

# The Human and Transpersonal Dimensions of Personality

By Samuel Bendeck Sotillos

[T]he Personality, or pure Spirit, is in no way subject to individual personality, which is but its reflection, or to the conditions that determine the self. Even in its relations with the self, the Personality remains unaffected by any individual modifications, which are wholly contingent and not exigent to the Personality, inasmuch as they all precede form divine essence, as from a single seed.<sup>1</sup>

(Meister Eckhart)

Out of this myriad mosaic of [the perennial philosophy] emerges a pattern of the human personality in the cosmos that is unerringly consistent, clear, and struck through with a resonance infallible in its ever renewed reverberations of the one same Reality.<sup>2</sup>

(Whitall N. Perry)

The state of optimal [integral] personality growth [of the perennial psychology], regardless of time, place, and the degree of culture, shares the same characteristics. All people have adopted the same goal of experiencing final integration [in the Divine], and moreover, the methods they use are similar [spiritual practice]. The name makes no difference; it is the experience which is the same. Under this assumption, the concepts of East and West...vanish and have no validity in the mature state.<sup>3</sup>

(A. Reza Arasteh)

**M**odern, and by extension postmodern psychology, endeavors to address human identity by creating voluminous and elaborate

<sup>1</sup> C.F. Kelley paraphrasing Meister Eckhart, "The Primal Distinction," in C.F. Kelley, *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge* (Cobb, CA: DharmaCafé Books, 2009), p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Whitall N. Perry (ed.), "Introduction," to *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> A. Reza Arasteh, "Preface to the Second Edition," in *Toward Final Personality Integration* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), p. xiii; see also Joshua J. Knabb and Robert K. Welsh, "Reconsidering A. Reza Arasteh: Sufism and Psychotherapy," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2009), pp. 44-60.

clinical theories, psychometrics and other tests of personality to determine who we are, losing sight of the fullness of what constitutes human identity, and of the personality which lies beyond its relative and pathological modes.<sup>4</sup> To date—setting aside all claims—contemporary psychology has been incapable of establishing “the unity of the personality”<sup>5</sup>. A profound recognition of this dire situation is stated as follows: “The deep split in our personality...is the outstanding characteristic of our time.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Integral Human Identity is both the Drop and the Ocean**

Modern and postmodern psychology has attempted to frame the discourse about the search for human identity in terms beyond pathology or human sickness. Allusions about “...the fundamental unity of that ocean of which individual personalities are droplets...”<sup>7</sup> bear testimony to the further reaches of contemporary psychology and its possibilities beyond its present limited scope. The Sufi mystic, Rumi, frames the completion and the unique gift of human identity in relation to the Supreme Identity when he writes, “You see yourself as the drop in the ocean, but you are also the ocean in the drop.”<sup>8</sup> In the world of non-duality there is no separation, and therefore no drop and no ocean, because the drop and the ocean derive from one and the same Source and cannot be divided. In the world of duality, this same scenario is perceived as a paradox because according to the point of view held by dualism, one cannot occupy two distinct states simultaneously. What is

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<sup>4</sup> See Julius Seeman, “Toward a Concept of Personality Integration,” *American Psychologist*, Vol. 14, No. 10 (October 1959), pp. 633-637.

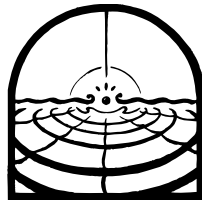
<sup>5</sup> Alfred Adler, “The Fictional Final Goal,” in *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*, eds. Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 94-96. “[T]he personality as a whole” (Wilhelm Reich, “The Economic Viewpoint in the Theory of Analytic Therapy,” in *Character Analysis*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno, eds. Mary Higgins and Chester M. Raphael [New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990], p. 10).

<sup>6</sup> Frederick S. Perls, “Theory and Technique of Personality Integration,” *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (October 1948), p. 567.

<sup>7</sup> Gardner Murphy, “The Skeptical Psychologist,” in *Personality: A Biosocial Approach to Origins and Structure* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1966), p. 919.

<sup>8</sup> Rūmī, quoted in Mark Perry, *The Mystery of Individuality: Grandeur and Delusion of the Human Condition* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2012), p. 105.

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