



Institute for the Awakened Mind

The Mechanism of Rebirth

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Principles of Final Integration * Certainty and the Search for Truth and Satisfaction * The Horizontal Expansion into Creativity * Relationship with the Non-Human Environment * What Motivates Existential Awareness * Requirements of Rebirth in Integration * The Art of Liberation

Contrary to most psychologists who study children, animals, or the mentally ill in order to find principles that will contribute to the understanding of maturity or final integration, I believe that insight into the nature of fully integrated individuals can greatly increase our knowledge of the mature man who exists potentially within the child. It can make psychotherapy a more effective and meaningful technique and can guide the socially adjusted person to his proper state of individuation.

To begin with, I shall take up the following questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of final integration?
- 2) What kinds of individuals are psychologically ready for it?
- 3) What are its psychological laws, and what mechanisms have been used in various cultures to attain it?
- 4) What contributions can it make to the state of developmental psychology?

My understanding of final integration is that it is an experience of inner evolution that begins with a state that Reza Arasteh (former Professor of Psychiatry at George Washington University) has called “existential moratorium”; it leads to anxiety, detachment from social realities, the attainment of a state

of “void”, and rebirth in totality, where one in the process of living creates “forms” and internally attains happiness. It is a universal state, regardless of time, place, and the degree of culture. It is characterized by certainty, and the search for truth and satisfaction, which are the final manifestations of the drives for preservation, and activity respectively.

In Zen Buddhism, final integration is the state of deciphering koan (the state of enlightenment), koan referring to what everyone brings into this world at his birth and tries to decipher before he dies. In Near Eastern thought, Sufism (the art of rebirth) can be stated as “individuality in non-individuality”, that is, becoming a creative truth by passing from “I-ness” to “he-ness” to “one-ness” (universality). In Khayyam’s description it is an overflowing of the state of being born without attributes. In classical Chinese philosophy this state is called tao and is compared to the water current that resistlessly moves towards its goal. In recent Western thought the problem of final integration is becoming more recognized in our age of increasing anxiety. It has been noted under such names as “spontaneous expression without reservation”, “peak experience”, “becoming one’s self”, “intensive visionary experience”, “dynamic insight”, “autonomy”, as well as other phrases.

In short, the state of final integration is the end of the vertical growth of the adult personality and the beginning of the horizontal expansion into creativity. Fromm’s concept of “spontaneous experience without reservation” is comparable to Maslow’s “peak experience”. However, Fromm believes that the concept of creativity is not limited to creating something new, something physical in terms of an art object, but that this concept must be extended to the human reality that exists beneath, thus bringing about something new, namely a creative attitude. According to Fromm the best general quality of creativity is an ability to see (or to be aware) and to respond. The condition for such a creative attitude is summarized in the phrase “...creativity means to be born before one dies”. Furthermore, final integration gives integrated persons an insight into human lives, and their own life histories. Indeed, they can write the detailed history of their own lives. They possess enormous energy and ability to carry the pains of others without burden. Their insight into human evolution, history, and nature contributes to their “subjectively objective” state of mind. They have great ability to endure, and they can also stand solitude without boredom; they can truly live in any community. Finally, they are not only related to their fellow men, to history, but also to the nonhuman environment. Natural phenomena become symbolic of a universal communication. They see natural objects as units resembling life. This relatedness is expressed by Rumi:

All the atoms of the universe, in secret
Are communicating day and night that
We are hearing, we are aware, we are joyful.
We aren’t in communication with nonconfidants.

In his excellent study, The Non-Human Environment, Searles cites numerous examples to indicate the significance of relatedness to the non-human environment in health, creativity, and normalcy. Buber sees it as an “I-it” relationship; similar is Fromm’s concept of “unity”. Under the condition that one can also retain his own sense of identity: “The productive orientation involves a creative relatedness not only with one’s fellow-man but also with the non-human environment”.

A number of factors may motivate and provide a shock, which then instigates existential awareness. For example, these factors may be a critical ego; an achieved superego; acculturation; awareness of the partiality of the social self; purity and sensitivity; early intellectual growth; accidentally finding oneself in a quest situation; being in a situation in which power, wealth, and fame may lose their security value; a traumatic experience such as the loss of a loved object; and continuous struggle against social and mental obstacles. In other words, the attainment of final integration in the succession of identities is open to those who have:

- 1) experienced the social self as a fragmented self;
- 2) become aware that reason alone does not provide trust and certainty;
- 3) doubted their own hierarchy of values by coming in contact with another set of values, for example, through contact with two cultures, minorities in one culture or via social-class mobility;
- 4) found religion and culture as a means of further self-realization;
- 5) received a genuine avocation and examined their inner selves;
- 6) attained final integration through constant struggle, resistance and directed effort;
- 7) progressed slowly, perhaps due to their scientific accomplishments, after which they found time to give meaning to their final integration through artistic media;
- 8) found they were sensitive enough to apprehend man’s situation in a few tragic signs;
- 9) grew in a creative environment;
- 10) tasted life in companionship and were awakened by the death of the beloved.

It does not matter how one arrives at the stage of final integration, but rather whether one adopts a suitable mechanism of rebirth.

The biological birth of the individual, his self-growth within the family, his social patterning, are all means of attaining a “final rebirth”. All of us are born in a family; we all possess certain healthy or unhealthy attitudes toward our parents and we all become social beings. However, both these processes (the familial and the social), as well as the biological endowments upon which they are based, provide the means for final rebirth – for becoming a man, a “mankind”.

In the Near Eastern cultures the mechanism of rebirth in final integration takes place in two major psychological steps, both of which are interrelated. The Sufis assert that a seeker faces two major tasks:

to dissolve his present status (fana), then reintegrate again. "Unless you are first disintegrated, how can I reintegrate you again?" In a practical sense, fana means cleansing one's consciousness of what Rumi calls fictions, idols, and untruths, and purifying the heart of greed, envy, jealousy, grief, and anger so that it regains its original quality of becoming mirrorlike to reflect the reality within in. In going through the process of rebirth the principle of individual differences is recognized. In other words, rebirth in integration requires:

- 1) detachment from such external values as fame and wealth;
- 2) the selection of a guide;
- 3) detachment from inner veils;
- 4) intentional isolation;
- 5) travelling and arriving at the state of nothingness;
- 6) integration into "everythingness".

Unlike the modern Western and Islamic cultures that forced man to arrive at psychotherapy and the "art of rebirth" through intellectual and religious development, respectively, Far Eastern culture arrived at the art of liberation as formulated in Taoism, Vedanta, Yoga, and especially Buddhism through the development of a rigid social order. Conventionality formed the individual's false self, which challenged man's true nature and finally became synthesized in the real self by going through the process of the "art of liberation".

In Zen Buddhism, liberation from maya, that is, from social institutions, from the veil of language and logic, from conventionality, and from the way maya forms our character, furthers enlightenment (satori).