"The Human Domains"
from *INTEGRAL COACHING* by James Flaherty

[This text is part of a chapter of James Flaherty's upcoming book. It is being used with permission. The four "human domains" pertain to Wilber's four "quadrants".]

Integral coaching employs three central models. Before I begin talking about them, I'll give you the warnings that all model-givers provide but that nobody follows. First warning is that the model is not the person. We know this more broadly as "the map is not the territory." An obvious point, soon forgotten: really nobody is an extravert, nobody is an Enneagram "nine," nobody is "green" in Spiral Dynamics. These are all labels that result from a particular analytical process. The process distorts and limits the true reality and possibilities inherent in the person. They have the advantage of being convenient and facilitating conversation. They have the terrible downside of limiting thought, crushing creativity, and putting a strong cage around our appreciation of others. Once we've applied and held strongly to such a label, we usually stop observing any behavior that does not fall within that which is expected from it. We don't observe the introvert speaking up; we overlook the Enneagram "five" being warm, fearless and generous; and, so on. It's bad enough that we have to speak our native language of English, French, or whatever; our language already determines what is possible for us to observe, think about, or imagine. Further downgrading our ability to be in contact with actual life by strongly holding to a label makes the work of coaching that much more difficult.

The second warning is a corollary of the first. It's when our clients begin to explain themselves, excuse themselves, justify themselves by employing a label that falls out of a model. For example: "I can't get along with her. She's 'orange,' as in Spiral Dynamics, and I'm 'yellow.' " There are endless variations of this behavior and they are all unhelpful.

A third potential problem is using what we discover in employing the model as a way of manipulating our clients. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) got a particularly bad name because its practitioners were doing this. Another difficulty is when we forget that assessment models are snapshots and that life flows before, around, and after the snapshot is taken. Do we still notice subtle changes once we have labeled our client? Like I said at the beginning of this section, I am not saying anything new so far, but we fall into these traps and they have our coaching be stale, crude, abrasive and sometimes even cruel. They are also reinforcing our habit of reification, which means taking a phenomenon that is in process, in flow, and making it into a solid, unchanging object. For example, saying "I have a relationship" the same way as "I have a briefcase."

How to keep all of this in mind when you are doing your coaching work? I recommend that you have a short, personal ritual that demarcates your coaching work from the rest of your life. Perhaps you sit in meditation for a few moments, or you do some tai chi movements, or jot down what's occupying your mind. I also recommend that you institute a practice of asking yourself at the end of every coaching session, "What is more mysterious for me about this person?" I think you'll find it much more useful to open to the mystery of the person instead of coming to conclusions about them.

Okay, here we go.

Model One: The Four Human Domains

This model draws strongly Ken Wilber's work. I am employing his basic concept and my version of his essential categories. I display them in a different way and use them for different purposes. I've never shown them to Ken but my guess is that he would find something missing in them, which might be really great to hear. Meanwhile, hundreds of our certified integral coaches are using the model as I will describe it and find it powerful and assuring that the work attends to all aspects of the client's life.

The basic idea of the model is that any phenomena that occurs in the human world simultaneously appears in all four quadrants. Although at a given moment, we may have our attention on this or that particular quadrant, it is by attending to all quadrants that we have the greatest chance of bringing about the fulfillment of our coaching work. Each quadrant, though, also exists and has its own operational laws and validation process for our truth claims. (For example, any consultant who has attempted to sell an engagement to a corporation knows that the client is pressing for measurable outcomes; they want a number that is at one place at the beginning and at a better place afterwards. I call this the tyranny of Quadrant Four, the realm of things, numeric measurement and physical laws. Much of what consultants do cannot be reduced and expressed in a number. Although there has been lots of Rube Goldberg thinking to try and bring this about, can we really assign a number to loyalty, better communication, more creativity, openness, resilience, responsiveness? — those qualities that really account for organizational success—since it's pretty much only time, money and surveys that can provide numbers.

Many times consultants are forced to construct their work. The list of qualities can be observed. We can construct distinctions that establish standards. That is not the same as numerically measuring it. My view is that that which is the most important in life is not measurable. Do we really love our children a

quart, or is it a mile? The tyranny of Quadrant Four is expressed by calling that which exists in it "hard" and everything else "soft." Organizations under stress often throw out the "soft stuff," forgetting that all results come from them. It is easier to justify our decisions based on numbers instead of on criteria that are more challenging to explain. Many folks end up talking about instinct or gut reaction, which many times is not helpful, since no one else can help save us from self-delusion when we are couching our decision-making process in these terms. As we study the quadrants, perhaps you'll see that there are rigorous ways of describing phenomena that are not numeric. You'll see as we go along that much human mischief is brought about attempting to use the truth claims of one quadrant in a different one and forgetting that the quadrants exist as both a unit and as individual elements.

