

SOMETHING ABOUT INTEGRATION

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SOMETHING ABOUT INTEGRATION

Shaffer defines integration as a state of an individual in which his various habits, perceptions, motives and emotions are fully co-ordinated, resulting in effective adjustment.¹ That aim is very desirable and toward it every human being ought to be striving. There is only one difficulty: not all persons succeed in achieving that high and desirable standard of behavior. I say to achieve because integration is an achievement and not something handed to us by our ancestors or provided by the environment. It requires a day by day effort, for we are in the making every minute of our lives.

This important business of becoming integrated concerns all of us, and it is to our advantage to know what stands in the way of achieving a wholesome, and well-rounded personality, and what may help us in the attainment of that goal. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick points out in one of his books that the central business of every human being is to become a real person.² By being a real person he means a personality that is well-integrated around worth-while goals and objectives. This integration, as said before, is an achievement and not a gift. One must have certain prerequisites in order to attain it.

No attempt will be made in a paper of this size to say everything related to integration. Our task is merely one of exploration.

1. Larence Frederic Shaffer, The Psychology of Adjustment (New York, 1943), p. 382

2. Harry Emerson Fosdick, On Being a Real Person (New York, 1943), p. 9

As we learn from various sources of information, we will write and comment on what seems paramount to us. ^{shall}

One of the problems that we have to face on our way toward integration is the tension between what we are and what we want to be. This tension, of course, is very desirable if what we want to be is within our power to attain. Unfortunately, that is not the case in many instances. "Every human being faces a situation where on the one side is his actual self, with his abilities and circumstances, and on the other side are ideal pictures of himself as he is ambitious to be and of his achievements as he has his heart on having them; and between the two is such disparity that they have no practical relationship."¹ When a man is at this point there is no way out for him but utter disappointment. His desired self is something beyond his scope, with the result that his life is torn to pieces. What can a man do in this case if he is willing to become a real person? There is only one answer, and it was magnificently expressed by one of the greatest literary geniuses of all times, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, in his masterwork Don Quijote de la Mancha. Talking one day with Sancho Panza, his squire, don Quijote said to him these famous words pregnant ^{with} of wisdom and coming out of deep experience, "Yo sé quien soy y quien puedo ser."²

1. Fosdick, p. 70

2. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha (Mexico)

In English, "I know who I am and who I can be." This is very assertive; nevertheless, any person who intends to end the strife between his real and desired selves must come to understand the meaning behind that statement. A psychologist uses another terminology to express the same thought. He would say that a person must accept himself as he is, with all his limitations and abilities, and from there on proceed to picture his desired self.

An initial act of self-acceptance is indispensable in order to have a well-integrated life.

Various are the causes of tension between the actual and desired selves. In many cases parents are to blame. Without trying to discover what a child's abilities are, they project into his imagination ambitions that are out of step with his aptitudes and abilities. This creates in the child a kind of civil war. On the one hand is his actual self with many possibilities; on the other is his desired self which is only an extension of his parents' ambitions. Dr. Fosdick gives us a good illustration, showing how tragic this parental attitude can be. "One mother aspiring to be a singer and frustrated in her own career, transferred her ambitions to her daughter. The fierce and baffled desires of her disappointed life were concentrated on her hopes for the girl. Into her daughter's susceptible imagination she poured her own unattainable aspirations, and did it more persuasively and remorselessly because she conceived her motive as maternal love. The daughter in consequence, unfitted for the imposed role, found herself at last with an imagination preoccupied by one ambition and a conscience committed to it as a

sacred duty, but with an impossible chasm between her actual her actual and desired self."¹

Tension between the actual and desired selves is also due to physical handicaps. One would be inclined to affirm that there is not much that a person can do when physical impossibilities are in the way of our desired self. However, it is surprising that a great number of people have overcome their physical handicaps and become powerful personalities. I always remember an illustration given in a lecture when I was in high school. The lecturer told us of a young man he knew in New York who had lost both his arms, and in spite of that, he was able to travel alone in the subway. He had learned how to use his feet so as to be able to insert the nickel at the entrance door. To many this would have been shattering, but to this young man it was only a challenge. He did not retreat into himself and start to worry about his miserable condition. On the contrary, he accepted himself as he was, a normal human being without two arms. From there on he proceeded to do his best with what he possessed. In other words, he was able to reconcile his desired self with the reality of his actual self.

This business of self-acceptance is not a simple one. As a matter of fact, it takes a good deal of courage to see ourselves as we are. The tendency is to cover up our actual self, never trying to find out what lies behind the false picture of our imagination.

¹. Fosdick, pp. 72-73

This is due to the fact that we turn our limitations into humiliations.¹ As soon as this attitude is assumed inferiority feelings spring up, launching us into a sea of troubles. It is to our advantage to be willing to recognize our limitations and not try to make them humiliations. If we ever expect to follow the road of integration, this is a basic step.

