

Trumpeter (1991)

ISSN: 0832-6193

The Harmonious Person

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Trumpeter

Introduction

Education in the West has long emphasized development of the intellect as its primary, sometimes its sole, concern. As a result, "we de-emphasize and even devalue the arational, non-verbal modes of consciousness. Education consists predominantly of "'readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic'," and we are taught precious little about our emotions, our bodies, our intuitive capacities." (Ornstein 1972, p. 10) Some of the imbalance has been redressed with stress on sex education, outdoor activities and explorations, and various sensitivity and affectivity programmes in schools, not to mention religious studies (which remains a loaded issue). Still, it remains unclear for many just exactly how this "ties in" with the intellectual training which continues to be the school's major concern. It is even more unclear what other "arational," or non-rational modes of consciousness are being pointed to. What are the various aspects of the person which are to be isolated, encouraged, and then reassembled in the harmonious expression of individuality? The question is ancient as well as modern, and concerns discovering the nature of the self. Socrates warns in the *Apology* that the unexamined (un-self-criticized) life is not worth living, and his critical examination of the self is made a religious duty as a result of his acceptance of the advice given by the Delphic oracle, "Know thyself!". In the *Republic* Plato provides one of his most developed accounts of this "self" which education is supposed to bring you to know: the self (psyche "soul" in Plato's terms) has three parts; the rational, the spirited or feeling, and the appetitive or passionate. And while this tripartite analysis was probably never meant to be exhaustive of the functions of the self, it is a broad account of its chief functions. (Grube, 1964, p. 135) Plato continually reminds you that these three parts are not to be groomed in isolation, but must be viewed and treated as a unity and harmony of distinctions within the balanced and complex whole of personhood. As educator, then, you are responsible not only for developing the isolatable parts of the self, but also for assisting with the harmonious integration of these parts in a balanced personality. No doubt this helps to explain why Plato was so sure that to know the good was to do the good, for this is guaranteed if you assume that your "real" knowing (as a balanced and integrated individual) includes passionate zeal for putting what you know into action, and deep feelings to initiate and maintain that passion. Knowledge by conviction is more than intellectual knowing alone. A healthy, "together" person does not simply "know" in the abstract, but knows with feeling and will; the healthier the person, the more intense the feeling, the firmer the will. All three dimensions must be alive and well, and pulling together in harmonious clarity provided by the leadership of reason.

Integration

The harmony and integration of the self is habitually forgotten in modern education in part because it is seldom emphasized that there are distinct "parts" requiring *differing* nurture. Plato's three parts of the soul are perhaps easier to think of as (1) knowing, (2) feeling, and (3) willing. These chief divisions of consciousness, with (4) the integration and harmony of these constituting the *character* of the individual, each of them could be divided yet again, so that will-power, ego-strength, the capacity to self-start, and to persevere might all be included in an analysis of, for example, willing. Additionally, there

are the less accepted, yet quite common claims for addition or altered states and functions of consciousness which might be considered, including meditation in its various forms, the mystical vision, and the oriental states of enlightenment such as *satori*, or the realization of *nirvana*. Finally, there is the need to take into account the foundational input which comes to you through the senses themselves. Just as you can educate your intellect, and stiffen your will, so you can attend to your sense organs in order to refine your awareness of them, and to make them more or less sensitive to the stimuli which continually impinge on them. The Scottish philosopher John McMurray once wrote that "The education of our emotional life is primarily an education of our sensibility", (McMurray, 1935, p. 37), and added that it is "an aspect of our experience which is too much overlooked." He defines "sensuality (for him the goal of training in the sense realm) as "the capacity to enjoy organic experience, to enjoy the satisfaction of the senses." (McMurray, p. 38) He is not unaware of the puritanism which, for so much of the modern era, has warned that pleasure or enjoyment is religiously evil and morally bad: "... there lies behind us a long tradition which would persuade us that this capacity is undesirable, and should be eliminated altogether." We have all too often undertaken through education to suppress our sensuality. On the side of feeling in education, it must be recognized that "The first stage in any education of the emotional life must be the reversal of this attitude. We have to start by recognizing and insisting that the life of the senses is inherently good..." (McMurray, p. 39) Indeed, the senses are the "gateways of our awareness," and without the input gained through them we would be locked within our own minds. If you are concerned with the fullness and richness of life, then in considerable measure it results from "the delicacy and quality of our sense-life." (McMurray, p. 40) The development of meaning and joy in life appears to rely heavily on our awareness of the world, and our capacity to see what we have overlooked before, to see what we have seen before in a new way, and to respond to both with an attitude of being-totally-there in the moment.

