

Integrity: Psychological, Moral, and Spiritual

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The structure of intrapersonal integrity can well be characterized as a form of “unity-in-diversity” within the human psyche or human soul. To illustrate this notion we will begin with Socrates in Plato’s *The Republic*, Book IV. Socrates explained that the human psyche, or soul, consists of three “parts”: the logical-rational (logiston), the spirited or affective (thymia), and the desiring or willing (epithymia). He argued that when these elements of the soul are in “friendly harmony”—when these three diverse abilities are unified—the soul is temperate and just. Thus we see that the integration of reason, affect, and desire, which are a form of psychological integrity, has a moral outcome. When these three functions are harmoniously united, we create the just soul, the temperate soul. In particular Socrates emphasized that harmony is created in the soul by the mutual and interacting respect of these three capabilities: reason respecting emotion and desire; emotion respecting reason and desire; and desire respecting emotion and reason. However, according to Plato, the form of integrity that produces moral outcomes requires that reason be allowed to rule emotion and desire. This is the most harmonious and just form of integrity. Socrates says that when reason rules but also respects the proper roles of emotion and desire, then the person will never commit sacrilege or theft nor treat others treacherously: “neither will he ever break faith where there have been oaths or agreements.” This is a classical definition of integrity.

Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Judgment*, also posits three irreducible faculties of the soul: knowledge, feeling and desire. Although Kant’s concept of the soul may be different than Socrates’ notion of the psyche or soul, and Kant’s description of the faculties of knowing, feeling, and desiring may be somewhat incongruent with Socrates’ logiston, thymia, and epithymia, nonetheless Kant bases his model on the structural relations of unity-in-diversity. In

the last section of the *Critique of Judgment*, “Of the Connexion of the Legislation of Understanding with that of Reason by Means of the Judgement,” Kant describes the integration of the three irreducible faculties of the soul, the abilities to know, feel and desire. He implies that the fully functioning human soul, the soul with integrity, has unified the soul’s most fundamental capacities.

Psychological Integrity: Knowing, Loving and Willing

In modern psychology, Ernest Hilgard, in his article entitled, “The Trilogy of Mind: Cognition, Affection, and Conation” argues that the trilogy of the mind, described by philosophers, lives on through psychology’s study of cognition (knowing), affect (feeling and emotions) and conation (will or desire). Despite behaviorism’s reign throughout much of the 20th century, in which the concepts of cognition and emotion were minimized, and conation (the will) was banished; and despite the current over-emphasis in the discipline of psychology upon “cognition,” many psychologists continue to frame the structure of the psyche in terms of these three capacities.

It is the integration of these three capacities that is a sign of the mature and well-developed human: unifying the diverse and irreducible human powers of knowing, emoting and willing is the best description of psychological integrity that I can offer. Perhaps the best known work on integrity in the field of psychology is Carl Rogers’ description of being “genuine,” or authentic, which are synonyms for integrity. Rogers emphasizes that genuineness is being emotionally congruent with one’s behavior—the way a person truly feels on the inside is represented in her behavior on the outside, and vice versa, the behaviors (verbal and motor) that a person performs are congruent, that is truly represent, the emotions that a person feels. Not as strongly emphasized in Roger’s work, but definitely present, is the integration of knowing and emoting.

The genuine person, the person with integrity, has the courage to look inward and examine, to know, what her true emotions are. And likewise, the person with integrity then wills her behavior to be congruent with this knowledge of her true feelings.

This, however, leaves open the question of whether it shows integrity to hurt others if your true feelings toward them is hatred. Although Rogers' approach does run the dangers of value relativism, one can also see that hatred is incongruent with Rogers' dictum of unconditional positive regard. Additionally, from my perspective, and that of most spiritual traditions, hatred is morally condemned. Nonetheless, the expression of an honest hatred does show a form of integrity that deceitful or hypocritical harboring of hatred does not. When a person harbors feelings and purposefully miscommunicates them, Rogers refers to this as a form of "incongruence" (non-genuineness) that shows "falseness or deceit" (p. 341 in *On Becoming a Person*). Although I abhor hatred, I recognize the integrity of people who are up-front with their desire to hurt, and morally admire them over those who give lip-service to love, but express their hatred hypocritically through deceitful means. As for the person who is genuine about his hatred, "We say of such a person that we know 'exactly where he stands'" (*ibid.*, p. 283). From a Rogerian viewpoint, one could frame this as recognizing that a person could have integrity (be genuine and congruent), but lack in positive unconditional regard for all persons.

