

INTEGRAL
CODE
of
ETHICS

PUBLIC REVIEW EDITION



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Integral Code of Ethics

A Living Covenant and Code of Practice for Integrative, Metatheoretical, and Developmental Work

Public Review Edition

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This document descends from an extensive field review process involving practitioners, scholars, and reviewers across contemplative, professional, developmental, and metamodern communities. It is offered publicly as a living covenant, open to ongoing engagement, and not currently housed in, endorsed by, or governed by any single organization.

Acknowledgments for Early Field Review

I am grateful to the early readers whose generous and searching feedback helped shape this version of the code. Their responses have sharpened its account of metatheoretical power, deepened its attention to the emotional and relational realities of ethical failure, strengthened its dialectical balance around developmental assessment and interpretive authority, and broadened its concern for intellectual lineages, terminology, and traditions beyond the integral field.

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As the code moves from independent authorship toward collective stewardship — through a provisional stewardship group and eventually a signatory-governed Ethics Council — its licensing terms may evolve accordingly, as an act of that stewardship rather than a unilateral decision by the author.

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Dedicated to Edward Berge, who since at least 2004 has been asking the integral community to get its ethical act together, and who has himself done a lot of important thinking in this area.

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Author's Note

This document is offered publicly as a living covenant: an invitation to shared ethical reflection, ongoing engagement, and possible future adoption across the broad field of integral, integrative, developmental, metatheoretical, contemplative, and allied communities of practice. It does not presume to speak for any single organization, lineage, school, or community, nor does it claim institutional authority over the diverse practitioners, scholars, educators, facilitators, consultants, coaches, leaders, and public intellectuals who work in these fields.

This edition follows an extensive field review process involving practitioners and scholars across contemplative, professional, legal-ministerial, developmental-theoretical, and integrative communities, whose feedback substantially shaped the document (see Acknowledgments). It is not formally housed within, endorsed by, or governed by any organization. It is offered publicly at this stage in order to invite wider engagement with whether a code of this kind is needed, whether this document is adequate to that need, and what form of stewardship might best support its future — including, in time, the formation of a provisional stewardship group and an Ethics Council drawn from a maturing signatory community, as described in Part IV.

A note on the word “integral.” *Integral* is used in this document in a broad philosophical sense: denoting comprehensive, integrative, and multi-perspectival approaches to knowledge, practice, and human development. It is not restricted to any single theoretical system, organization, or school. The term has a long history in philosophy, spirituality, and cultural thought, including the work of Sri Aurobindo, Jean Gebser, Ken Wilber, and others. It is used here with awareness of its association with the Integral Theory lineage, but also to address the wider range of communities — integral, integrative, metamodern, developmental, metatheoretical, contemplative, and allied — that share a commitment to working across perspectives, disciplines, and domains of practice.

In the Integral Theory lineage, ethical concern has often been framed through Wilber's Prime Directive, variously expressed as the call to protect and promote the health of the entire spiral of development, or to preserve the greatest depth for the greatest span. This code affirms the intuition that ethical responsibility must attend both to developmental depth and to the widest possible field of care. At the same time, it insists that depth and span must be pursued through ethically accountable means. No appeal to evolution, awakening, integration, or planetary flourishing permits the instrumentalization of persons, communities, or traditions.

The simple, if also demanding, premise of the document is that integrative and developmental work carries ethical responsibilities commensurate with its scope. Those who work with metatheoretical, developmental, contemplative, or systems-oriented frameworks often operate with lenses that can interpret persons, communities, traditions, organizations, worldviews, and cultural formations at multiple levels at once. These lenses can illuminate; they can also distort. They can support growth, dialogue, healing, and wise action; they can also be used to rank, silence, overreach, bypass, appropriate, or evade accountability.

The field already contains many rich values statements, commitments, and philosophical reflections. These are important. But values alone do not establish standards of conduct, processes of evaluation, or structures of accountability. A mature ethical culture requires more than aspiration. It requires shared obligations, concrete practices, relational courage, and mechanisms for repair when harm occurs.

This code is intended to have genuine normative force. It speaks in terms of duties, standards, and consequences. At the same time, it resists reducing ethics to a purely juridical or compliance-based apparatus. Ethical maturity cannot be secured by rules alone. It must be cultivated through ongoing practice, honest feedback, relational accountability, and the willingness to learn from failure without using growth as an excuse to avoid consequences.

Beyond constraining misconduct, the aim of this document is to support a culture of compassion, discernment, courage, and repair. It is therefore best understood as a living covenant and code of practice. It is covenantal because it rests on freely undertaken commitment, mutual answerability, and shared care for the integrity of the field. It is a code because it establishes obligations that can be evaluated, upheld, and, when necessary, enforced through the withdrawal of recognition and association.

Document Architecture

Part I: Principles: articulates the core ethical commitments that signatories would accept as binding obligations.

Part II: Standards of Practice: translates those principles into concrete expectations across domains such as teaching, coaching, consulting, contemplative facilitation, developmental assessment, public discourse, organizational intervention, community leadership, and AI-assisted metatheoretical tools.

Part III: Evaluation Criteria: frames ethical evaluation as a developmental practice, including self-assessment, peer reflection, stakeholder feedback, periodic recommitment, case-based learning, and review of claims, harms, and unintended consequences.

Part IV: Accountability Processes and Governance: describes graduated pathways for addressing ethical inquiries, concerns, complaints, and serious violations, including restorative processes, formal review, public clarification, withdrawal of signatory recognition, protections for those who raise concerns, and provisions for transitional stewardship.

The code envisions a signatory community, a provisional stewardship group during the formation period, an Ethics Council once the community matures, trained restorative facilitators, peer reflection structures, and periodic review processes.

How to Engage This Document

Readers are invited to engage this draft in the spirit of field review. The following questions may be helpful:

Does this document name the real ethical risks of integrative, developmental, contemplative, and metatheoretical work?

Are the principles strong enough to guide conduct without becoming rigid or totalizing?

Are the standards concrete enough to be useful across domains of practice?

Are the evaluation practices realistic, developmental, and sufficiently demanding?

Are the accountability processes fair to those harmed, fair to practitioners under review, and workable in a distributed community without centralized authority?

What is missing?

What language would make the document more trustworthy, precise, invitational, or protective?

What form of stewardship would you trust to hold such a code?

Feedback, questions, and interest in deeper involvement are welcome via the Contact page.

Status, Scope, and Relationship to Existing Obligations

This public review edition remains an independent, evolving document. One purpose of its public circulation is to explore what form of stewardship, signatory process, and practice ecology would best serve the code's integrity, legitimacy, and usefulness.

This code supplements but does not replace existing legal, professional, institutional, licensure-based, fiduciary, or mandatory reporting obligations. Where another applicable law, code, policy, or professional standard imposes a higher or more specific obligation, signatories remain bound by that obligation.

Because this code is a voluntary covenant rather than a licensing body, legal authority, or institutional regulator, it does not replace the protective functions of courts, professional boards, employers, schools, religious bodies, publishers, platforms, or other entities with formal authority. Where harm involves legal violations, professional misconduct, mandatory reporting obligations, institutional policy, or immediate risk, the appropriate external mechanisms remain necessary. The code may offer shared ethical language, standards, and processes, but it does not substitute for public, legal, professional, or institutional forms of protection and recourse.

Individual signatories commit to the principles, standards, evaluation practices, and accountability processes in relation to their own work. Organizational signatories would accept responsibility not only for the conduct of individual representatives but also for the governance structures, cultural norms, feedback mechanisms, financial arrangements, and institutional incentives that shape ethical practice within the organization.

Part I: Principles for Integrative, Metatheoretical, and Developmental Practice

Preamble

We who sign this code are practitioners, scholars, educators, consultants, and community leaders who work with integrative, metatheoretical, and developmental frameworks in service of human and planetary flourishing. We draw on diverse traditions of thought—integral theory, metamodern philosophy, applied metatheory, developmental psychology, complexity thinking, contemplative practice, and allied fields—each with its own strengths, limitations, and histories.

We recognize that the capacity to work across paradigms, to hold multiple perspectives without collapsing them, and to think at meta-levels of analysis carries distinctive responsibilities. The very power of integrative and developmental frameworks—their scope, their explanatory ambition, their claim to enfold partial truths into wider wholes—creates distinctive risks: the risk of epistemic overreach, the conflation of theoretical altitude with moral authority, the subtle colonization of traditions and perspectives that are honored in principle but absorbed in practice, and the use of developmental language to dismiss, pathologize, or silence legitimate dissent.

These dangers are not merely hypothetical. Across integrative, developmental, contemplative, and adjacent communities, there have been enough visible and consequential instances of harm to warrant serious ethical reflection. In some of these cases, frameworks that ostensibly valued depth, development, and care have also provided vocabulary for deflecting accountability: critique reframed as a failure of perspective-taking, harm minimized as a necessary disruption, those affected characterized as occupying less developed stages of understanding. This document does not presume that such failures are universal, inevitable, or characteristic of all integrative communities, of course. It names them because they have occurred often enough, and with enough consequence, to require shared language, standards, and accountability.

In this document, “harm” refers not only to overt abuse, coercion, exploitation, or material injury, but also to relational, psychological, developmental, spiritual, reputational, epistemic, cultural, or institutional patterns that significantly undermine a person’s dignity, agency, consent, voice, belonging, livelihood, or capacity for truthful participation. Because harms in integrative and developmental communities may be subtle, ambiguous, or cumulative, claims of harm require careful inquiry rather than automatic validation or automatic dismissal.

The power addressed by this code is not reducible to ordinary professional authority, though it may overlap with and amplify such authority. A therapist, teacher, minister, consultant, or organizational leader may hold significant influence within a bounded domain of practice. Metatheoretical and developmental practitioners, however, often claim or are granted a different order of interpretive authority: the capacity to assess not only what someone thinks, feels, believes, or does, but the developmental architecture *through which* they think, feel, believe, and act.

This form of authority operates on the conditions of intelligibility and legitimacy themselves. It shapes what counts as seeing, not only what is seen. It can influence what registers as sophisticated or naive, complex or reductive, integral or partial, mature or reactive. It positions speech itself—assigning it a developmental location, a degree of complexity, a measure of adequacy or limitation.

When exercised with humility, competence, transparency, and care, this authority can support learning, development, dialogue, and wiser action. Its ethical character depends not only on what is claimed or assessed, but on how the framework is held: whether it is imposed upon others, used alongside them, or brought into genuine dialogue with the persons and perspectives it engages.

But because metatheoretical authority works at the level of frames, perspectives, and criteria of adequacy, it carries distinctive risks. It can render critique structurally inaudible while appearing to include it. It can relocate dissent into a lower developmental position. It can treat another person's objection as evidence of the framework from which that person is presumed to be speaking, rather than as a claim deserving substantive response.

Metatheoretical power is interpretive, positional, and often invisible to those who exercise it. It is not reducible to professional role, institutional position, charisma, or social status, though it may be amplified by all of these. This distinctive form of power creates the ethical obligations this code seeks to articulate: obligations of humility, transparency, consent, competence, non-weaponization, accountability, and repair.

Ethical failures in integrative, developmental, contemplative, and metatheoretical communities rarely arise from abstract error alone. They occur within dense relational fields shaped by belonging, loyalty, admiration, dependency, shame, fear of exclusion, financial need, professional opportunity, spiritual longing, and the desire to protect a community or teacher who has given one meaning. These forces can make harm difficult to name and accountability difficult to sustain. A code of ethics must therefore address not only principles and procedures, but also the emotional and relational conditions that allow ethical distortion to persist.

No code can fully protect a community from the human dynamics it seeks to regulate. This document cannot eliminate the risks of loyalty, denial, idealization, factionalism, retaliation, or self-protection. It creates shared language, standards, practices, and processes through which those risks can be named, interrupted, and worked with more consciously.

This code exists because aspiration to act with integrity, while essential, is often not enough. Values statements and commitments charters articulate what we stand for; a code of ethics articulates what we owe—to the persons, communities, and traditions with whom and within which we work. It translates shared ideals into normative obligations, practical standards, and structures of mutual accountability.

We offer this code in a spirit consistent with the traditions it draws upon: as a living document, subject to revision and deepening, aware of its own partiality, and committed to the developmental humility it asks of its signatories. It is not a juridical instrument but a covenant—a set of binding commitments that derive their authority from the integrity of those who adopt them and the communities that hold them accountable.



The Principles

The following eleven principles constitute the ethical foundation of this code. Each is accompanied by a brief commentary that clarifies its intent, scope, and application. Together, they establish the normative framework from which specific standards, evaluation criteria, and accountability processes will be developed.

Principle I: Epistemic Humility and Framework Reflexivity

Signatories shall maintain an active awareness that every framework—including their own—is partial, perspectival, and historically situated. No integrative or metatheoretical framework constitutes a view from nowhere. The claim to operate at a meta-level does not exempt the practitioner from the limitations, blind spots, and cultural conditioning that attend all human knowing. Signatories shall routinely subject their own frameworks to the same critical scrutiny they apply to others, and shall resist the conflation of comprehensiveness with completeness.

Commentary: This principle addresses the deepest structural risk in metatheoretical work: the temptation to mistake a wider view for an adequate one. Integral and integrative frameworks are powerful precisely because they synthesize across domains—but synthesis can become a subtle form of closure if the practitioner loses sight of what the synthesis leaves out. The apophatic dimension matters here: what cannot be captured by the framework is as ethically significant as what it illuminates. Genuine meta-level work requires ongoing willingness to discover the limits of one’s own meta-level.