The Point of View of Zen

On this point we may benefit from an understanding of Zen Buddhism which recommends that we lose ourselves in the richness of the moment, and become the raindrop, or the flower, or the gnarled pine which we see, touch, smell and even hear before us. The claim that you should "become" a tree or a flower may appear to be illogical, or impossible except as a metaphor of the same intention as comparing your love to a red, red rose. Such comparisons are not to be taken literally, but as a kind of poetic licence which expresses your intensity of feeling. But something very different happens on the Japanese account, and on McMurray's account as well. First of all, as an artist you may exemplify the sensuality of becoming, for you do not attend to the human body, or the landscape before you, as a means to an end, i.e. extrinsically. You attend to it "for the sake of the awareness itself, (McMurray, p. 41), for its own sake, i.e. intrinsically. You lose yourself in the richness of the experience of the object which you likely appreciate in a fuller way, or in a different way from most people. You probably got that way by looking at things for the joy of seeing them, as the musician and the student of bird song likely choose their vocation because of their love of music and song. McMurray is worth quoting at length on this "intrinsic" sense of sensual awareness:

Sensitive awareness becomes then a life in itself with an intrinsic value of its own which we maintain and develop for its own sake, because it is a way of living, perhaps the very essence of all living. When we use our senses in this way we come alive in them, as it were, and this opens up a whole new world of possibility. We see and hear and feel things that we never noticed before, and find ourselves living in our senses for love's sake, because the essence of love lies in this. When you love anyone you want above all things to be aware of him, more and more completely and delicately. You want to see him and hear him, not because you want to make use of him but simply because that is the natural and only way of taking delight in his existence for his sake. That is the way of love, and it is the only way of being alive. Life, when it is really lived, consists in this glad

awareness. Living through the senses is living in love. When you love anything, you want to fill your consciousness with it. (McMurray, p. 42)

And in filling your whole consciousness with it, there is, at least for the moment, nothing else of which you are aware - not even your own breathing. Your whole consciousness is the tree, your loved one, and the only you that is left is the consciousness of the loved one or the tree. You have become that of which you are aware, by which you are filled. You are totally absorbed in such consciousness, abandoning the standoffish attempt to be "objective" about what is before you. To make the contrast, McMurray describes a drawing by George Morrow which has a couple watching a sunset. The woman remarks that the sunset is lovely, but the husband, who is not really absorbed by what is before him, for his mind is elsewhere, adds, "That reminds me.... Do remember to tell our landlady that I like my bacon streaky." (McMurray, pp. 43-44)

Becoming One With Something

Whereas we in the West speculate about what might be meant by an artist or anyone else becoming one with his object by the power of absorption and concentration, the East has long practised this capacity and made it an integral part of their cultural training. The Japanese are widely known for their good taste in things aesthetic, and the subtlety of their sensual discernment is often noted. The philosophical underpinning for this cultural capacity is provided by Zen Buddhism. Zen requires that you learn to let go of your ego, and then to forget all of your assumptions about the object being "out there" and separate from yourself. Instead, make yourself open to the fullness of the experience itself. Be fully open, i.e., lose yourself in the experience such that it is no longer "your experience," nor is it an experience of "that" tree. Instead, all that is left is the experience itself, the givenness of treeness. You lose your ego-boundaries by your reaching out and embracing the tree, and then by your concentrating your awareness on the tree as embraced, exclusive of all else. Consider the following account:

The painter sits in quiet contemplation, intensely concentrating his mind upon the ideal image of the bamboo. He begins to feel in himself the rhythmic pulsebeat of the life energy which keeps the bamboo alive and which makes the bamboo a bamboo, becoming gradually concordant with the pulsebeat of the life-energy which is running through his mind-body complex. And finally there comes a moment of complete unification, at which there remains no distinction whatsoever between the life-energy of the painter and the life-energy of the bamboo. Then there is no longer any trace in the consciousness of the painter of himself as an individual self-subsistent person. There is actualized only the Bamboo. Where is it actualized? Internally? Or externally? No one knows. It does not matter. For the word 'becoming' in the particular context here at issue concerns a state of contemplative awareness having in itself no ontological implication.