Another problem facing a person striving ~~a person striving~~ toward integration is the question of inner unity. Physically speaking as well as psychologically, there is in the body an urge toward wholeness.² As a child grows up he first shows in his behavior certain reflexes, which are far from being disorganized. They will always exhibit some regularity amid their apparent randomness. Next, as the child becomes more mature, he develops separate groups of habits. These habits are developed into traits. At first they are separate, with no obvious relation to each other, but as they merge, forced by the inner growth of the child, certain peculiarities appear.³ The next stage in the child's maturation is the appearance of different selves. Now the individual is one and many at the same time. He appears to be one type of person in his home, another in his work, and still another in the athletic field. This list of different selves could be greatly enlarged. As maturation takes place all these different stages appear. We move from reflexes to habits, from habits to traits, from traits to "multiple selves", all of them pointing toward integration.³

1. Fosdick, p. 89
2. Ibid., p. 42
3. Ibid., p. 44

Some people never pass the stage of "multiple selves". They never realize the truth of one of Dr. Fosdick's statements: "The central criterion of a meaningful living is somehow to pass from mere 'multiple selves' into poised, balanced, and cohesion of a unified personality."¹

It is of utmost importance for every individual to realize the transcendancy of the the above mentioned criterion. Mental hospitals have a very sad story to tell of people who were never able to put themselves together. Insanity is rampant! The Time magazine of January 6, 1947, points out that there are now in the mental hospitals of the United States 600,000 patients as against 500,000 ten years ago.

Our happiness also depends on the degree of personal wholeness and unity.² This is a rather strong statement but it is pregnant with truth. Certainly, no happiness is enjoyed when one is at odds with oneself. ^(or himself) A different state ensues when one is absorbed in a task that takes all the best that is in one and captures all one's attention. ^(his) When our energies are used one-directionally and wholeheartedly in the accomplishment of a worthy cause, personality becomes all of a piece. It is like a river which, no matter what obstacles it encounters, proceeds in its course, knocking down whatever obstructs its path. Such a life brings satisfaction and happiness.

Read this for.

1. Fosdick, p.45
2. Ibid., p. 45

According to Dr. Fosdick, every human being faces at least three kind of internal conflicts that, left unsolved, spoil tranquility and banish happiness. "For one thing, our desires and ambitions clash among themselves. **A** second set of conflicts arises from the collision between powerful urges in ourselves such as sex, pugnacity, and selfishness on one side, and on the other the possibilities and conventions of society. A third set of conflicts arises from the disproportion of our abilities to our ambitions."¹ These mental conflicts are a constant source of trouble. They darken our vision, rendering us unable to cope even with minor problems. If they are left unresolved the result is chaotic confusion, which tends to become worse as time goes on. Some people have actually committed suicide because they were unable to resolve the clash between their abilities and their ambitions. Others being incapable of adjusting themselves to the standards of society have given their lives to the vices, or still worse become hard-hearted criminals. All these conflicts point to one conclusion: the human being as a whole is a very complex organism, and must be dealt with with the utmost care. Its manifestations are very diverse and entirely confusing to the naïve person.

It must be said at this point that integration when it comes to our lives, means power, either for good or for bad. An integrated person may use this ^{power} in the direction that he pleases. It does not follow that an integrated person is necessarily good.

¹. Fosdick, p. 48

All we have to do is to cast a glance at the annals of history to check the veracity of this assertion. In the last few years we have had some examples of personalities unified around ethically low levels. Perhaps the most outstanding was Adolph Hitler. He was, indeed, ~~an~~ a potent personality with immense capacity for concentration. Nevertheless, he was unified around ethically sinister aims. Yet his integration meant power, and power that was capable of upsetting the whole world. The same criterion that holds true for Hitler holds also for Napoleon, Julius Caesar, and Alexander the Great. All of them were unified personalities, but what was behind their power was, in many instances, ethically rotten. It is obvious that we need to be aware of the dangers of integration on the one hand, and on the other, integration, if ever achieved on ethically admirable aims, is a blessing to humanity.

Another important factor to realize if we ever expect to make a unified entity of ourselves is that all integration is hierarchical.¹ One often gets the impression that great souls carry on a life of inner peace, poise, and serenity, thus suggesting a placid life with no conflicts to resolve. Experience tells us another story. Great souls are inwardly stormy seas. With more conflicting ideas, ambitions, feelings, and impulses than ordinary men possess, they are continually tortured by inevitable clashes.² They represent a river of turbulence, but like the solar spectrum, they blend into one powerful personality. In us, ordinary people, some of the same conflicts arise. Our interests are varied and pull us apart in all directions, with the resulting shattering effect,

¹. Fosdick, p.61

². Ibid., p. 61

The solution of this problem lies in the formulation of a scale of values. Some traits and purposes should be dominant over others. This, of course, is accomplished through great struggles. Dr. Fosdick puts it this way: "It (integration) involves a scale of values, with some supreme value, or complex of associated values, so organizing life that one gladly foregoes lesser aims, and resists contradictory enticements, rather than sacrifice life's chief aim and highest worth. Moreover, it entails not alone the resolving of conflicts, but, when that is impossible, the toleration of conflicts, the candid objective, sometimes ~~humorous~~ recognition of them, coupled with steady resolutuin to put first values first."¹

From what has been said about integration, it can be deduced that no institution, no teacher, no book, in other words, no outside influences in themselves can bring about integration. It is something that springs from within, and in that respect is a very personal matter. At the same time, it has a great social significance, for it can be said that personality molds society.

¹. Fosdick, pp. 61-62

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