Principle II: The Priority of Persons over Frameworks

Signatories shall hold the dignity, autonomy, and wellbeing of persons as prior to the explanatory claims of any framework. No individual shall be reduced to a case, a data point, a developmental stage, or an illustration of a theoretical principle. In all contexts of practice—teaching, consulting, facilitation, assessment, and scholarship—the person before you is not an instance of your theory.

Commentary: Integrative and developmental practitioners often work with rich taxonomies of human experience—stages, states, types, lines, quadrants. These are valuable tools of understanding, but they carry the risk of substituting the map for the territory of a lived life. When a framework becomes the primary lens through which another person is seen, the relationship has shifted from service to instrumentalization. This principle establishes a clear hierarchy: the framework serves the person; the person does not serve the framework. This principle does not deny that all perception and interpretation are mediated by frameworks. Rather, it requires signatories to remember that no framework exhausts the person interpreted, and that the ethical use of frameworks must remain answerable to the person’s dignity, agency, and lived complexity. This principle does not mean that patterns, types, roles, developmental dynamics, social locations, or recurring structures are ethically irrelevant. Persons may participate in real patterns, and those patterns may matter for understanding, care, assessment, or accountability. The ethical requirement is that no person be collapsed into the pattern used to interpret them. The framework may illuminate something true; it must not be allowed to exhaust the person. Put simply: the ends do not justify the means. No appeal to evolution, awakening, integration, civilizational renewal, or planetary flourishing permits the instrumentalization of persons or communities.

Principle III: Developmental Authority Is Not Moral Authority

Signatories shall not conflate developmental attainment—whether cognitive, contemplative, or structural—with ethical superiority, privileged access to truth, or the right to exercise unchecked authority over others. Claims of advanced development, however well-founded, do not confer immunity from ethical obligation, nor do they diminish the moral standing or epistemic contributions of those at different developmental locations.

Commentary: This may be one of the most consequential principles in this code, because it addresses a mechanism by which serious harms in integral and adjacent communities have sometimes been perpetuated and rationalized. Developmental frameworks describe real patterns of growth, but they can be appropriated as instruments of domination when a leader’s claimed stage of development is treated as sufficient warrant for deference. The history of contemplative and integral communities shows repeatedly that high cognitive or spiritual development can coexist with significant ethical failure. This principle does not deny that development is real, or that developmental capacities may bear on judgment, role competence, or forms of leadership. It insists that such capacities do not erase moral equality, remove the need for accountability, or justify domination.

Principle IV: Informed Consent and Transparency of Lens

Signatories shall be transparent about the frameworks, models, and developmental lenses they are applying, and shall seek the informed consent of individuals and communities before subjecting them to developmental assessment, metatheoretical analysis, or integrative intervention. Where consent cannot be meaningfully obtained—as in published scholarship—signatories shall exercise heightened

care to avoid misrepresentation, reductive characterization, or the imposition of evaluative hierarchies on perspectives and traditions that have not invited such evaluation.

Commentary: *This principle applies most directly to contexts in which developmental, psychological, or metatheoretical lenses are applied to persons, groups, or organizations in ways that may affect their self-understanding, reputation, access, role, or standing. It does not prohibit private reflection, scholarly critique, public analysis, or freedom of thought and expression. In such contexts, however, signatories remain responsible for accuracy, proportionality, transparency of lens, and care regarding foreseeable harms.*

Principle V: Non-Weaponization of Developmental Language

Signatories shall not use developmental, stage-based, or integral language to dismiss, pathologize, silence, or subordinate others. This includes, but is not limited to: characterizing disagreement as a failure of perspective-taking or cognitive complexity; dismissing emotional responses, ethical objections, or lived experience as expressions of a lower stage; using framework-internal categories to insulate one's own position from legitimate critique; and treating developmental assessment as a tool of social rank or institutional control.

Commentary: *This principle names what might be called the shadow side of developmental literacy. The very vocabulary that enables nuanced understanding of human growth—stages, tiers, levels, altitudes—can become a weapon when deployed in interpersonal or institutional conflict. “You’re operating from an amber value system” or “That’s a first-tier reaction” can function as conversation-ending moves that foreclose the possibility of genuine dialogue. The ethical issue is not that developmental distinctions are invalid; it is that they can be used to perform epistemic closure while appearing to perform epistemic openness. This principle does not prohibit careful developmental assessment, role-fit judgment, or discussion of capacity differences where these are relevant, evidence-informed, transparent, consent-sensitive, and proportionate. It prohibits the use of developmental categories as status weapons, conversation-ending moves, or substitutes for engagement with the substance of another’s perspective. A signatory who catches themselves using stage-language to win an argument rather than to understand a perspective has encountered the precise territory this principle is designed to address.*

Principle VI: Scope of Practice and the Limits of Competence

Signatories shall practice within the boundaries of their training, competence, and professional standing. Metatheoretical knowledge does not constitute clinical, therapeutic, spiritual, or organizational expertise. Signatories shall recognize when their work enters domains—psychological, somatic, spiritual, political, organizational—for which specialized training is required, and shall defer to, collaborate with, or refer to appropriately credentialed practitioners. Signatories shall not allow the breadth of an integrative framework to serve as a substitute for the depth of domain-specific competence.

Commentary: *The integrative impulse—the desire to weave disciplines, practices, and perspectives into coherent wholes—is valuable but carries the occupational hazard of overreach. A metatheoretical consultant who drifts into de facto psychotherapy, a developmental educator who begins functioning as a spiritual director, a complexity thinker who offers organizational advice beyond their experience—these boundary crossings are among the most common vectors of harm in integrative practice. This principle does not restrict integrative thinking; it insists that integrative thinking be accompanied by honest self-assessment of one’s actual competence.*

Principle VII: Attending to Shadow

Signatories shall maintain an ongoing commitment to self-inquiry and shadow work, understood as the disciplined attention to one’s own unconscious motivations, blind spots, projections, and areas of

unexamined privilege. This commitment is not merely aspirational but structural: signatories shall establish or participate in regular practices of peer supervision, contemplative reflection, and honest feedback that provide external mirrors for the aspects of self that are most resistant to self-observation.

***Commentary:** Integral theory's emphasis on "cleaning up" as one of the essential vectors of development is directly relevant here. But the principle goes beyond individual practice to require structural support for shadow work. The person most in need of honest feedback is often the person least likely to receive it—particularly when that person holds authority, charisma, or advanced developmental credentials. This principle therefore requires not just the intention to attend to shadow but the creation of conditions in which shadow can actually be revealed: relationships and structures that are not organized around deference to the practitioner's self-image.*

Principle VIII: Honoring the Integrity of Traditions, Fields, and Lineages

Signatories shall engage with the philosophical, spiritual, cultural, scientific, artistic, and scholarly traditions from which integrative work draws with respect for their internal coherence, historical depth, and self-understanding. Integration shall not function as extraction: the insights, practices, terminology, and categories of a tradition shall not be appropriated, decontextualized, or instrumentalized in ways that distort their meaning or diminish the communities from which they arise. Where traditions are brought into dialogue, signatories shall ensure that each voice retains its own integrity and is not merely ventriloquized through the grammar of the integrative framework.

***Commentary:** Integrative and metatheoretical work necessarily draws on multiple traditions. The ethical risk is that this drawing-on becomes a form of intellectual colonization—a gathering of insights under a master framework that claims to honor each perspective while actually subordinating it. When Buddhist "emptiness" is translated into integral-theoretic terms, something is gained and something is lost. When Indigenous cosmologies are "included" in a developmental schema, the act of inclusion can itself be a form of epistemic violence if it imposes evaluative categories that the tradition does not recognize. This principle requires ongoing attentiveness to the difference between genuine dialogue and framework-driven assimilation. Honoring the integrity of traditions does not require endorsing practices that violate human dignity, bodily autonomy, civil law, or the code's commitments to non-exploitation, informed consent, and the prevention of harm.*

Principle IX: Structural Accountability and Mutual Answerability

Signatories shall submit themselves to structures of mutual accountability that are not controlled by or dependent upon their own authority, reputation, or institutional position. This includes willingness to receive and act upon ethical feedback, to participate in peer review processes, to cooperate with legitimate inquiries into their conduct, and to accept appropriate consequences when ethical standards have been breached. Signatories shall actively resist the concentration of unchecked authority—in themselves or in others—and shall work to create institutional and relational structures in which power is distributed, transparent, and contestable.

***Commentary:** This principle addresses a recurring vulnerability in loosely organized integrative communities: the absence of shared structures capable of receiving concerns, checking charismatic authority, and supporting accountability when ethical failures occur. When a teacher or leader is the sole arbiter of their own conduct, when organizational structures provide no independent check on charismatic authority, when the community's reverence for a figure's developmental accomplishments inhibits legitimate challenge—these are structural failures, not merely personal ones. The principle requires signatories not only to be accountable but to actively build the structures that make accountability possible. It recognizes that the absence of such structures is itself an ethical failure.*

Principle X: Restorative Orientation and the Priority of Repair

When harm occurs in the course of integrative, metatheoretical, or developmental work, signatories shall prioritize repair over reputation, acknowledgment over defense, and the needs of those harmed over the continuity of programs, institutions, or professional standing. Signatories shall approach situations of harm with a restorative rather than punitive orientation—seeking to understand the conditions that enabled the harm, to address the needs of those affected, and to transform the structures that allowed the harm to occur—while recognizing that restoration requires truthful acknowledgment as its precondition and does not preclude appropriate consequences.

***Commentary:** The instinct to protect reputation—one’s own, one’s organization’s, one’s tradition’s—is among the most powerful obstacles to ethical repair. This principle names that instinct and subordinates it to the needs of those who have been harmed. It draws on restorative justice traditions while recognizing that restoration is not a euphemism for avoiding consequences. The sequence matters: truthful acknowledgment first, then the collaborative work of repair, then the structural changes that prevent recurrence. Without the first step, the others are impossible. This principle also recognizes that harm can be systemic, not only interpersonal—that frameworks, institutions, and community norms can cause harm even in the absence of individual malice.*

***An essential distinction:** Restorative processes seek truth, repair, learning, and transformation. They do not require reconciliation, renewed relationship, forgiveness, or continued participation by those harmed. The conflation of restoration with reconciliation can function as a subtle form of pressure on those who have been harmed—an expectation of premature forgiveness or continued relationship that compounds the original injury. This code insists on the distinction: repair is an obligation of those who caused harm; reconciliation, if it occurs, is a gift that can only be freely offered by those who were harmed.*

Principle XI: Non-Exploitation and the Responsible Use of Power

Signatories shall recognize that integrative, developmental, contemplative, and metatheoretical work often creates asymmetries of power, trust, dependency, and interpretive authority. They shall not use these asymmetries for sexual, financial, ideological, institutional, or reputational exploitation. Where power differentials are present, signatories shall make them visible, manage them transparently, and create conditions under which those affected can question, refuse, withdraw, or seek redress without fear of retaliation.

***Commentary:** Many of the most serious harms in integrative, developmental, spiritual, and educational communities are not primarily epistemic; they are relational and material. They involve sex, money, status, dependency, access, unpaid labor, institutional loyalty, spiritual intimacy, and professional opportunity. The preceding principles address the distinctive epistemic and interpretive risks of metatheoretical work; this principle addresses the more fundamental human dynamics of power and exploitation that attend any relationship characterized by significant asymmetry. The principle does not prohibit power; it prohibits the concealment and abuse of power. Authority is not determined solely by formal title, self-description, or intention. A person may function as an authority through expertise, charisma, seniority, authorship, teaching role, institutional position, access to opportunity, interpretive influence, spiritual or developmental recognition, or the dependency and projections of others. Signatories shall attend to the power they actually hold in context, including power they did not seek, do not identify with, or actively disavow. The requirement to make power differentials visible is as important as the prohibition on exploiting them—because exploitation flourishes in conditions of invisibility, and some of the most harmful dynamics observed in integrative and adjacent communities have been sustained by a refusal, or inability, to name the power that was operating.*



Interpretive Notes

On the relationship between principles. These eleven principles are interdependent and form a mutually illuminating whole. Epistemic humility (I) grounds the non-weaponization of developmental language (V); the priority of persons (II) motivates the requirements of informed consent (IV); the insistence that developmental authority is not moral authority (III) finds its structural expression in mutual accountability (IX); the responsible use of power (XI) gives material and relational force to the commitments of transparency (IV), scope of practice (VI), and restorative repair (X). In cases of apparent tension between principles, the resolution should be sought by attending to the deeper intention that animates them all: the protection of persons and communities from the distinctive harms that integrative and metatheoretical work can inflict when practiced without adequate ethical constraint.

On the scope of the code. This code is addressed to anyone who works with integrative, metatheoretical, or developmental frameworks in contexts that affect others—whether as teacher, consultant, facilitator, scholar, organizational leader, community builder, or public intellectual. It is not restricted to any single theoretical lineage or institutional affiliation. Its principles apply across the broad field of integral, metamodern, and allied integrative communities.

On developmental sensitivity. This code does not deny the reality or value of developmental frameworks. It insists that developmental understanding carries ethical obligations commensurate with its explanatory power. To see more is to owe more—not less—to those one sees.

