to inspire transformation or translative moves towards health.

I do not know if “Socks?” possesses that ability, but I did find the process of employing different methodologies and the principles of nonexclusion, unfoldment, and enactment to deeply inform me about my experiences and myself. I also found it provided me with a confidence that what I was writing and how I was going about it was valid. Mostly I found it extremely challenging trying to discern how the different perspectives and methodologies informed the story, as the lumping together of zones can attest. It was also difficult trying to decide which aspects of research informed which parts of the story. There was so much and it was nuanced and subtle. Knowing how to incorporate typologies while being considerate of the various levels of authenticity and without assuming that type=gender=destiny was particularly challenging. Furthermore, I found that working with the eight zones broadened and deepened my capacity for seeing, holding, and connecting perspectives, which pushed the limits of my aptitude with language. All in all, it was wonderful. Having finished the story, I do feel that it is full of “truth to life” and am proud of its potential to affect my audience.

NOTES

¹ Combs & Esbjörn-Hargens, “An integral tour of consciousness studies,” 2006, p. 332

² Wilber, “Excerpt B: Kosmic karma and creativity,” 2002, p. 11

³ Wilber, “Excerpt B: Kosmic karma and creativity,” 2002, p.16

⁴ McKee, *Story*, 1997

⁵ Wilber, *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*, 2000, p. 52

⁶ Wilber, *The eye of spirit: An integral vision for a world gone slightly mad*, 1997, p. 187

⁷ Wilber, *The eye of spirit: An integral vision for a world gone slightly mad*, 1997, p. 188

⁸ Wilber, *The eye of spirit: An integral vision for a world gone slightly mad*, 1997, p. 199

⁹ Wilber, personal communication, 2007

- ¹⁰ Wilber, personal communication, 2007
- ¹¹ Wilber, *The eye of spirit: An integral vision for a world gone slightly mad*, 1997, pp. 188-189
- ¹² Wilber, *The eye of spirit: An integral vision for a world gone slightly mad*, 1997, p. 189
- ¹³ Rentschler, "AQAL glossary," 2006, p. 24
- ¹⁴ Esbjörn-Hargens, "Integral ecology: A post-metaphysical approach," 2006, p. 330
- ¹⁵ Rentschler, "AQAL glossary," 2006, p. 12
- ¹⁶ Rentschler, "AQAL glossary," 2006, p. 5
- ¹⁷ Gilligan, *The birth of pleasure: A new map of love*, 2003, p. 30
- ¹⁸ Brown & Gilligan, *Meeting at the crossroads*, 1992, p. 6
- ¹⁹ Brown & Gilligan, *Meeting at the crossroads*, 1992, p. 41
- ²⁰ Brown & Gilligan, *Meeting at the crossroads*, 1992, p. 218
- ²¹ Bergman, "Men's psychological development: A relational perspective," 1991, p. 10
- ²² Reuther, quoted in Ellison, "Holding up our half of the sky: Male gender privilege as problem and resource for liberation ethics," 1993, p. 96
- ²³ Gilligan, *The birth of pleasure: A new map of love*, 2003, p. 28
- ²⁴ Brown & Gilligan, *Meeting at the crossroads*, 1992, p. 97
- ²⁵ Gilligan, *The birth of pleasure: A new map of love*, 2003, p. 30
- ²⁶ Gilligan, *The birth of pleasure: A new map of love*, 2003, p. 95
- ²⁷ Kegan, *In over our heads*, 1994, p. 6
- ²⁸ Kegan, *In over our heads*, 1994, p. 110
- ²⁹ Kegan, *In over our heads*, 1994, p. 110
- ³⁰ Kegan, *In over our heads*, 1994, p. 110
- ³¹ Kegan, *In over our heads*, 1994, p. 124
- ³² Rentschler, "AQAL glossary," 2006, p. 3
- ³³ Rentschler, "AQAL glossary," 2006, p. 7
- ³⁴ Brizendine, *The female brain*, 2006, p. 5
- ³⁵ Brizendine, *The female brain*, 2006, p. 15
- ³⁶ Brizendine, *The female brain*, 2006, p. 41
- ³⁷ Brizendine, *The female brain*, 2006, p. 119
- ³⁸ Brizendine, *The female brain*, 2006, p. 125
- ³⁹ Rentschler, "AQAL glossary," 2006, p. 28
- ⁴⁰ Roy, quoted in Gilligan, *The birth of pleasure: A new map of love*, 2003, p. 173
- ⁴¹ Eisler, *Sacred pleasure*, 1996, p. 337
- ⁴² Eisler, *Sacred pleasure*, 1996, p. 338
- ⁴³ Kegan, *In over our heads*, 1994, p. 114

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