Let us take an example. Although we seldom want to call love simply an emotion, love can be framed as the mother of all emotions: sadness is loss of the love object; anger is a response to unjust threat to the love object; fear is anticipated loss of the love object; happiness is reunion with, or anticipated union with, the love object; disgust is recognition of contamination of the love object, etc. Psychological integrity involves knowing what we love. This is a double entendre: first we have to look inward and examine ourselves to see what we truly love. Do we

love comfort? Do we love material objects? Do we love ourselves? Do we love the members of our inner circle? Do we love our enemies? Do we love all humanity? Do we love God?

Second, we need to know about the objects of our love. How deeply can we understand the members of our inner circle? How deeply can we know God? How deeply can we know our pleasures or our bodies? Love motivates us to will ourselves to ever deeper knowledge of the objects of our love. The greater our knowledge, the deeper our capacity to love. And “will” is omnipresent: whenever and whatever we *choose* to know is preceded by an act of will, and whenever and whomever and whatever we *choose* to love is preceded by an act of will. That which we love, we will to know ever better, and that which we choose to know, we learn to love more effectively.

This psychological integrity—the unifying of our capabilities of loving, knowing and willing—appears ‘naturally’ in the human being; it seems inherent in our design. Any clinician will recognize, however, that human psychological disorders involve ‘disordering’ of the integration of loving and willing and knowing. (See psychiatrist H. B. Danesh, *The Psychology of Spirituality*, for further explanation of the integration of knowing, willing and loving, and for clinical descriptions of disorders of knowledge, love and will.) For instance, if we over-emphasize the ability to know, at the expense of not integrating the ability to love with our knowledge, we become empty shells that place the law above the spirit. If we over-emphasize the ability to love, without integrating the moderating influence of knowledge, than we run the risk of passionate foolishness, or trying to love others, but doing it stupidly and ineffectively. If we do not integrate the power of the will with our abilities to love and to know, then we become stagnated and atrophied due to inaction and a lack of service to others. If we over-emphasize the power of the will, by minimizing the integration of love, we become tyrants. This recognition of

the possible breakdown in, and disordering of, psychological integrity, leads us from describing integrity to prescribing integrity – from psychology to ethics.

Moral and Spiritual Integrity

So far we have described a framework of understanding psychological integrity, but have not addressed moral integrity. Moral integrity is the type of integrity most often meant in everyday speech. The phrase, a woman or man of integrity, leaps to mind. In the English language this phrase evokes for us thoughts of a person who is honest, who is trustworthy, and who honors his or her promises, agreements, oaths, contracts, and covenants: A person true to her word. Persons of integrity integrate what they say with what they do. In particular we consider a person of moral integrity to be a person who has congruence between what he says he will do and what he actually does. Moral integrity is the opposite of hypocrisy.

Psychological integrity is necessary, but insufficient, for moral integrity. Psychological integrity requires the unification of knowing, loving, and willing; moral integrity involves the unification of knowing the good, loving the good, and willing the good. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (son of Bahá’u’lláh, and head of the Bahá’í Faith, 1892-1921) was asked about persons with this kind of moral integrity, who showed kindness to all creatures, cared for the poor, and worked toward universal peace, but believed neither in God nor in divine scripture. He explained that “such actions” “are praiseworthy and approved, and are the glory of humanity. But these actions alone are not sufficient; they are [like] a body of the greatest loveliness, but without spirit” (*Some Answered Questions*, p. 300). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá goes on to say that it is through the integration of knowing God, loving God, and a good-will that a human action becomes perfected and complete. Moral integrity, without knowing and loving God, is worthy of praise; but spiritual integrity,

which unites knowing God, loving God, and willing God's will, causes us to become a "whole" human being and to more perfectly reflect the image of God that is the structure of our soul.

Of course, believing in God is an act of faith, and those that do not believe in God will take exception to the claim that knowing and loving God is necessary in order to become a whole human being. Believers and unbelievers alike may well agree that knowing, loving and willing the good is a description of moral integrity; however, non-believers will find the concept of spiritual integrity somewhat meaningless in framing the wholeness of human being.

Reason: What, then, do you want to know?

Augustine: The very things for which I have prayed.

Reason: Summarize them concisely.

Augustine: I want to know God and the soul.

Reason: Nothing else?

Augustine: Nothing else at all (St Augustine, *Soliloquia*).