On the participation of affected parties. Ethical evaluation shall include, wherever possible and appropriate, the perspectives of those affected by the conduct in question—not only the perspectives of peers, leaders, or recognized experts. The code’s accountability processes are designed to serve those who have been harmed, not only to adjudicate the conduct of those who caused harm. A code that evaluates practitioners solely through the eyes of other practitioners risks becoming an internally self-protective guild structure. The voices of students, clients, community members, and the traditions engaged must be structurally included in the processes of evaluation and accountability.

On the relationship to existing professional codes. This code supplements but does not replace the professional, legal, institutional, or licensure-based obligations that may already apply to signatories in their respective fields. Where another professional code imposes a higher or more specific standard, signatories remain bound by that standard. Many signatories will be therapists, coaches, professors, ministers, consultants, researchers, or organizational practitioners who already operate under established professional obligations. This code addresses the distinctive ethical territory of integrative and metatheoretical practice that existing professional codes do not cover; it does not constitute a parallel credentialing system.

On tensegrous ethical practice. The principles of this code should not be read as isolated rules but as mutually tensioned commitments. Ethical practice often requires holding autonomy and interdependence, care and accountability, humility and discernment, openness and boundary, tradition and transformation, restoration and consequence. The integrity of the code lies in sustaining them in a living, tensegrous relation—each principle giving shape, limit, and support to the others.

On signatory status. The meaning, responsibilities, and limits of signatory status—including the distinction among individual, organizational, and provisional signatories; the roles of stewards and council members; and the implications of review, suspension, or withdrawal—will be specified in the governance and accountability layers of this code. Signing is not merely symbolic; it entails substantive obligations, including participation in the evaluation practices and accountability processes the code establishes.

On the code’s own limitations. This document articulates principles. Principles require interpretation, and interpretation is itself a developmental and perspectival act. The code does not claim to resolve

every ethical dilemma that arises in integrative practice; it provides a normative framework within which such dilemmas can be identified, named, and addressed through the collective wisdom of the signatory community. The standards, evaluation criteria, and accountability processes that complete this code will be developed collaboratively, in a manner consistent with the principles themselves.

Part II: Standards of Practice

Introduction

The principles layer of this code establishes the normative foundation—eleven principles—for ethical practice across integrative, metatheoretical, and developmental communities. This standards layer translates those principles into concrete expectations, organized by domain of practice. Each domain represents a distinct context in which integrative and developmental work occurs, with its own characteristic power dynamics, risks, and relational obligations.

Standards are expressed as specific expectations that signatories accept when working within a given domain. A signatory may work across multiple domains; the applicable standards are determined by the nature of the work being undertaken, not by the practitioner’s primary identity or title. A scholar who also facilitates contemplative practice is bound by the standards of both domains when engaged in each.

These standards are meant to be read alongside the eleven principles. Where a standard may seem to constrain legitimate practice, the practitioner is invited to return to the animating principles for interpretive guidance. Where a situation arises that no standard explicitly addresses, the principles themselves provide the normative orientation for ethical judgment.

The numbering system references principles by Roman numeral (e.g., “I” for Epistemic Humility, “XI” for Non-Exploitation and the Responsible Use of Power) and standards by domain letter and sequence (e.g., “A.3” for the third standard under Teaching and Pedagogy). This allows cross-referencing between layers.



Domain A: Teaching and Pedagogy

Teaching in integrative and developmental contexts involves a distinctive combination of intellectual content, personal formation, and evaluative framing. Teachers in these settings do not merely transmit information; they model ways of seeing, invite students into new developmental territories, and often hold implicit or explicit authority over how students understand themselves. This power is pedagogically valuable and ethically consequential.

- A.1 Teachers shall present integrative and developmental frameworks as powerful but partial lenses, not as settled descriptions of reality. Curricular design shall include explicit attention to the limitations, critiques, and unresolved tensions within the frameworks being taught.
- A.2 Teachers shall not use developmental assessment as a pedagogical tool in ways that rank, compare, or publicly stage students relative to one another. Where developmental frameworks are taught as content, the distinction between understanding a model and being subjected to it shall be maintained.
- A.3 Teachers shall create learning environments in which students can question, challenge, or decline to adopt the frameworks being presented without penalty, stigma, or implicit characterization of their objections as developmentally inadequate.
- A.4 Where teaching involves contemplative, somatic, or experiential practices, teachers shall obtain informed consent, provide clear opt-out pathways, and exercise particular care with practices that may surface psychological material for which the educational context is not equipped to provide adequate support.

A.5 Teachers shall be transparent about their own lineage, formation, and theoretical commitments, and shall not present their particular integrative synthesis as though it were the only or inevitable form that integration can take.

A.6 Where teaching involves evaluative assessment of student work (grading, feedback, capstone review), teachers shall ensure that assessment criteria are transparent, applied consistently, and do not conflate developmental sophistication with academic merit or personal worth.

Note: The teaching context is where many people first encounter integrative and developmental frameworks. The impressions formed here—about the frameworks themselves, about the character of the community that holds them, and about the relationship between intellectual scope and ethical maturity—are formative and lasting. Standards in this domain carry disproportionate weight for the integrity of the broader field.

Domain B: Coaching and Consulting

Coaching and consulting involve ongoing relational engagements in which the practitioner holds interpretive authority over the client's situation, goals, and developmental trajectory. The integrative practitioner who coaches or consults brings developmental, systems-level, and multi-perspectival lenses to this work—lenses that can illuminate but also distort if applied without sufficient care for the client's own self-understanding and agency.

B.1 Coaches and consultants shall establish clear agreements at the outset of each engagement that specify the frameworks and methods to be employed, the scope and duration of the engagement, the boundaries of the practitioner's role, and the client's right to modify or terminate the relationship.

B.2 Practitioners shall not impose developmental interpretations on clients' experiences without the client's understanding and consent. Developmental language shall be offered as one lens among others, not as a definitive diagnosis of the client's condition or potential.

B.3 Practitioners shall maintain clear boundaries between coaching, consulting, and therapeutic intervention. When material arises that exceeds the practitioner's competence or the appropriate scope of the engagement, the practitioner shall acknowledge this openly and facilitate referral to an appropriately qualified professional.

B.4 Practitioners shall not exploit the trust inherent in coaching and consulting relationships for personal, financial, sexual, or ideological purposes. Dual relationships—in which the practitioner holds multiple roles relative to the same client (e.g., coach and business partner, consultant and spiritual mentor)—shall be avoided where possible and managed with explicit transparency where unavoidable.

B.5 Practitioners shall regularly seek supervision, peer consultation, or reflective practice that provides external perspective on their coaching and consulting engagements, with particular attention to the dynamics of transference, projection, and authority that arise in developmental work.

B.6 Financial arrangements shall be transparent, commensurate with the practitioner's actual qualifications and the scope of services rendered, and shall not create conditions of financial dependency that distort the professional relationship.

Domain C: Spiritual and Contemplative Facilitation

Spiritual and contemplative facilitation occupies uniquely sensitive territory. It involves practices that can open practitioners to altered states of consciousness, deep psychological material, devotional attachment, and experiences of surrender or ego-dissolution that create profound vulnerability. The

facilitator's authority in these contexts is often not merely professional but existential—touching on the practitioner's relationship to meaning, identity, and ultimate concern. The history of harm in contemplative and spiritual communities is extensive and well-documented, and this domain requires correspondingly heightened ethical vigilance.

- C.1 Facilitators shall be transparent about their own contemplative formation, lineage affiliations, and the traditions from which their practices derive. Practices shall not be presented as tradition-neutral or universally applicable when they carry specific cultural, religious, or philosophical commitments.
- C.2 Facilitators shall obtain informed consent before introducing practices that may involve psychological risk, including but not limited to: intensive meditation, breathwork, somatic release practices, energy work, and practices designed to induce non-ordinary states of consciousness. Consent shall include disclosure of potential risks and the right to withdraw at any point.
- C.3 Facilitators shall not exploit the heightened vulnerability, devotional affect, or altered states that can arise in contemplative contexts for personal, sexual, financial, or institutional purposes. The power asymmetry inherent in the teacher-student or facilitator-practitioner relationship shall be acknowledged and actively managed.
- C.4 Facilitators shall not discourage participants from seeking appropriate psychological, medical, or relational support, and shall actively encourage such support or referral where signs of distress, risk, or need exceed the facilitator's role or competence.
- C.5 Facilitators shall not claim or imply that their own contemplative attainment—however genuine—places them beyond the reach of ethical accountability, interpersonal feedback, or the ordinary obligations of care that attend human relationship.
- C.6 Where contemplative facilitation occurs within an integrative or metatheoretical context, facilitators shall take particular care to distinguish between developmental assessment and spiritual discernment. The evaluation of a participant's developmental location is not equivalent to the assessment of their spiritual depth, sincerity, or realization.
- C.7 Facilitators shall establish and communicate clear protocols for responding to psychological distress, dissociative episodes, or other adverse effects that may arise during or following contemplative practice, including provisions for referral to qualified mental health professionals.

Domain D: Community Leadership

Community leadership in integrative and developmental contexts carries a distinctive burden. Leaders in these communities often hold authority that is simultaneously intellectual, moral, organizational, and in some cases spiritual—a concentration of power that can inhibit the very capacities for critical reflection and mutual accountability that integrative values ostensibly promote. Cultic dynamics are not confined to formal cults. Elements such as idealization, dependency, loyalty pressure, information control, purity boundaries, charismatic exception-making, fear of exclusion, and the suppression of dissent can arise in families, churches, political movements, businesses, schools, and developmental communities alike. Community leaders have a responsibility to recognize these dynamics before they harden into explicit abuse. The standards in this domain address the structural and relational responsibilities of those who shape community culture, governance, and norms.

- D.1 Community leaders shall actively work to distribute authority, decision-making power, and institutional knowledge rather than concentrating these in themselves or in a small inner circle. Where concentrated authority is temporarily necessary (as in founding or crisis contexts), leaders shall articulate explicit timelines and processes for distributing that authority more broadly.

- D.2 Leaders shall establish and support governance structures that provide independent oversight, including mechanisms for receiving and investigating ethical concerns that operate independently of the leader’s own authority or approval.
- D.3 Leaders shall not cultivate or tolerate cultures of deference, idealization, or uncritical loyalty. Communities organized around the developmental authority of a single figure are structurally vulnerable to ethical failure; leaders have a responsibility to name and resist this dynamic, even when—especially when—it serves their interests.
- D.4 Leaders shall ensure that community membership, participation, and advancement are not conditioned on personal loyalty, ideological conformity, or the suppression of legitimate dissent. The health of a community is measured in part by its capacity to tolerate and learn from internal disagreement.
- D.5 Leaders shall exercise transparency in financial matters, including compensation structures, revenue sources, and the use of community funds. Financial opacity is a structural enabler of abuse.
- D.6 When community members raise ethical concerns, leaders shall treat these as legitimate contributions to community integrity rather than as threats to institutional stability or personal reputation. The response to ethical concern is itself an ethical act.

Domain E: Developmental Assessment

Developmental assessment—the practice of evaluating individuals, groups, organizations, or cultural formations along developmental dimensions—is among the most ethically sensitive activities in integrative practice. It involves the exercise of evaluative authority over another’s inner life, cognitive capacity, or existential orientation. Ethical practice of assessment may sometimes require naming developmental limitations or capacity constraints. The ethical issue is not whether such judgments are ever made, but whether they are made competently, transparently, humbly, proportionately, and in service of appropriate care, role-fit, learning, or protection from harm. When conducted with care and competence, developmental assessment can support growth, self-understanding, and appropriate challenge. When conducted carelessly, coercively, or without adequate humility, it can inflict lasting harm—reducing persons to scores, weaponizing complexity against those deemed less complex, and installing the assessor in a position of unchallengeable interpretive authority.

- E.1 Developmental assessment shall be conducted only with the informed consent of the person or group being assessed, except in scholarly contexts where the analysis concerns publicly available data or historical material. Consent shall include a clear explanation of the assessment framework being used, its limitations, and how results will be communicated and used.
- E.2 Assessors shall present developmental findings with appropriate epistemic humility, acknowledging that all developmental models are partial, that assessment instruments have known limitations, and that a developmental profile is a snapshot shaped by context, not a fixed truth about the person assessed.
- E.3 Developmental assessment shall not be conducted or communicated in public settings in ways that rank, compare, or stage individuals relative to one another. The public announcement of someone’s assessed developmental location—whether flattering or unflattering—constitutes a violation of their dignity and autonomy.
- E.4 Assessors shall resist the reification of developmental stages—treating fluid, contextual, and multidimensional developmental processes as though they were fixed categories or permanent traits. Language that implies a person “is” a particular stage, rather than that they may exhibit

patterns associated with certain structural features in certain domains under certain conditions, shall be avoided.

E.5 Developmental assessment shall not be used as a proxy for moral worth, epistemic credibility, or institutional authority. The finding that a person operates at a particular developmental center of gravity carries no implication about their ethical character, the validity of their perspectives, or their fitness for leadership.

E.6 Assessors shall maintain clear boundaries between developmental assessment and therapeutic intervention. When assessment reveals material that calls for therapeutic engagement, the assessor shall facilitate appropriate referral rather than expanding their role beyond the scope of assessment.