For example, when working to have less stress in our life, we pick our favorite quadrant to work in. We shut off our social contacts, or exercise a lot more, or do an intervention in our cognitive process, or get a faster computer. That is an example of seeing the quadrants individually. Seeing them together would mean asking the broader question of "How am I seeing life/living life that is appearing in these ways across the quadrants?" It is looking for the pattern that unites and is expressed in the quadrants rather than thinking it is the individual pieces that are forming the pattern. Both are true, but we have our favorite way of thinking about it.

Let's walk through the quadrants:

Human Domain One: Individual Consciousness and Experience

This is the quadrant that people would usually describe as their inner world. It is the realm of thought, emotion, belief, ambition, concerns, commitments (i.e., most of everything about me that you could only find out about me if I told you). Body sensations are also here because, although we can observe the body in a public space, what it *feels like* is private to the individual. Like many of the quadrants, this is a favorite of the coaches. Some say that all that is necessary for coaching to succeed is that we switch the client's beliefs; and it's true that there is something to be said for letting go of our habitual way of viewing ourselves and the world and opening to something new. Our body, though, has deep patterns of habit that are not immediately changeable by a shift in beliefs. (There are probably a lot of you who are reading this who are thinking of exceptions. Every now and then there are exceptions. Eckhardt Tolle tells his enlightenment story as sitting on a park bench having a powerful moment of realization after which everything is different. I've been experimenting with many park benches in many cities since then and I've not had the same luck. Maybe I need to try Europe. The enlightenment stories in Zen tell stories of immediate realization, but these examples were told in

communities that knew the real context. The context was a student studying for many years before the moment of realization and studying for years afterwards.) Sometimes we imagine that we can tell what someone is experiencing by her facial expressions or body language or by words and actions. Alternately, many of us believe that adult humans have a clearly defined character that determines internal experience. If you will study yourself quietly over a period of time, you'll find that your inner world is much vaster than you had first thought and much more varied. In fact, each moment of experience has a unique taste. The question is, Are we present enough to detect the unique taste of each moment?

Human Domain Two: Body and Behavior

This quadrant is the public aspect of the individual. We can observe the behavior the person does and we can experience, observe and test his body. Between quadrant one and two, perhaps you can see the point I was making earlier; both realms exist together. Human consciousness requires a body and bodies are animated with consciousness, and yet we can speak about them separately when that helps us to untangle our difficulties or open up new possibilities. We often make the mistake of interpreting a body movement as meaning something to the person making it that it, in fact, does not mean to her. I'll always remember Fernando Flores asking someone to walk around the room and then sit in a chair. He then asked observers in the room what that person had just done. The answers were almost limitless: she was following instructions; she was walking; she was exercising; she was observing the room from different angles; she was trying out a new pair of shoes; she was wearing out the carpet; and, on and on. And, yet, it's not that any answer would do. She wasn't performing surgery or flying an airplane.

I'm bringing this up because it is frequently a sore spot in coaching. How do I know what I'm really up to? Do I really know what I think, knowing that we have a near limitless capacity for self-deception? Or, do I let other people say what my real intent is? Do I conclude that the results of my actions are what I intended? Or, are intentions and outcomes separate? (My view is that the only being whose intentions are perfectly realized is God, and for the rest of us, we have to deal with mistakes, lack of skill, and wandering attention. The conflict that I'm speaking of becomes pointed in organizations when someone is receiving his 360-degree feedback. The feedback conversations on this topic often devolve into arguments about what the person really did. It is pretty impossible for us to be—in Robert Heinlein's words—a "Fair Witness" (when asked what color a building is, the Fair Witness said, "it looks blue on this side to me from here"). We impute motivation and speak our view as fact. I guess that is because it is quicker than taking the time to ask someone.

Yesterday I was driving late to an appointment down a narrow, downhill road; two-thirds down the road blocking the road completely was a silver SUV. I stopped and started to fume. My prejudice against SUVs was coming to the surface. I stuck out my hand and waved the person on. Nothing happened. Finally, I shouted out in a not-too-hostile voice, "What are you doing?" The other driver said something. I asked her to repeat. Someone is blocking my driveway and I'm waiting to get in. Once I had taken the time to ask what she was up to, my interpretation of the entire event shifted. The other driver was no longer an SUV-selfish-bully driver but someone who was being inconvenienced in a big way by someone else's lack of consideration. But like I said, it's easier to come to our conclusions than to ask. How often do we do this each day?