Spiritual integrity relates to the purpose of this magazine, *Human Development*, as found in the words of Executive Editor, Linda D. Amadeo in her last sentence of "Invitation to Authors," "human beings can become what we are created to be: persons being made whole in the image and likeness of God."

My own summary of the scriptures of the Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Bahá'í Faiths, in the context of individual integrity, recognizes that God has made a covenant with us: if we strive to know God and the good, and to love God and the good, and to will God's will, and to integrate these three human powers in our minds, hearts and behavior, then we will become whole in the image and likeness of God.

Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty (Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1963, p. 4).

Systemic Integrity

Both individuals and institutions may be ascribed integrity. So far we have only addressed individual integrity, but the integrity of institutions and systems is relevant to human development as well. In the Socratic sense, institutions (such as a city) mirror the conditions of the individuals that comprise them. For a city to be ruled by justice, the individual souls that comprise the city must also be intrapersonally just. Thus we can speak of a city as having integrity, although that sounds a bit odd to my ears. But other institutions, especially businesses and religious denominations can have more or less integrity. YYZ Corporation has integrity; we can do business with them without our conscience suffering. This Church has integrity. When we refer to a church or a business as having integrity, we mean that it is not corrupt, it is not contaminated, it is pure. In terms of our leitmotif of *unity-in-diversity*, an institution with integrity is one that has united diverse peoples and diverse concepts and diverse rules/principles; and there is no dis-unifying dissent within the institution (disagreement among members, in the sense of a clash of differing opinions is not dis-unifying dissent, as long as the members follow the consultative path, do not *insist* on their own viewpoints, and bow humbly to majority decisions). And, as in the individual, the institution that has integrity is known for actualizing its ideals. That is, the institution as a whole serves the goals that it preaches. It consistently does what its spokespersons say it will do.

Integrity is as much a process as it is an end-state, and thus, like individuals, institutions have relatively more or less integrity. Just as we idiomatically say “no one is perfect,” and all of us are sinners to some degree, so it is with institutions. No institution, or institutional structures, created by humans will have perfect integrity. And there will always be a dialectical (bi-directional) relationship between the degree of moral integrity of the individuals and the degree of moral integrity of the institution—the individuals and the institution will influence each others’ development of integrity, for better or worse.

Positive Psychology and Integrity

The current Positive Psychology movement in the field of psychology emphasizes three pillars: subjective well-being or happiness, individual traits or character strengths, and positive institutions. Although little attention has been paid to studying positive institutions in the recently emerging positive psychology literature, the movement assumes that individuals’ character strengths influence the integrity of institutions to which they belong, and the level of the integrity of institutions influence the development of individual’s character strengths, including intrapersonal integrity.

The Positive Psychology movement has produced a handbook of classification of character strengths and virtues, which the authors, Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman, refer to as a ‘manual of the sanities’ to contrast it with DSM-IV, the manual that psychologists and psychiatrists use to classify mental disorders. They have identified six major virtues (knowledge/wisdom, courage, justice, humanity/love, temperance, transcendence), which they describe as cross-cultural, emphasized in Eastern and Western philosophies and highlighted in the world’s religions; within these six virtues they have identified three to five “character strengths” that represent a particular virtue. They consider the virtue of Courage to be the mother

of integrity, and its principal components are authenticity and honesty. Positive psychologists Kennon Sheldon, Lucy Davidson, and Elizabeth Powell define integrity as capturing “a character trait in which people are true to themselves, accurately representing—privately and publicly—their internal states, intentions, and commitments. Such persons accept and take responsibility for their feelings and behaviors, owning them, as it were, and reaping substantial benefits by so doing” (pp. 249-250). They go on to specific behavioral criteria for integrity: a) a behavior pattern congruent with espoused values, b) willing to publicly justify moral convictions, even in the face of opposition, and c) caring for others, especially those in need. Sheldon *et al.* note that honesty connotes “factual truthfulness and interpersonal sincerity;” authenticity concerns “emotional genuineness” and “psychological depth;” and that “integrity refers to moral probity and self-unity” (p. 250).