E.7 Practitioners who design or administer developmental assessment instruments shall be transparent about the psychometric properties, normative assumptions, cultural situatedness, and known limitations of those instruments. Claims of validity shall be supported by evidence, not assumed from theoretical coherence alone.

Domain F: Public Discourse and Publishing

Integrative, metatheoretical, and developmental practitioners who engage in public discourse—through publishing, podcasting, social media, conference presentations, and public intellectual life—carry epistemic responsibilities that extend beyond the norms of ordinary opinion. The claims made in public forums shape how integrative frameworks are understood, how their associated communities are perceived, and how developmental ideas are taken up in broader culture. Public discourse is also the domain in which the temptation to overclaim—to present integrative frameworks as more settled, more comprehensive, or more empirically validated than they are—is most acute.

F.1 Practitioners shall represent integrative and developmental frameworks honestly in public contexts, acknowledging their theoretical status, empirical limitations, and the diversity of legitimate positions within the field. The desire to advocate for a framework shall not override the obligation to represent it accurately.

F.2 Practitioners shall not publicly assign developmental stages, levels, or tiers to specific living individuals, public figures, or identifiable groups without robust evidence, appropriate qualification, and awareness of the reductive effects of such characterization. The casual deployment of developmental categories in public commentary (“That’s a blue/orange response”; “They’re clearly first-tier”) constitutes a form of intellectual irresponsibility.

F.3 Practitioners shall engage with critics, interlocutors, and rival frameworks in good faith, resisting the temptation to use the meta-level positioning of their framework as a device for avoiding substantive engagement with objections. The claim to operate at a higher level of integration does not exempt one from the obligation to engage with the content of lower-order arguments.

F.4 When representing the ideas, traditions, or perspectives of others in published or public work, practitioners shall prioritize accuracy and charitable interpretation. The integrative impulse to locate perspectives within a larger framework shall not result in the distortion, oversimplification, or misrepresentation of those perspectives.

F.5 Practitioners shall be transparent about the relationship between their public intellectual work and any commercial, institutional, or organizational interests that may shape it. Where advocacy for a framework is entangled with financial interests—selling assessments, promoting training programs, marketing consulting services—this entanglement shall be disclosed.

- F.6 Practitioners shall acknowledge intellectual debts, influences, and sources with appropriate rigor. The integrative character of the work does not diminish the obligation of honest attribution. Where synthesis builds significantly on the work of others, credit shall be given clearly and generously.
- F.7 Practitioners shall not claim, imply, exaggerate, or strategically use endorsement, co-authorship, lineage sanction, institutional affiliation, or intellectual partnership in ways that mislead audiences, confer unearned legitimacy, or deflect ethical scrutiny. Where a practitioner invokes the name, authority, or reputational capital of another person, lineage, organization, or intellectual tradition, they shall do so accurately, transparently, and with appropriate authorization.

Domain G: Organizational Intervention

Organizational intervention—the application of integrative, developmental, or metatheoretical frameworks to the assessment, design, or transformation of organizations—involves a distinctive set of ethical challenges. The “client” in organizational work is diffuse: it may be the leadership team that contracted the engagement, the employees who are affected by it, the organizational culture that is being assessed, or the stakeholders whose interests the organization serves. These interests may conflict, and the practitioner’s integrative framework does not resolve those conflicts—it reframes them.

- G.1 Organizational practitioners shall be transparent about the frameworks and methods they intend to apply, including the developmental and evaluative assumptions embedded in those frameworks. Organizations have the right to understand, question, and decline the lenses through which they are being assessed.
- G.2 Practitioners shall clarify at the outset of each engagement who the client is, whose interests the engagement serves, how conflicting interests among stakeholders will be navigated, and what obligations of confidentiality and transparency apply.
- G.3 Developmental assessment of organizational culture, leadership, or teams shall be conducted with the same standards of consent, humility, non-reification, and non-weaponization that apply to individual developmental assessment. Characterizing an organization or team as “amber” or “orange” carries real consequences for the people within it and shall not be offered as casual shorthand.
- G.4 Practitioners shall not promise transformative outcomes that exceed what the evidence supports or what the engagement’s scope can deliver. The integrative aspiration to catalyze systemic transformation shall be tempered by honest assessment of what is actually achievable within the constraints of a given engagement.
- G.5 Where organizational intervention involves significant changes to structure, culture, or personnel, practitioners shall attend to the welfare of those most affected—particularly those with the least power. Developmental frameworks that emphasize systemic evolution can inadvertently rationalize the displacement of individuals who are framed as obstacles to organizational growth.
- G.6 Practitioners shall maintain independence of judgment and shall not allow financial dependence on the client to compromise the integrity of their assessment or recommendations. Where conflicts of interest arise, they shall be disclosed and managed transparently.

Domain H: AI, Metatheory Tools, and Applied Sensemaking Platforms

The emergence of artificial intelligence, computational modeling, and digital sensemaking platforms as vehicles for metatheoretical and developmental work introduces a new class of ethical challenges. When developmental frameworks are encoded in algorithms, embedded in assessment platforms, or mediated through AI-assisted sensemaking tools, the distinctive risks of metatheoretical practice—

reification, overreach, the conflation of maps with territories—are amplified by scale, speed, and the appearance of objectivity that computational systems confer. This domain addresses the responsibilities of those who design, deploy, or integrate such tools.

H.1 Designers and deployers of AI-assisted or computationally mediated metatheoretical tools shall ensure that the developmental frameworks, evaluative assumptions, and interpretive logics embedded in those tools are transparent, documented, and available for scrutiny. “Black box” developmental assessment—in which an algorithm assigns a developmental profile without the user understanding the framework, method, or limitations involved—is incompatible with the principles of this code.

H.2 AI-mediated developmental assessment shall be clearly identified as computationally generated and shall include explicit disclosures about the limitations of algorithmic assessment, including the absence of contextual sensitivity, embodied perception, and relational attunement that characterize competent human assessment.

H.3 Practitioners who use AI tools to augment their metatheoretical or developmental work shall retain responsibility for the ethical implications of that work. The delegation of interpretive labor to an AI system does not transfer ethical responsibility to the system. The practitioner remains accountable for how AI-generated assessments, analyses, or recommendations are communicated and applied.

H.4 Sensemaking platforms that employ metatheoretical or developmental frameworks shall build in mechanisms for epistemic humility: explicit acknowledgment of uncertainty, the presentation of multiple interpretive possibilities rather than single definitive assessments, and provisions for user contestation and feedback.

H.5 The encoding of developmental categories in algorithmic systems carries a heightened risk of reification—the transformation of fluid, contextual developmental processes into fixed, scored, and ranked outputs. Designers shall actively resist this tendency by incorporating qualitative nuance, contextual caveats, and dynamic modeling into their tools rather than reducing developmental complexity to discrete categories or numerical scores.

H.6 Practitioners and platform designers shall attend to the cultural situatedness of the developmental models embedded in their tools. Models developed primarily within Western, educated, industrialized contexts may not translate across cultural settings, and their deployment as though universally applicable constitutes a form of epistemic colonization at scale.

H.7 Data generated through AI-mediated developmental assessment or sensemaking shall be treated with the same standards of confidentiality, consent, and security that apply to sensitive personal data. Users shall have the right to know what data is collected, how it is used, who has access to it, and how it can be corrected or deleted.

H.8 Practitioners who contribute to the development of AI-assisted metatheoretical tools shall consider the second-order effects of those tools on the broader culture of sensemaking: the potential for algorithmic flattening of developmental nuance, the creation of feedback loops that reinforce rather than challenge users’ existing frameworks, and the risk that computational speed and scale outpace the slow, relational, and embodied processes through which genuine developmental understanding emerges.

H.9 AI-assisted metatheoretical tools shall not treat developmental sophistication, conceptual complexity, polarity recognition, or multi-perspectival fluency as sufficient indicators of ethical integrity. Designers and deployers shall ensure that tools built to assess developmental or communicative complexity also attend to power dynamics, consent, retaliation, silencing, and the

possibility that developmental or metatheoretical language is being used to deflect accountability rather than to support genuine understanding.

H.10 Tools designed to evaluate discourse in contexts where ethical concerns may be present shall be oriented not only toward the complexity of communication but also toward the dynamics of power, voice, and consequence. They shall be designed to ask: Who holds interpretive authority? Whose perspective is being diminished, overridden, or rendered structurally inaudible? What is the framework being used to accomplish? What forms of harm, pressure, dependency, retaliation, or exclusion may be obscured by sophisticated language?



Cross-Cutting Standards

The following standards apply across all domains and address ethical obligations that are not specific to any single context of practice.

- X.1 Signatories shall not engage in sexual, romantic, or financially exploitative relationships with individuals over whom they hold professional, pedagogical, spiritual, or developmental authority. Where such relationships arise between former practitioners and former clients or students, a significant period of time shall have elapsed and the power differential shall have been genuinely dissolved before the relationship proceeds.
- X.2 Signatories shall maintain the confidentiality of personal, psychological, developmental, and spiritual information shared by clients, students, and community members in the course of professional engagement, except where disclosure is required by law, necessary to prevent imminent harm, or authorized by the individual concerned.
- X.3 Transparency is not identical with maximum disclosure. Signatories shall exercise discernment regarding what should be disclosed, to whom, when, and under what protections. Ethical transparency seeks accountability, clarity, and repair while avoiding unnecessary exposure, performative disclosure, retaliation, voyeurism, or harm to vulnerable parties.
- X.4 Signatories shall not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, national origin, religion, socioeconomic status, caste, migration status, or other structurally significant forms of identity and social location in the provision of integrative, metatheoretical, or developmental services. The claim that a developmental or integrative framework “transcends” identity categories does not exempt the practitioner from the obligations of equity, inclusion, cultural humility, and attention to structural bias.
- X.5 Signatories shall engage in ongoing professional development and continuing education, including engagement with perspectives and critiques from outside their primary framework. Developmental and integrative competence is not a fixed attainment but an ongoing practice.
- X.6 Signatories shall respond to ethical concerns raised about their own conduct by engaging the presenting issues with seriousness, openness, and good faith. They may clarify, contextualize, or contest claims where appropriate, but shall not use defensiveness, developmental reframing, or counter-accusation to avoid the substance of the concern.
- X.7 Signatories shall, where possible, make their integrative and developmental work accessible across lines of economic privilege. The concentration of integrative education, coaching, and facilitation among economically privileged populations is a structural limitation of the field that signatories have a responsibility to address.
- X.8 Signatories shall not retaliate against individuals who raise ethical concerns, decline participation, challenge the use of a framework, or seek accountability. Retaliation includes not only

overt punishment but also reputational damage, exclusion from community opportunities, developmental pathologizing, or the use of informal influence to silence or marginalize the person raising concern. In communities organized around developmental, spiritual, or intellectual authority, retaliation often takes subtle forms—exclusion reframed as natural consequence, dissent reframed as pathology, loss of opportunity reframed as developmental mismatch. This standard names those forms and prohibits them.

- X.9 Signatories shall attend to the cognitive, physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual conditions that support ethical practice. They shall recognize that burnout, isolation, untreated distress, compulsive overwork, and neglect of one’s own developmental and relational needs can impair judgment, distort power relations, and increase the risk of harm.
- X.10 Signatories shall engage adjacent schools, lineages, movements, and communities with intellectual honesty, charitable interpretation, and a spirit of dialogical reciprocity. Differences among frameworks shall not be exaggerated for factional advantage, nor minimized through premature synthesis. Signatories shall support relations among communities that are cooperative, mutually generative, and critically respectful, rather than rivalrous, dismissive, or appropriative.
- X.11 Signatories shall exercise care when interpreting the psychological, developmental, spiritual, relational, or moral patterns of other persons. The ethical obligations surrounding interpretive assessment vary by context. Private perception, dialogical sharing, professional consultation, formal assessment, organizational evaluation, and public characterization carry different degrees of risk and require different degrees of consent, transparency, confidentiality, evidence, and opportunity for response. The more consequential, public, asymmetrical, or role-affecting the interpretation, the stronger these obligations become. This standard does not prohibit private reflection, professional consultation, supervisory discussion, risk assessment, or good-faith communal discernment where such interpretation is relevant to safety, role clarity, collaboration, accountability, or responsible engagement. The ethical concern is not interpretation as such, but unaccountable interpretation: assessments that are totalizing, casually circulated, unsupported by evidence, reputationally damaging, or substituted for direct engagement. Signatories shall not allow interpretive assessments to affect a person’s standing, access, reputation, or opportunities without appropriate transparency, proportionality, confidentiality, role clarity, and opportunity for response.
- X.12 When developmental, psychological, spiritual, or metatheoretical perceptions are shared in relational or conflictual contexts, signatories shall favor phenomenological, descriptive, and invitational language over assertive, totalizing, or diagnostic claims. “I notice,” “I wonder,” “one possible reading is,” and “this is how it lands for me” are often ethically preferable to declarations about another person’s stage, shadow, motive, or level of understanding.



Relationship to the Principles Layer

Every standard in this document derives its authority from the eleven principles articulated in the principles layer. Where interpretation of a standard is unclear or contested, the principles provide the normative ground to which the community of signatories returns. Where a standard appears to conflict with another, the resolution is to be found by attending to the deeper intention that animates the principles as a whole: the protection of persons and communities from the distinctive harms that integrative and metatheoretical work can inflict when practiced without adequate ethical constraint, and the fostering of conditions under which integrative work can fulfill its genuine promise.