Human Domain Three: Relationship and Culture

This quadrant is the realm of relationship and culture. It is the inner aspect of the group. It is where language, custom, rituals, history, and morals exist. We can only fully comprehend this world by being a member of it. Even if I decided today to fully dedicated myself to understanding Chinese culture and went to China, learned Chinese, made Chinese food, lived in a Chinese landscape, lived in a Chinese social system, I never would have a full Chinese view of life. It's too late. The weight of the other quadrants, especially One and Two, has made the task impossible. That doesn't stop us though from us thinking that we really know what is going on in a relationship, or imagining that any other culture that was interested in what's good would take on our way of living, whatever that is.

For many of us, it is very difficult to see the social frame we put around situations. We translate that which we see into the category our culture defines and these categories feel so right, emotionally and somatically, for us that we frequently have a "yuck" reaction to other forms. Some of us even go so far as to say our cultural forms are the natural ones and others are deviant. (The science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin, the daughter of a famous anthropologist, writes terrific stories about other cultural systems that show us the built-in biases of our own.) In other words, we take our cultural values and make them into laws of nature. Nowhere is this more apparent than in business, which is a social construct masquerading as a product of nature. Who in business remembers that it is made up that "profits must rise" and "products must be produced faster and faster"? Nearly every businessperson speaks as if these two are facts of nature like the speed of light or the boiling point of water. Speaking about business in that way frees us from the responsibility of the choices we make and assigns them to the inevitable conclusions drawn from the "laws" of business. In essence, Quadrant Three is the world of shared interpretation within communities or relationships. These

interpretations get built over time through shared language and practices. Yet they are not all equal.

If we have a starting point of assessment that posits human joy, freedom and peace as the purpose of culture and relationship, then we have criteria for examining the practices of particular cultures. Torture, mutilation, slavery, patriarchy, plutocracy can readily be stripped of their legitimacy if we begin with the stated premise. I understand that it is impossible to ever be outside of interpretation, but I do keep finding that some interpretations are better than others. I've stated my criteria for better, and it seems better to me to have a criteria for what's better than to be cowed by half-baked notions that all interpretations being such are inherently equal and consequently unassailable. If coaches don't have clarity themselves about this, they'll find themselves taking on coaching projects that in the end make their client's life worse. For example, clients who imagine that everything in their life will better when they lose twenty pounds and then find out that the only thing that has happened is that they weigh less and that a certain portion of people react differently towards them are left more resigned and unhappier than before coaching took place. It seems to me that coaches have to establish for themselves their own criteria of value. Where does this sense of value come from? And, what are its consequences in action?

Human Domain Four: Environment and Systems

Here we have the realm of the environment, both natural and human made. Here lie the worlds of measurement, science, and their application in technology and engineering. Like Quadrant Two, we can bump into the contents of this quadrant. We can't fall over a thought, Quadrant One, or a word, Quadrant Three, but we can over an ankle, Quadrant Two, or a couch, Quadrant Four. The environment is that which has given life to everything on earth. Our cultures exist only because they have found a way to live successfully in the environment. Bedouins do great in Arabia, not so great on the North Pole. Inuits, with their sealskin clothes and harpoons, would not flourish in the desert.

Nature also inspires us with its beauty, harmony and regenerative properties. We are never separate from it, even if we imagine that we are. The human world of engineering and technology exists as an expression of what we have discovered by studying the natural environment. As we all know, we have unfortunately started to use technology, engineering, and industrialization to such an extent that we are severely damaging the natural world every day. Somehow we imagine that our technology in the end will be superior to nature even though nature was the source of the technology.

The people we coach will all live in a particular environment and have their own relationship with technology. Some of these relationships will be healthful and nourishing; others will be toxic and limiting. Many people work in physical spaces that are sterile and utilitarian and their creativity and spirit are diminished as a result. Some of us have become slaves to our electronic leashes of email, pagers, mobile phones, voicemail and personal digital assistants. We at one point created them, but now they are shaping the kind of people we are by having to do many activities simultaneously; having to be always available for our work; having to be informed about everything that is happening everywhere and eternally busy. When we try to step away from all this, why do we feel diminished? Why do we even feel as if a part of us has been cut off? In science fiction, there has long been the idea of a cyborg, a being that is part human and part machine. When I hear the attachment that some of us have to our technology, I wonder if we have not already become cyborgs.