A major tenet of positive psychology is that the virtue-derived character strengths lead to happiness, or what is typically called *subjective well being* in the research literature. In reviewing the correlates of integrity found in empirical studies Sheldon *et al.* found that measures of integrity predict greater life satisfaction, higher empathy, self-actualization, positive mood states, openness to experience, better interpersonal relationships, and the trait of conscientiousness. Although one hopes we are motivated to greater levels of integrity and authenticity for altruistic purposes, there are clearly strong psychological rewards for developing and maintaining one’s integrity. In terms of institutional integrity, Sheldon *et al.* refer to studies that show positive correlations between educational administrators’ levels of integrity and teachers trust in the educational institution. Likewise, in the business world, the more authentic workers perceive their managers to be, the more effective are the workplace relationships between managers and workers. Chris Peterson, in his *A Primer in Positive Psychology* (New York: Oxford University

Press, 2006) summarizes integrity in institutions, without specifically mentioning the word integrity, thus:

Besides being culturally congruent with their workers, good workplaces are characterized by certain institution-level virtues. Excellent work organizations have an articulated moral goal or vision that can be embraced by workers and customers alike. This vision must guide the actual conduct within the organization. Slogans and logos provide clues about the vision of a work organization, but it is our observation of day-to-day practices that provides the real proof of their existence...excellent work organizations follow through on commitments—to workers and to customers. Promises and contracts, even implied ones, are honored. Said another way, in a good workplace, the spirit of the law trumps the letter of the law (p. 289).

In summary, the Positive Psychology movement shows empirical evidence that institutions with integrity correlate with individuals of integrity; and intrapersonal integrity, as a character strength, correlates with subjective well being.

Trustworthiness

“O LORD of hosts, happy are those who trust in you!” (Psalm 84:13)

“Put your whole trust and confidence in God, Who hath created you, and seek ye His help in all your affairs” (Bahá’u’lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1983, p. 251).

We are created in the image of God, and integrity is a spiritual virtue, therefore surely God is a Being of integrity as well. God may be viewed as unifying all the diverse divine virtues in a perfect integration. Integrations are dynamic and hierarchical. We know that when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, he referred to the virtue of agapic love, and he put love

‘objects’ in hierarchical order: first love God; second, love your fellow humans. Paul also set up a hierarchy in his famous statement: “So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians, 13:13). Therefore it seems reasonable to assume love is a foundation for integrity. Love becomes the spiritual motivation ever to strive to become a being of greater and greater integrity; and integrity becomes a mode of existence that is a medium for effective expression of our love to others.

The most salient manner in which integrity expresses our love for others is through trustworthiness. As mentioned above, when we imagine a person or institution with integrity, one of the first concrete examples that come to mind is that of keeping promises, of maintaining our covenants, and of nobly and honorably caring for any trust we are responsible to safeguard. “The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones” (Luke 16:10). “O people! The goodliest vesture in the sight of God in this day is trustworthiness. All bounty and honour shall be the portion of the soul that arrayeth itself with this greatest of adornments” (Bahá’u’lláh. *Trustworthiness. A Compilation of Extracts from the Bahá’í Writings*. London: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, p.1, 1987).

As God has perfect integrity, God is completely trustworthy. As both a personal God, that cares about each and every one of us, and as the God Who is the Maker of Covenants with all humankind, we cannot err in putting our whole trust and confidence in our Creator. Trusting has important implications for a mood disorder that disrupts intrapersonal human development across our world: anxiety. In terms of cognitive and emotional development, thoughts and feelings of trust cannot co-exist at the same time in our heart and mind with thoughts and feelings of anxiety. In our prayers and meditations, as we focus on God’s trustworthiness, and

our trust in the Belovéd, anxiety disappears. Likewise with our acts of service: when we serve others out of agapic love (self-less love, *caritas*), and with trust that God will guide our path, anxiety is minimized.

Among the greatest of trusts that God has given us humans is the safeguarding and development of our souls. We believe that our soul is created in the image of God, and thus all the divine attributes, such as love, trustworthiness, mercy, forgiveness, beauty, perfection, justice, etc., lie within our soul as potentialities awaiting their development, expression and integration.

“O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983, p. 196).

Therefore, the person of spiritual integrity knows God by gaining intimate knowledge of the attributes of God that are the reality of his soul. “[I]n thine inward being thou revealest the hidden mysteries which are the divine trust deposited within thee” (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991 p. 27.). The person of integrity loves the beauty of the divine attributes deposited in her soul (viz. Diessner, *Psyche and Eros*, ch. 8). The person of integrity wills the development of the divine attributes which are the image of God in her soul. And, finally, the person of spiritual integrity integrates their knowledge, love and will in service to God and service to all humanity.

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“Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. *Let integrity* and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower

of strength for the fugitive” (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983, p. 285; italics added).”

Recommended Reading

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions* (L. Clifford Barney, Trans.). Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981; especially section 84, "The Necessity of Following the Teachings of the Divine Manifestations, pp. 300-305.
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