These standards, like the principles they serve, are offered as a working draft for collaborative refinement. The domains they address and the expectations they articulate will deepen through the lived experience and collective wisdom of the signatory community.

Part III: Evaluation Criteria

Introduction: Evaluation as Developmental Practice

Most ethics codes treat evaluation as compliance verification: a periodic check to determine whether the practitioner has met or failed to meet established standards. Such an approach has its place, and the standards layer of this code provides the concrete expectations against which compliance can be measured. But for a code that takes development seriously—that holds ethical capacity itself to be a domain of growth, not a fixed attainment—evaluation must do more.

The orienting question of this evaluation layer is not “Are you compliant?” but “How are you practicing ethical maturation?” This reframing does not weaken the code’s normative force. It strengthens it by recognizing that genuine ethical accountability requires not only adherence to standards but ongoing growth in the discernment, relational sensitivity, and structural awareness that make ethical practice possible. A practitioner who meets every standard while never deepening their ethical understanding has satisfied the letter of the code but not its spirit.

This evaluation layer establishes eight interconnected practices of ethical review. They operate at multiple levels—individual, relational, communal, and institutional—reflecting the integral insight that ethical development occurs simultaneously across interior and exterior, individual and collective dimensions. Together, they constitute what might be called an ecology of ethical maturation: a set of mutually reinforcing practices that support the kind of ongoing growth the code envisions.

These practices are not optional enrichments; they are constitutive of signatory status. A signatory who adopts the principles and follows the standards but declines to participate in evaluation has accepted the code’s conclusions while refusing its process—a stance incompatible with the developmental orientation that animates the whole.



Practice 1: Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is the foundation of ethical evaluation—not because self-knowledge is sufficient, but because it is necessary. The practitioner who does not regularly examine their own conduct, motivations, and blind spots in light of the code’s principles and standards has no ground on which to receive external feedback. At the same time, self-assessment is the form of evaluation most vulnerable to self-deception, and its limitations must be structurally acknowledged.

EV.1.1 Signatories shall conduct a structured self-assessment at least annually, organized around the eleven principles and the standards applicable to their domains of practice. This self-assessment shall include reflection on areas of strength, areas of difficulty, situations in which the practitioner’s ethical judgment was tested, and patterns of recurring challenge.

EV.1.2 Self-assessment shall attend not only to behavioral compliance but to the practitioner’s interior life: the motivations, assumptions, fears, desires for recognition, and areas of unexamined privilege that shape ethical conduct from within. The code recognizes that ethical failure often originates not in conscious decision but in unacknowledged interior dynamics.

EV.1.3 The self-assessment process shall include explicit attention to what the practitioner does not see—the blind spots, projections, and self-serving narratives that are, by definition, difficult to identify from within. Signatories are encouraged to develop self-assessment practices that deliberately seek out the edges of self-knowledge, including contemplative inquiry, journaling, and structured reflection on discomfort, defensiveness, and avoidance.

EV.1.4 Self-assessment shall be documented in a form that can be shared, in whole or in part, with peer reflection partners, ethics councils, or supervisors, as the signatory's accountability structures require. The documentation is not a compliance form but a living record of ethical inquiry.

Note: Self-assessment without external corrective is a closed loop. The subsequent practices exist precisely to open that loop—to provide mirrors, challenges, and perspectives that the self, working alone, cannot generate.

Practice 2: Peer Reflection

Peer reflection provides the relational context in which self-assessment is tested, deepened, and corrected. It involves structured engagement with one or more fellow signatories who can offer honest feedback, raise questions the practitioner has not considered, and provide the kind of collegial challenge that supports growth without shaming.

EV.2.1 Signatories shall establish and maintain at least one peer reflection relationship—either a dyadic partnership or a small peer group—dedicated to ongoing ethical inquiry. These relationships shall be characterized by mutual honesty, confidentiality, and the willingness to offer and receive difficult feedback.

EV.2.2 Peer reflection shall be reciprocal: each participant functions as both inquirer and subject. This reciprocity is not merely procedural but ethical—it models the mutual answerability that Principle IX requires and resists the concentration of evaluative authority in any single direction.

EV.2.3 Peer reflection sessions shall engage substantively with the practitioner's actual work—specific situations, decisions, relationships, and dilemmas—rather than remaining at the level of abstract principle. The ethical value of peer reflection lies in its concreteness: the willingness to subject one's actual practice to another's honest gaze.

EV.2.4 Peer reflection partners shall be selected with attention to complementary perspective—ideally including colleagues who work in different domains, hold different theoretical commitments, or bring different social locations to the practice. Peer reflection within an echo chamber reproduces the limitations it is meant to address.

Practice 3: Developmental Review

Developmental review applies the code's own developmental sensibility to the practitioner's ethical growth over time. It asks not only "Are you meeting the standards now?" but "How has your ethical practice evolved? What capacities are emerging? What patterns persist? What growth edges remain?" This is the practice through which the code's commitment to development-as-ethics becomes concrete.

EV.3.1 Signatories shall periodically review their own ethical development trajectory—attending to how their understanding of the code's principles has deepened, how their capacity to navigate ethical complexity has changed, and what new challenges have emerged as a consequence of their growth.

EV.3.2 Developmental review shall resist the same reification that Principle I and Standard E.4 warn against in other contexts: it shall not reduce the practitioner's ethical maturation to a stage score or a linear progression. Ethical development is multidimensional, uneven, and context-dependent; the review process shall honor this complexity.

EV.3.3 Where appropriate, developmental review may involve structured assessment using validated instruments—subject-object interviews, reflective judgment measures, or other tools suited to the evaluation of meaning-making complexity. Such instruments shall be used as one input among others, not as definitive measures of ethical maturity.

EV.3.4 Developmental review shall include attention to the practitioner’s growing capacity to hold ethical ambiguity, navigate competing obligations, and sustain ethical commitment under conditions of uncertainty, pressure, and relational complexity. These capacities are not easily measured but are central to the ethical maturation the code envisions.

***Note:** Developmental review is the practice most directly shaped by the code’s distinctive character. Other ethics codes review conduct; this code reviews growth. The risk is that developmental review becomes another arena for developmental performance—displaying one’s growth rather than honestly examining it. The antidote is the quality of the relationships within which the review occurs: relationships honest enough to distinguish genuine development from its performance.*

Practice 4: Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder feedback ensures that evaluation is not conducted solely within the practitioner’s own community of peers but includes the perspectives of those most directly affected by the practitioner’s work—students, clients, community members, organizational partners, and the traditions and communities with which the practitioner engages. This is the practice that most directly addresses the power asymmetries that characterize integrative and developmental work.

EV.4.1 Signatories shall establish regular mechanisms for soliciting honest, confidential feedback from those affected by their work. These mechanisms shall be designed to minimize the power dynamics that typically inhibit candid feedback—including anonymity where appropriate, third-party facilitation, and explicit assurance that feedback will not result in retaliation or disadvantage.

EV.4.2 Feedback instruments shall be designed to surface the kinds of harm that are most characteristic of integrative and developmental practice: feeling reduced to a developmental stage, experiencing framework-language as dismissive or silencing, sensing that one’s tradition or perspective has been misrepresented, encountering scope-of-practice boundary violations, or feeling unable to challenge the practitioner’s authority.

EV.4.3 Stakeholder feedback shall be received with the non-defensiveness that Principles X and XI and Standard X.5 require. Where feedback reveals patterns of harm or dissatisfaction, the practitioner shall engage with the substance of the feedback rather than deflecting it through framework-internal explanations (e.g., attributing negative feedback to the stakeholder’s developmental limitations).

EV.4.4 Where the practitioner’s work involves engagement with specific philosophical, spiritual, or cultural traditions, evaluation shall include feedback from knowledgeable representatives of those traditions regarding the accuracy, respectfulness, and integrity with which their tradition has been engaged.

Practice 5: Periodic Recommitment

Signatory status is not a credential earned once and held indefinitely. It is a living commitment that requires periodic renewal—not as a bureaucratic formality but as a genuine act of recommitment in light of the practitioner’s evolving understanding, the community’s developing norms, and the code’s own ongoing refinement.

EV.5.1 Signatories shall formally renew their commitment to the code at regular intervals—recommended every two to three years. Renewal shall involve a structured process of review that includes the practitioner’s self-assessment, peer reflection, and any stakeholder feedback received during the preceding period.

EV.5.2 The recommitment process shall include explicit engagement with any revisions or developments in the code itself. As the code evolves through the community’s collective learning,

signatories have an obligation to engage with its growth, not merely to reaffirm their original commitment.

EV.5.3 Recommitment is an opportunity for the practitioner to articulate what they have learned, how their practice has changed, and what commitments they are making for the next period. It functions as a threshold—a moment of honest reckoning and intentional reorientation.

EV.5.4 Where serious ethical concerns have arisen during the preceding period, recommitment shall be contingent upon good-faith engagement with the accountability processes described in Part IV of this code. Recommitment without accountability is recommitment without substance.

Practice 6: Case-Based Ethical Reflection

Abstract principles come alive in concrete situations. Case-based ethical reflection involves the collaborative examination of real or realistic ethical dilemmas drawn from the practice of integrative, metatheoretical, and developmental work. It builds the community's collective ethical discernment by developing a shared repertoire of ethically complex situations and thoughtful responses to them.

EV.6.1 The signatory community shall develop and maintain a growing collection of ethical case studies drawn from the actual practice of integrative and developmental work. Cases shall be anonymized to protect confidentiality while preserving the ethical substance and situational complexity of the dilemma.

EV.6.2 Signatories shall participate in periodic case-based reflection—whether in peer groups, community gatherings, or structured learning contexts—in which cases are examined collaboratively, multiple perspectives are engaged, and the principles and standards of the code are applied to concrete situations.

EV.6.3 Case-based reflection shall attend not only to what should have been done but to why the situation arose in the first place—the structural, relational, and systemic conditions that created the dilemma. This systemic attention distinguishes ethical reflection from moral casuistry: it seeks to transform conditions, not only to judge actions.

EV.6.4 The case collection shall include examples of ethical success as well as failure—situations in which practitioners navigated complex dilemmas with skill, courage, and integrity. A case-based practice oriented exclusively toward failure produces a culture of anxiety rather than a culture of discernment.

Practice 7: Public Learning from Ethical Difficulty

A community that cannot learn publicly from its ethical difficulties is a community that will repeat them. This practice establishes norms and conditions under which ethical failures, missteps, and near-misses can be shared for the benefit of the broader community—not as confession, spectacle, or reputation management, but as genuine contribution to collective learning.

EV.7.1 Signatories are encouraged, when appropriate and when the conditions of safety, consent, and readiness are met, to share accounts of their own ethical difficulties, misjudgments, and growth edges with the broader signatory community. Such sharing shall be undertaken in service of collective learning, not personal narrative-building.

EV.7.2 Public learning from ethical difficulty shall center the needs and perspectives of those who were affected by the difficulty. The practitioner's account of what went wrong is valuable, but it is not the whole story. Where others were harmed, their consent shall be obtained before any public account is shared, and their perspective shall be given appropriate weight and space.

EV.7.3 The community shall cultivate a culture that distinguishes between genuine public learning and performative vulnerability. Genuine learning includes specific acknowledgment of what went wrong, how it was addressed, what structural conditions enabled the failure, and what has changed as a result. Performative vulnerability displays the practitioner’s self-awareness without substantive accountability or change.

EV.7.4 Public learning shall not be compelled. It is most valuable when it arises from the practitioner’s own readiness and from conditions of sufficient trust within the community. Forced public confession reproduces the power dynamics the code is designed to prevent.

***Note:** The distinction between genuine public learning and performative vulnerability is one of the most ethically delicate in this entire document. It cannot be resolved by procedural rules alone; it requires the cultivation of collective discernment—the community’s capacity to recognize the difference between honesty that serves growth and disclosure that serves reputation. This capacity is itself a developmental achievement that the community must practice.*

Practice 8: Review of Claims, Harms, and Unintended Consequences

This practice addresses the structural and systemic dimension of evaluation. It asks practitioners and organizations to examine the broader effects of their work—including effects they did not intend and consequences they may not have anticipated. It recognizes that ethical harm can be systemic, cumulative, and emergent, arising from the interaction of individually well-intentioned actions within structures that produce harmful outcomes.

EV.8.1 Signatories shall periodically review the claims they have made—in teaching, publishing, consulting, and public discourse—for accuracy, proportionality, and intellectual honesty. This review shall include attention to claims that may have been overclaimed, understated, insufficiently qualified, or presented with greater certainty than the evidence warrants.

EV.8.2 Signatories shall attend to the unintended consequences of their work—the ways in which frameworks, practices, assessments, or interventions may have produced effects that were not anticipated and may not align with the code’s principles. Ethical responsibility extends beyond intention to consequence, and the absence of harmful intent does not eliminate the obligation to address harmful outcomes.

EV.8.3 Organizations, programs, and communities led or shaped by signatories shall undergo periodic structural review to assess whether their governance, culture, power dynamics, and institutional incentives are aligned with the code’s principles. Structural review shall attend to the conditions that enable or inhibit ethical practice, not only the conduct of individuals within the structure.

EV.8.4 Structural review shall include explicit attention to patterns of exclusion, inequity, or systemic advantage that may operate within the organization or community—including patterns that are invisible from the perspective of those who benefit from them. This includes review of who is represented in leadership, whose perspectives are amplified, whose concerns are heard, and whose voices are systematically absent.

EV.8.5 Where review reveals significant patterns of harm, overclaiming, or structural misalignment, signatories shall initiate corrective action and, where appropriate, public acknowledgment. The results of structural review shall not be treated as proprietary or confidential when they bear on the wellbeing of those the organization or community serves.

Integrating the Eight Practices: An Ecology of Ethical Maturation

The eight practices described above are more than a checklist to be completed; they are an ecology to be inhabited. They operate at different scales—individual (self-assessment), relational (peer reflection), communal (case-based reflection, public learning), and institutional (structural review)—and their value lies not in any single practice but in their mutual reinforcement.

Self-assessment without peer reflection is a closed system. Peer reflection without stakeholder feedback may reproduce shared blind spots. Stakeholder feedback without developmental review may lack the longitudinal perspective needed to distinguish growth from stasis. Case-based reflection without attention to structural conditions may individualize what are actually systemic problems. And all of these without periodic recommitment risk becoming routine rather than renewing.

The practitioner’s task is not to master each practice in isolation but to allow them to inform one another: to bring what is discovered in self-assessment into peer reflection, to let stakeholder feedback reshape self-assessment, to allow case-based reflection to deepen developmental review, and to let the whole process be periodically renewed through honest recommitment.

This ecology embodies a core conviction of the code: that ethical capacity is not a fixed trait or a credential but a living practice—one that develops, deepens, regresses, recovers, and unfolds over the course of a professional and personal life. The code holds people accountable for their conduct while supporting the growth that makes increasingly discerning conduct possible. These two commitments—accountability and development—are not in tension. They are, properly understood, the same commitment viewed from different angles.



Tiers of Evaluation Expectation

The eight practices described above constitute a rich ecology. To ensure that this ecology is implementable rather than overwhelming, the code distinguishes among tiers of expectation based on frequency, obligation level, and the scale at which the practice operates.

Minimum annual practice. All signatories are expected to engage annually in self-assessment (Practice 1), peer reflection (Practice 2), and stakeholder feedback (Practice 4) where applicable to their domains of work. These three practices constitute the baseline of signatory participation in the evaluation ecology. They are not burdensome in isolation; together, they ensure that the signatory’s ethical practice is regularly examined from the inside, from alongside, and from the perspective of those affected.

Periodic practice. Formal recommitment (Practice 5) is expected every two to three years, as described in EV.5.1. Developmental review (Practice 3) operates on a similar periodic cycle, and may be integrated with the recommitment process or conducted independently. These practices provide the longitudinal perspective that annual practices cannot: they ask not only “how am I doing?” but “how am I growing?”

Community practice. Case-based ethical reflection (Practice 6) and public learning from ethical difficulty (Practice 7) are communal practices that depend on the signatory community’s collective initiative. Signatories are expected to participate in these as opportunities arise—through community gatherings, peer groups, conferences, or other structured contexts—rather than on a fixed schedule. The community’s responsibility is to create and sustain these opportunities; the individual signatory’s responsibility is to engage with them.

Organizational practice. The review of claims, harms, and unintended consequences (Practice 8), particularly its structural review component (EV.8.3–8.5), applies primarily to signatories who lead or

significantly shape organizations, programs, or communities. Individual practitioners without organizational responsibilities may engage with the claims-review dimensions (EV.8.1–8.2) as part of their self-assessment and peer reflection practices.

This tiered approach recognizes that different practices operate at different scales and rhythms. A signatory who faithfully engages with the minimum annual practices, participates in periodic recommitment, and contributes to community practice as opportunities arise is fulfilling the code's evaluation expectations. The ecology is designed to be sustainable across a professional lifetime, not exhausting within a single year.



Relationship to the Principles, Standards, and Accountability Layers

This evaluation layer occupies a distinctive position in the code's architecture. The principles layer establishes why ethical conduct matters and what normative commitments signatories accept. The standards layer specifies what ethical conduct looks like in concrete domains of practice. The accountability layer (Part IV) addresses what happens when ethical standards are breached. This evaluation layer addresses how ethical capacity is cultivated, deepened, and sustained over time.

Evaluation is not enforcement. It is the ongoing practice through which signatories develop the discernment, self-awareness, and structural sensitivity that make adherence to the standards possible. Where evaluation reveals difficulty, it feeds into the accountability layer's restorative processes. Where accountability processes result in growth, they are reflected in subsequent evaluation. The two layers are complementary, not redundant.

The evaluation layer also serves a broader function: it models for the integrative community what it looks like to take one's own development seriously without self-congratulation. The claim that "ethical capacity develops" is not a weakening of ethical obligation; it is the most honest and demanding form that ethical obligation can take. To see more is to owe more. And to owe more is to submit oneself to the kinds of practices that allow one to see clearly what one owes.

Part IV: Accountability Processes and Governance

Introduction: Accountability Without Juridicalism

This is the hardest layer of the code to write and the most important to get right. Principles inspire, standards guide, and evaluation supports growth—but accountability is what happens when things break down. It is the layer that determines whether the code is a living instrument or a decorative aspiration.

The challenge is distinctive. The communities addressed by this code do not constitute a single organization with centralized authority. There is no licensing board, no disciplinary body, no institutional mechanism for compulsory enforcement. The code's accountability structures must therefore derive their authority from a different source: the voluntary commitment of signatories to mutual answerability, the collective capacity of the signatory community to hold its members to account, and the moral weight of a covenant that signatories have freely chosen to adopt.

These limits must be stated plainly. The accountability processes described here can shape culture, clarify obligations, support repair, and guide the withdrawal of signatory recognition, but they cannot replace legal remedies, professional discipline, institutional reporting, or other public mechanisms of protection where those are warranted.

This is not as fragile as it may sound. Many of the world's most enduring ethical traditions—the Hippocratic oath, monastic rules, professional codes in fields that predate state licensure—have operated through voluntarily assumed obligation, peer accountability, and the authority of shared commitment. What makes such systems work is not the power to punish but the willingness to take the process seriously: to treat accountability as a practice integral to the community's own integrity.

At the same time, this code must resist the temptation to become merely punitive. Accountability in an integral context includes consequences—real ones, with practical effect—but it also includes understanding, repair, growth, and the transformation of the conditions that enabled the harm. The goal is not to produce a juridical apparatus dressed in developmental language. It is to create structures robust enough to address genuine harm while wise enough to recognize that harm, too, occurs within a developmental context—one that includes the possibility of growth, repair, and deepened ethical commitment.

The accountability structures described here therefore operate at two levels simultaneously. At the procedural level, they establish a clear sequence of steps—from informal concern through formal review to the withdrawal of signatory recognition—that provides predictability, fairness, and due process. At the developmental level, they embody the code's conviction that ethical failure is an occasion not only for consequence but for learning—for the practitioner, for those harmed, and for the community and its structures.

These two levels are not in tension. Consequences without learning produce compliance without growth. Learning without consequences produces insight without accountability. The code requires both.

Accountability requires compassion, but compassion here does not mean indulgence, evasion, or premature reconciliation. It means a disciplined concern for the dignity, suffering, safety, and possible growth of all affected parties, held together with truthful acknowledgment, proportional consequences, and repair.

The protections of this code extend to all persons and communities affected by the conduct of signatories, whether or not they are themselves signatories. Students, clients, seekers, participants, congregants, organizational members, collaborators, and community members have standing to raise

concerns, submit complaints, participate in relevant accountability processes, and receive appropriate communication about outcomes. Their vulnerability within the relationship is sufficient grounds for protection.



The Special Dangers of Integrative Power

Before describing the accountability process itself, the code must name the distinctive forms of ethical failure to which integrative, metatheoretical, and developmental practice is susceptible. These are not generic professional risks; they are specific to the kind of work this community does. The accountability process must be alert to them, and the ethics council must be trained to recognize them.

These dangers arise from a single structural feature: integrative and developmental practitioners often work with lenses capable of interpreting another person’s development, spirituality, worldview, shadow, epistemology, trauma, culture, organizational role, and social location. This is potent material. It creates asymmetries of interpretive power that are difficult to challenge from within the framework’s own terms.

The following are named as recognized patterns of ethical risk. They are not exhaustive, but they constitute the territory the code is most specifically designed to address.

Developmental Ranking and Stage-Casting

The use of developmental categories to rank individuals, assign social standing, or establish hierarchies of worth. This includes the public or private assignment of developmental stages in ways that function as judgments of character rather than descriptions of structure, and the construction of social environments in which perceived developmental level determines access, credibility, or voice.

Framework Weaponization

The deployment of integral, metatheoretical, or developmental concepts as instruments of interpersonal or institutional power. This occurs when the framework is used to foreclose dialogue rather than open it—when “you’re not seeing the bigger picture” becomes a way of ending rather than beginning a conversation, or when a framework’s internal logic is used to render critique structurally inaudible.

Spiritual Bypassing

The use of spiritual, contemplative, or transpersonal concepts to avoid, suppress, or dismiss legitimate psychological, emotional, relational, or political concerns. In integrative contexts, this often takes the form of reframing valid grievances as attachment, interpreting distress as resistance to growth, or treating calls for structural change as failures of transcendence.

Complexity Washing

The use of complexity language, multi-perspectival display, or meta-level framing to obscure rather than illuminate—to make a position appear more sophisticated than it is, to overwhelm critique with conceptual proliferation, or to substitute terminological density for genuine depth of understanding. Complexity washing exploits the integrative community’s reverence for nuance by performing nuance without practicing it.

Premature Synthesis

The integration of perspectives, traditions, or domains of knowledge before the genuine differences, tensions, and incompatibilities between them have been adequately understood and honored.

Premature synthesis produces a false coherence that erases the productive friction between distinct perspectives—friction that is often where the deepest learning resides.

Charismatic Authority Without Accountability

The concentration of authority—intellectual, spiritual, organizational, or moral—in a single figure or small group, without independent oversight, contestable decision-making, or structural provisions for challenge. This pattern is especially dangerous in communities that valorize developmental attainment, because the leader’s perceived development can function as a warrant for unchecked power.

Scope-of-Practice Inflation

The expansion of one’s professional role beyond the boundaries of one’s training and competence, enabled by the integrative framework’s comprehensive scope. The metatheoretical consultant who drifts into psychotherapy, the developmental educator who begins functioning as a spiritual director, the complexity facilitator who offers clinical advice—these boundary violations are among the most common vectors of harm in integrative practice.

Unaccountable Interpretive Assessment

The use of psychological, developmental, spiritual, relational, or moral interpretations in ways that are totalizing, casually circulated, unsupported by evidence, reputationally damaging, or substituted for direct engagement. This danger becomes especially serious when such assessments affect a person’s standing, access, reputation, role, or opportunities without appropriate transparency, proportionality, confidentiality, role clarity, or opportunity for response.

Extractive Use of Traditions

The appropriation of insights, practices, categories, or wisdom from philosophical, spiritual, cultural, or scientific traditions in ways that decontextualize, distort, or diminish the source tradition—often while claiming to honor or include it. This includes the treatment of living traditions as raw material for synthesis, the flattening of complex traditions into data points on a developmental schema, and the failure to acknowledge intellectual and spiritual debts.

Confusing Map Fluency with Wisdom

The assumption that facility with integrative frameworks—the ability to deploy multi-perspectival language, navigate complex taxonomies, and articulate meta-level positions—constitutes or demonstrates ethical maturity, spiritual realization, developmental altitude, or practical wisdom. Map fluency is a cognitive skill. Wisdom is a quality of being that integrates cognitive capacity with emotional depth, relational sensitivity, embodied discernment, and moral courage. The conflation of the two is perhaps the most subtle and pervasive danger in the integrative community, because it is the one most difficult to see from within the framework’s own terms.

Backchanneling and Reputational Manipulation

The use of informal networks, private communications, or selective disclosure to shape perceptions of a concern, discredit a party, protect a practitioner, or influence an accountability process outside the established procedures. In communities that are relationally dense and that mix friendship, intellectual status, spiritual affinity, professional opportunity, and developmental language, informal influence can be more powerful than formal process—and more damaging. Backchanneling subverts the accountability structures the code establishes by routing consequential information through channels that are invisible, unaccountable, and often self-serving.

***Note:** This catalogue of dangers is itself a map—and as such, is subject to its own warning about the limitations of maps. It does not exhaust the forms of ethical failure possible in integrative practice. It names the patterns that the community’s experience has revealed to be most characteristic and most consequential. The ethics council shall treat this catalogue as a living document, subject to expansion as new patterns are identified.*

Types of Ethical Difficulty: A Principle of Proportionality

Not every ethical difficulty is an ethical violation. The code distinguishes among four types of ethical matter, and seeks to match the process to the nature, severity, and urgency of the concern.

Ethical inquiries are questions, uncertainties, or requests for guidance. A practitioner wondering whether a particular dual relationship is appropriate, or seeking clarification about the code’s application to a novel situation, is engaged in inquiry. Inquiries are signs of ethical health, not ethical failure. They are best addressed through peer reflection, consultation with experienced colleagues, or advisory guidance from the Ethics Council.

Ethical concerns involve possible misalignment with the code’s principles or standards—situations where something may be wrong but the nature and severity of the issue are unclear. Concerns may be raised by the practitioner themselves (through self-assessment) or by others who observe patterns that trouble them. Concerns are appropriately addressed through informal dialogue (Stage 1) or facilitated peer reflection (Stage 2).

Ethical complaints allege specific violations of the code’s standards that have affected identifiable persons or communities. Complaints carry a claim of harm and a request for response. They may be addressed through facilitated reflection or restorative process (Stages 2–3), but where the harm is significant or the practitioner is unresponsive, they warrant formal review by the Ethics Council (Stage 4).

Serious ethical violations involve abuse, exploitation, retaliation, sustained patterns of harm, or major breaches of trust—situations where the safety of individuals or the integrity of the community is at stake. Serious violations may warrant immediate formal review, bypassing earlier stages, and may result in the most consequential responses available under the code, including public clarification and withdrawal of signatory status.

This typology serves two purposes. It prevents the accountability structure from feeling disproportionately heavy for ordinary ethical uncertainty—which should be encouraged, not penalized. And it protects the Ethics Council from becoming overloaded with matters that are better addressed through consultation, peer reflection, or advisory guidance. The graduated process described below is designed to accommodate all four types, directing each to the level of response appropriate to its nature and severity.



The Accountability Process: A Graduated Sequence

The following sequence describes the process through which ethical concerns are raised, explored, and resolved. It moves from informal engagement to formal process, with provisions for restorative and consequential responses at each stage. The sequence is graduated: earlier stages are always attempted before later ones, except in cases of imminent harm or serious violation where urgency requires immediate formal response.

The accountability process shall protect both the right of affected persons to raise concerns and the right of practitioners to fair process, accurate representation, and protection from knowingly false, malicious, or materially misleading claims.

Stage 1: Informal Concern and Direct Dialogue

Many ethical concerns can and should be addressed through direct, honest conversation between the person with the concern and the practitioner whose conduct is in question. This is not a lesser form of accountability; it is often the most effective and least harmful form.

AC.1.1 Any person—signatory or non-signatory, client, student, community member, or colleague—may raise an ethical concern with a signatory directly. The code encourages this as the first step whenever it is safe and appropriate.

AC.1.2 Signatories who receive direct ethical feedback shall respond first to the presenting issues with seriousness, openness, and good faith. They may clarify, contextualize, or contest claims where appropriate, but shall not use defensiveness, developmental reframing, or counter-accusation to avoid engaging the substance of the concern.

AC.1.3 Direct dialogue is appropriate when the concern is specific, the power differential is manageable, the person raising the concern feels safe doing so, and there is reasonable expectation that the practitioner will engage in good faith. Where any of these conditions are absent, the person with the concern may proceed directly to Stage 2 or beyond.

AC.1.4 The person raising a concern is never obligated to engage in direct dialogue with the practitioner. The decision to skip this stage and proceed to facilitated or formal processes is always legitimate and shall not be characterized as avoidance, escalation, or developmental limitation.

Stage 2: Facilitated Peer Reflection

When direct dialogue is insufficient, unsafe, or unsuccessful, the concern may be brought into a facilitated process involving one or more peer signatories who serve as reflective witnesses and process guides. This stage is not adversarial; it is an extension of the evaluation layer's peer reflection practice, applied to a specific ethical concern.

AC.2.1 Either the person raising the concern or the practitioner in question may request facilitated peer reflection. A mutually acceptable facilitator—a signatory experienced in dialogue, conflict facilitation, or restorative practice—shall be identified by the parties or, if agreement cannot be reached, by the ethics council.

AC.2.2 The facilitated process shall provide a structured space for both parties to speak, be heard, and explore the ethical dimensions of the situation. The facilitator's role is not to adjudicate but to support honest inquiry, mutual understanding, and, where possible, resolution.

AC.2.3 Facilitated peer reflection may result in: mutual understanding and informal resolution; specific commitments by the practitioner to change conduct, seek supervision, or engage in further reflection; or a determination by either party that the concern requires formal review. All outcomes shall be documented in a form agreed upon by both parties.

AC.2.4 Where the concern involves a significant power differential—for instance, a student raising a concern about a teacher, or a client about a consultant—the facilitation process shall include specific structural provisions to equalize the parties' standing within the process, including the option of an advocate or support person for the less powerful party.

Stage 3: Restorative Process

Where harm has occurred and is acknowledged, a restorative process may be initiated—either as an outgrowth of facilitated reflection or as a distinct intervention. Restorative processes seek to address the needs of those harmed, to support the practitioner's accountability and growth, and to repair the relational and communal fabric that harm has torn.

- AC.3.1 Restorative processes shall be initiated only with the informed consent of all parties, including the person or persons who were harmed. No one shall be compelled to participate in a restorative process, and declining to participate shall carry no penalty or negative implication.
- AC.3.2 Restorative processes shall be facilitated by individuals with specific training in restorative justice or restorative practice. General facilitation skill is necessary but not sufficient; the dynamics of harm, accountability, and repair require specialized competence.
- AC.3.3 The restorative process shall attend to multiple dimensions: the specific harm experienced by those affected; the practitioner's understanding of what they did and why; the relational, communal, and structural conditions that enabled the harm; and the actions needed to address the harm, prevent recurrence, and support the healing of those affected.
- AC.3.4 Restorative processes are not a substitute for consequences. Where the harm is serious, the restorative process may inform but does not replace the formal review described in Stage 4. Restoration that avoids accountability is not restoration; it is appeasement.
- AC.3.5 The outcomes of a restorative process may include: acknowledgment and apology; specific reparative actions (material, relational, or symbolic); commitments to changed behavior, additional training, or supervision; structural changes within organizations or programs; and agreements about communication with the broader community. These outcomes shall be documented and subject to follow-up review.
- AC.3.6 Restorative processes shall never require forgiveness, reconciliation, renewed relationship, or continued participation by those harmed. The conflation of restoration with reconciliation can function as a subtle form of pressure on those who have been harmed—an expectation of premature relational repair that compounds the original injury. Repair is an obligation of those who caused harm; reconciliation, if it occurs, is a gift that can only be freely offered by those who were harmed.

Stage 4: Formal Review by the Ethics Council

When earlier stages have not resolved the concern, when the concern involves serious harm, when the practitioner declines to engage in good faith with earlier processes, or when a pattern of conduct across multiple situations warrants collective examination, the concern may be referred to the Ethics Council for formal review.

- AC.4.1 Any signatory, any person directly affected by a signatory's conduct, or any group of three or more community members may refer a concern to the Ethics Council. The Council may also initiate review on its own motion when credible information of serious ethical violation comes to its attention.
- AC.4.2 Upon receiving a referral, the Ethics Council shall conduct a preliminary assessment to determine whether the concern falls within the code's scope, whether sufficient information exists to warrant formal review, and whether earlier stages of the process have been attempted or reasonably bypassed. This assessment shall be completed within thirty days of referral.
- AC.4.3 Formal review shall include: notification to the practitioner of the specific concerns raised; an opportunity for the practitioner to respond in writing; gathering of relevant information from all parties, including witnesses and stakeholders; and a deliberative process in which the Council assesses the conduct against the code's principles and applicable standards.
- AC.4.4 The practitioner under review shall have the right to: know the specific concerns raised; respond to those concerns in writing and, if requested, in person; present evidence and identify

witnesses; be accompanied by a support person or advocate during any in-person proceedings; and receive a written statement of the Council's findings and the reasoning behind them.

AC.4.5 The Council's assessment shall attend not only to whether a violation occurred but to its nature, severity, and context. The Council shall consider: the degree of harm caused; the practitioner's awareness and intent; the presence or absence of power differentials; whether the conduct reflects a pattern or an isolated incident; the practitioner's demonstrated capacity for ethical reflection, learning, repair, and changed conduct; the practitioner's responsiveness to earlier accountability processes; and the structural or systemic conditions that may have contributed to the violation.

AC.4.6 The Council shall be alert to the specific dangers catalogued in this document—developmental ranking, framework weaponization, spiritual bypassing, complexity washing, premature synthesis, charismatic authority without accountability, scope-of-practice inflation, unaccountable interpretive assessment, extractive use of traditions, the conflation of map fluency with wisdom, and backchanneling and reputational manipulation—and shall apply the code's principles with particular care when these patterns are present.

AC.4.7 In cases where the practitioner declines to participate in formal review, the Council may proceed on the basis of available information and shall note the practitioner's non-participation in its findings. Non-participation does not invalidate the review process or prevent the Council from reaching conclusions and recommendations.

Stage 5: Recommendations for Repair, Education, Restitution, or Role Limitation

Following formal review, the Ethics Council shall issue recommendations that are proportionate to the nature and severity of the ethical concern. Recommendations are designed to address harm, support growth, prevent recurrence, and protect the community—in that order of priority.

AC.5.1 The Council's recommendations may include, individually or in combination: specific actions of repair or restitution toward those harmed; additional training, education, or supervised practice in areas of identified deficiency; engagement in structured shadow work, peer supervision, or therapeutic process; temporary limitation of specific domains of practice (e.g., suspension of developmental assessment, teaching, or contemplative facilitation) until conditions are met; organizational or structural changes within programs or communities led by the practitioner; and, in cases involving public harm, provisions for public acknowledgment as described in Stage 6.

AC.5.2 Recommendations shall be communicated in writing to the practitioner and, where appropriate, to the person or persons who raised the concern. The communication shall include the Council's findings, the reasoning behind each recommendation, and the expectations for compliance, including timelines and review mechanisms.

AC.5.3 The practitioner shall have the opportunity to respond to the Council's recommendations, including proposing alternative actions that address the same concerns. The Council shall consider such proposals in good faith while retaining authority over the final form of its recommendations.

AC.5.4 Compliance with recommendations shall be monitored through follow-up review at intervals determined by the Council. Where the practitioner demonstrates good-faith engagement with the recommendations and evidence of genuine growth, the Council shall acknowledge this progress and may modify or conclude the monitoring process.

AC.5.5 Where the practitioner declines to comply with recommendations, the concern shall proceed to Stage 7. Non-compliance is itself an ethical act—a refusal of the mutual answerability that signatory status entails—and shall be treated accordingly.

Stage 6: Public Clarification

When harm has been public or community-wide—affecting not only individuals but the broader culture, trust, and integrity of the integrative community—the Council may recommend or require public clarification. This stage addresses the community’s legitimate interest in understanding what occurred and what is being done about it, while protecting the dignity of all parties.

AC.6.1 Public clarification is appropriate when: the harm was publicly visible or widely known; the practitioner’s conduct has affected the community’s reputation, trust, or safety; silence would constitute complicity in ongoing harm or enable the continuation of harmful patterns; or the practitioner has made public claims that require public correction.

AC.6.2 Public clarification shall be issued by the Ethics Council, not by individual parties, and shall include: a statement of the ethical concerns reviewed; a summary of the Council’s findings, without unnecessary detail about private matters; the recommendations issued; and the practitioner’s response to those recommendations. The statement shall be factual, measured, and respectful of all parties’ dignity. Public clarification shall disclose only what is necessary to protect community trust, prevent ongoing harm, correct public misrepresentation, or explain the Council’s action.

AC.6.3 Before public clarification is issued, the practitioner shall be given the opportunity to review the proposed statement and to request modifications that address legitimate concerns about accuracy, privacy, or fairness. The Council retains final authority over the content of public statements but shall exercise that authority with care.

AC.6.4 Public clarification is not public shaming. It is the community’s acknowledgment that it takes its own ethical commitments seriously enough to be transparent about how they are upheld. The tone of public clarification shall reflect the code’s values: honesty without cruelty, accountability without humiliation, transparency in service of trust.

AC.6.5 Where the practitioner has engaged in genuine repair and demonstrated substantive growth following an ethical violation, the public record may be updated to reflect this. The code recognizes that people change, and that a permanent public record of failure without acknowledgment of growth is itself a form of harm.

Stage 7: Withdrawal of Signatory Status

In the most serious cases—where the harm is severe, where the practitioner refuses to engage with accountability processes, where a sustained pattern of ethical violation persists despite intervention, or where continued signatory status would endanger the community or undermine the code’s integrity—the Ethics Council may recommend the withdrawal of signatory recognition.

AC.7.1 Withdrawal of signatory status is the most consequential action available under this code. It represents the community’s determination that the practitioner’s conduct is incompatible with the commitments signatories have undertaken, and that the community’s integrity requires public clarity about this determination.

AC.7.2 Withdrawal may be recommended when: the practitioner has caused serious harm and refuses to engage with restorative or corrective processes; a sustained pattern of ethical violation persists despite formal review and recommendations; the practitioner’s conduct poses ongoing risk to clients, students, community members, or the public; or the practitioner’s non-compliance with Council recommendations renders signatory status meaningless.

AC.7.3 Before recommending withdrawal, the Council shall ensure that: the full graduated process has been followed (except where the practitioner’s non-engagement has made earlier stages impossible); the practitioner has been given adequate opportunity to respond, participate, and

demonstrate change; the Council’s deliberation has been thorough, fair, and documented; and the recommendation reflects the considered judgment of the full Council, not a summary decision.

AC.7.4 The practitioner shall have the right to appeal a withdrawal recommendation to an independent review panel constituted from the signatory community but not including current Ethics Council members. The appeal shall be heard within sixty days and shall review both the substance of the Council’s findings and the fairness of its process. Appeals may be based on procedural unfairness, significant factual error, disproportionate recommendation, conflict of interest, or failure to consider relevant evidence. This enumeration of grounds protects the practitioner’s right to meaningful review while preventing appeal from functioning as simple disagreement with the outcome.

AC.7.5 Withdrawal of signatory status shall be communicated to the signatory community and, where appropriate, to the broader public. The communication shall be factual and proportionate, consistent with the standards for public clarification described in Stage 6.

AC.7.6 Withdrawal is not necessarily permanent. A former signatory may apply for reinstatement after a period determined by the Council (typically no less than two years), upon demonstration of substantive growth, genuine repair of harm, and renewed commitment to the code’s principles and standards. Reinstatement is not automatic; it requires Council review and approval.



Protection of Those Who Raise Concerns

The integrity of the accountability process depends on the willingness of individuals to raise concerns. In communities organized around developmental authority, the person raising a concern is structurally vulnerable to a distinctive form of retaliation: being reframed as the one with the problem—as lacking perspective, operating from a reactive stage, failing to see the bigger picture, or being motivated by personal shadow rather than legitimate grievance. The code must provide explicit protection against this inversion.

AC.8.1 Signatories shall not retaliate against any person who raises an ethical concern in good faith, whether through the formal processes described here or through informal channels. Retaliation includes but is not limited to: professional exclusion, social ostracism, public or private characterization of the concern-raiser as developmentally limited, and the use of framework-internal language to discredit or dismiss the concern.

AC.8.2 The developmental reframing of legitimate ethical concerns—interpreting a complaint as evidence of the complainant’s shadow, lower developmental stage, or insufficient perspective-taking—is itself a serious ethical violation when used to deflect accountability. The Ethics Council shall treat such reframing as an aggravating factor in any review.

AC.8.3 Persons who raise concerns may request confidentiality regarding their identity. The Ethics Council shall honor such requests to the maximum extent consistent with the requirements of fair process. Where the practitioner’s right to respond necessitates disclosure of the concern-raiser’s identity, this shall be communicated to the concern-raiser in advance, and they shall have the option to withdraw the concern or proceed with the understanding that their identity will be disclosed.

AC.8.4 The signatory community shall cultivate a culture in which raising ethical concerns is recognized as an act of care for the community, not an act of aggression toward the practitioner. The willingness to name what is wrong is as important to the community’s ethical health as the willingness to affirm what is right.

The Ethics Council: Composition, Authority, and Accountability

The Ethics Council is the body through which the code's accountability processes are administered. Its authority derives from the collective commitment of the signatory community, and its legitimacy depends on its own ethical conduct, structural independence, and developmental maturity.

Composition

- AC.9.1 The Ethics Council shall consist of five to seven members drawn from the signatory community, selected through a process that ensures diversity of perspective, domain expertise, theoretical orientation, social location, and community affiliation. No single organization, lineage, or theoretical school shall hold a majority of Council seats.
- AC.9.2 The Ethics Council shall include non-practitioner or lay members, including individuals with experience representing the interests of students, clients, seekers, community members, or those harmed by abuses of spiritual, developmental, or metatheoretical authority. The Council shall not be composed solely of practitioners, teachers, facilitators, or recognized experts within the field, since a body made up only of peers risks reproducing the very forms of collegial self-protection this code seeks to interrupt.
- AC.9.3 Council members shall serve staggered terms of three years, renewable once. Staggered terms ensure institutional continuity while preventing the entrenchment of any particular faction or perspective. A rotating chair, selected annually from among Council members, shall coordinate the Council's work.
- AC.9.4 Council members shall possess demonstrated competence in ethical reasoning, facilitation, and the capacity to hold multiple perspectives under conditions of conflict and ambiguity. They shall have a track record of engagement with the code's evaluation practices and shall not be currently subject to unresolved ethical concerns.
- AC.9.5 Council members shall recuse themselves from any case in which they have a personal, professional, or institutional relationship with either party that could compromise their impartiality. Where recusal reduces the Council below quorum, temporary members shall be appointed through a process determined by the Council's governance procedures.

Authority

- AC.9.6 The Ethics Council has authority to: receive and assess ethical referrals; conduct formal reviews; issue findings and recommendations; recommend public clarification and withdrawal of signatory status; maintain records of proceedings; and develop guidance documents, advisories, and case-based resources for the signatory community.
- AC.9.7 The Council's authority is deliberative and recommendatory, not executory. It cannot compel a signatory to undertake specific actions; its recommendations derive their force from the signatory's prior commitment to the code and the community's collective recognition of the Council's legitimacy. Where a signatory rejects Council recommendations, the community's response—including the potential withdrawal of signatory recognition—is the enforcement mechanism.

Accountability of the Council Itself

- AC.9.8 The Ethics Council is itself subject to the code's principles and standards. Council proceedings shall be transparent in their processes (while protecting the confidentiality of parties), fair in their treatment of all involved, and consistent in the application of the code's principles.
- AC.9.9 The Council shall undergo periodic external review—at least once every three years—conducted by qualified individuals who are not current Council members or signatories under

review. This review shall assess the Council’s procedural fairness, consistency of application, responsiveness to concerns, and alignment with the code’s principles.

AC.9.10 Any party involved in a Council proceeding may challenge the Council’s process or composition by requesting a review by an independent panel, as described in AC.7.4. This right of challenge is not limited to withdrawal proceedings but extends to any stage of formal review. Grounds for challenge include procedural unfairness, significant factual error, disproportionate recommendation, conflict of interest, or failure to consider relevant evidence.

AC.9.11 Council members who are found to have violated the code’s principles in the exercise of their Council responsibilities shall be subject to the same accountability processes as any other signatory, with the added recognition that ethical failure in a position of adjudicative authority constitutes a particularly serious breach of trust.

Transitional Stewardship

The Ethics Council as described above presupposes a relatively mature signatory community from which Council members can be drawn, nominated, and recognized. During the initial formation period of the code, before such a community exists, a different structure is needed.

AC.9.12 During the initial formation period of the code, before a mature signatory community exists, a provisional stewardship group may be convened to guide collaborative review of the code, receive early signatories, establish initial procedures, and prepare the conditions for the first Ethics Council. This group shall operate under the code’s principles from its inception.

AC.9.13 The provisional stewardship group shall operate under explicit term limits (recommended: no more than two years), transparent selection criteria, and a mandate to transfer authority to the signatory community—and to a duly constituted Ethics Council—as soon as feasible. The group’s authority is transitional and custodial, not permanent or proprietary.

AC.9.14 The composition of the provisional stewardship group shall reflect the diversity of perspectives, domains, and communities that the code addresses. It shall not be constituted solely from a single organization, lineage, or network, even if the code’s initial development originated within one.



Quadrant-Aware Accountability

The code recognizes that ethical failure is never only an individual behavioral issue. Harm arises within a field of conditions that spans all four quadrants of the integral framework. The accountability process must therefore attend to each dimension.

Interior-individual (UL): The practitioner’s intentions, motivations, self-awareness, shadow dynamics, and the interior conditions that shaped their conduct. Accountability at this level asks: What did you see? What did you not see? What interior dynamics contributed to this outcome?

Exterior-individual (UR): The practitioner’s observable behavior, decisions, and actions—the conduct that can be assessed against the code’s standards. Accountability at this level asks: What did you do? Did your conduct meet the standards you committed to uphold?

Interior-collective (LL): The cultural norms, shared assumptions, group dynamics, and relational patterns within the community or organization that enabled, permitted, or failed to prevent the harm. Accountability at this level asks: What cultural conditions made this possible? What was everyone not saying? Accountability shall also attend to cultural and ideological patterns—including racialized,

gendered, classed, colonial, ableist, or other structural biases—that shape whose voices are trusted, whose harms are minimized, and whose interpretations are treated as authoritative.

Exterior-collective (LR): The institutional structures, governance arrangements, organizational incentives, policies, and systemic conditions that shaped the context in which harm occurred. Accountability at this level asks: What structural conditions enabled this? What institutional arrangements need to change?

The Ethics Council shall attend to all four quadrants in its assessment and recommendations. A finding that focuses exclusively on individual behavior while ignoring the cultural and structural conditions that enabled that behavior is an incomplete finding. Recommendations that address only the practitioner’s conduct while leaving the enabling structures intact are incomplete recommendations.

***Note:** Quadrant-aware accountability does not diminish individual responsibility. It contextualizes it. The practitioner who caused harm is responsible for their conduct; the community and its institutions are responsible for the conditions that made the harm possible. Both forms of responsibility are real, and both require attention.*



The Apophatic Safeguard

This code arises from a community that claims to operate at meta-levels—to integrate perspectives, to transcend and include, to hold the widest and deepest view available. This is a powerful aspiration. It is also, if untempered, a dangerous one.

The apophatic safeguard is the code’s reminder to itself that no framework—including this code—exhausts the real, the good, or the person before us. The more powerful the map, the more essential the humility. The more comprehensive the framework, the greater the temptation to believe that what it cannot capture does not exist.

This safeguard operates at every level of the code:

In the principles, it appears as Principle I’s insistence on framework reflexivity: the acknowledgment that every framework, including one’s own, is partial, perspectival, and historically situated.

In the standards, it appears as the recurrent requirement for epistemic humility in assessment, transparency about limitations, and refusal to reify categories.

In the evaluation practices, it appears as the ongoing attention to what the practitioner does not see—the blind spots, projections, and self-serving narratives that are difficult to identify from within.

In the accountability process, it appears as the recognition that the Ethics Council’s own judgments are themselves perspectival, that fairness requires structural humility, and that the process must include provisions for challenging its own conclusions.

And at the level of the code as a whole, it appears as this: the acknowledgment that any ethical code arising from a meta-level community carries a specific and paradoxical danger—the danger of believing that because the code is integrative, it is therefore adequate. It is not. It is a best effort, offered in awareness of its own limitations, by a community that is itself still learning what it means to practice the integration it professes.

The apophatic safeguard is not a qualification that weakens the code. It is the condition of its integrity. A code that did not acknowledge its own partiality would be precisely the kind of totalizing instrument it warns against.

Safeguard Against Ideological Capture

The apophatic safeguard addresses the code’s epistemic limitations—the inevitable partiality of any framework, including this one. This companion safeguard addresses the code’s political vulnerability—the risk that the code itself, or the structures of accountability it establishes, could be captured by a faction and deployed as an instrument of power.

The code shall not be used as an instrument for factional struggle, ideological policing, reputational attack, or the consolidation of authority by any lineage, school, organization, or interpretive community. Accountability processes exist to protect persons and communities from harm; they do not exist to settle intellectual disputes, enforce theoretical orthodoxy, or advance the interests of one current of thought over another.

This safeguard requires constant vigilance, because the line between legitimate ethical concern and ideological weaponization is not always clear. A complaint may be grounded in genuine harm or motivated by factional interest; sometimes both are present simultaneously. The Ethics Council’s responsibility is to assess the substance of each concern on its own merits, to resist pressure from any quarter to use the code’s authority for purposes other than the protection of persons and communities, and to name the dynamic openly when it detects that the accountability process is being instrumentalized.

The structural provisions of the code—the diversity requirements for Council composition (AC.9.1), the prohibition on any single organization holding a majority of seats, the rotating chair, the external review of the Council itself, and the right of appeal—are all designed in part to resist ideological capture. But structural provisions are necessary, not sufficient. The deeper safeguard is the community’s own discernment: its capacity to distinguish between the use of the code in service of ethical integrity and the use of the code in service of power.



Conclusion: A Living Covenant

This code—in its four layers of principles, standards, evaluation, and accountability—constitutes what might best be called a living covenant: a set of binding commitments undertaken freely by those who recognize that the power of integrative, metatheoretical, and developmental work creates obligations commensurate with its scope.

The code’s authority rests not on institutional enforcement but on the integrity of those who sign it and the community that holds them accountable. This is both its vulnerability and its strength. It is vulnerable because it can be ignored, violated, or abandoned without legal consequence. It is strong because it asks signatories to be accountable because they have *chosen* to be—because they recognize that the work they do is too important and too powerful to be conducted without ethical constraint, and because they understand that the ethical maturity they cultivate in themselves is inseparable from the ethical health of the communities they serve.

The code is a living document. It will grow, deepen, and be revised as the signatory community gains experience, confronts new challenges, and develops the collective wisdom that ethical practice in integrative contexts demands. Its principles are enduring; its standards, evaluation practices, and accountability processes are subject to ongoing refinement. The code’s capacity to evolve is not a weakness but a feature—the expression, in institutional form, of the developmental sensibility it asks of its signatories.

Finally, the code returns to the conviction that has animated it from the beginning: to see more is to owe more. Those who work with integrative frameworks have the privilege of wide and deep seeing. This privilege carries an obligation—to the persons whose lives are touched by this work, to the

traditions from which it draws, to the communities in which it takes root, and to the future these communities are working to create. This code is an attempt to honor that obligation. It is offered with humility, with seriousness, and with the hope that it serves the flourishing it envisions.

Closing Invitation to Reviewers

You are invited to help determine whether this code is needed, whether it is adequate to the field it seeks to serve, and what kind of community or stewardship structure could hold it with integrity.

The hope is not to impose a finished framework, but to begin a shared ethical conversation serious enough to become practice. The draft is offered with humility, with seriousness, and with the conviction that the more powerful our frameworks become, the greater our obligation to use them with care. To see more is to owe more.