There is absolutely no 'consciousness of' anything whatsoever. The sole fact is that the Bamboo is there, actualized with an unusual vivacity and freshness, pulsating with a mysterious life-energy pervading the whole universe. At that very moment the painter takes up the brush. The brush moves, as it were, of its own accord, in conformity with the pulsation of the life-rhythm which is actualized in the bamboo. (Izutsu, 1977, p. 80)

The same phenomenon of total absorption and complete identification is regularly expressed through the martial arts. You may have read of, and might be able to imagine yourself to be, a samurai swordsman, who, by learning to focus your mind and energy on the circumstances of the encounter, is no longer separated from his sword. Spontaneously, the sword seems to block a thrust, and without any thinking, your body and the sword together thrust home the decisive blow. You do not think or worry about whether you are as good as your opponent, or about the positioning of your feet, or about your children and wife at home, or about the lessons given by your master. You are totally in the battle, and for the moment this is your whole world. The Japanese samurai is

a lethal living weapon precisely because in the moment that is all he is. He is totally there. For purposes of educational theory, it does not matter whether it is morally justified that there be samurai, for the point in question is whether Western culture sufficiently emphasizes the development of the capacity to be completely absorbed in the experiences of living. If you were a samurai, haiku poet, brush painter, potter, musician, or sports figure in Japan, you would be taught from the beginning to apply yourself to the art of single-minded concentration on the experience of the moment. Even now in Japan it would not be an unusual activity for you to sit for an afternoon gazing at a particularly beautiful pine tree. In fact, the sort of concentrated sitting which requires that you become single-minded, and eventually "no-minded" with respect to what is before you, and even with respect to yourself, is regularly a part of basic art training. Learning requires that you be still, and stillness includes the capacity to embrace totallù whatever is before you in experience.

An important aspect of that which is given in direct experience is its immediacy. Ordinary cognitive activities are heavily mediated by language, by concepts, by expectations and habits, by stereotypes and the imposition of order and regularity such that exceptions are not even seen. Often, when you look at a pine tree, the word "pine tree" comes to mind at least in the background of consciousness. You are helped to see the tree by being at least half aware of what the concept pine tree stands for and includes. You may only glance quickly at the tree, for you expect that you will see what you have seen so many times before, and may even mis-see what is there because you anticipate that it will have the features common to your other encounters with pine trees. To concentrate on your concept of the tree, or to allow your expectations to blind you to what is before you, or simply to glance at it out of lack of interest, is to "mistake the finger for the moon," as the old Zen story has it. The moon is above you not nearby, but to point it out to someone you point with your finger. If it is not clear what you are doing, your onlooker may think you are asking him to look at your finger, and so he assumes that the moon you are telling him about is your finger. Similarly, verbal and symbolic expression is but a pointer, a finger pointing at the experiences themselves. To see what we call a pine tree is not to focus attention on the words, the concept, or even the expectations, but rather on the experience before us. Ideally, you still your mind, including your assumptions and expectations, your pigeon-holing and conceptualization, until you become mirror-like. A mirror is still, like a lake without ripples, better able to reflect what is given without the same degree of distortion. By getting back to the experience itself, you have stilled the mind and made it more capable of seeing or of reflecting what is there in experience. Only the tree remains, with the activities and expectations of the ego stilled and made calm. The tree occupies the entire conscious world of the individual; it is an object of concentration. To this point it is still the consciousness of the tree in your experience. The Zen Buddhist would go still further, to the disappearance of the last trace of your ego-consciousness, so that tree-consciousness alone would exist. For our purposes this is a necessary step, for what is being emphasized is a state of consciousness which is able to drink afresh and completely from the flowing source of sense-experience. A common saying in Zen is that a true Zen Master receives a student each day as though for the first time. He does not assume that this fellow will never learn, or that he will be making progress today because he always has before. A good teacher tries to leave expectations and assumptions about the past nature of a student behind him in order to be open to new and possibly contradictory insights about the student and his or her needs and attributes. Change and not constancy alone, is taken as a fundamental characteristic of the world, and of human beings. Fixity is as much a distortion of the ideal as is utterly chaotic flux.

Interiority

A "self" with an interior has consciousness which is self-conscious, and which constantly strives to distinguish external appraisal from internal, membership in a group from the totality of characteristics which constitute the person, and the externally accepted view

from the internally acceptable view. Indeed, the procedure for developing this capacity for intrinsic valuation is the enriching of your awareness of your own interiority, i.e. of your own self-consciousness. And it is no small irony that in thus concentrating on the study of the self, the result is to be able to begin to lose it. "To study the self is to forget the self," advised the Zen Master, Dogen, nearly a thousand years ago. To become conscious of yourself, you can choose and define your own ends, purposes, goals, and essential character. As such, you can become increasingly aware of the extent to which these ends, and your choice of character are suitable, acceptable and sufficient. You may also decide the extent to which you actually live up to, or embody these aims and ideals. Neurosis is often the repressing of the fact that your actual and ideal goals are "out of sync." Such a neurosis is a healthy sign, valuationally, for it makes it obvious that you are at least sensitive to higher things. The problem may in fact result from your being far more sensitive than most, but unable to allow time for growth or for human finitude. Insensitivity to intrinsic value may be seen in your identifying with the goals of others in a passive and unthinking way, or with the charter or creed of an institution or nation, or in your otherwise living by "remote control"/habit/rote/laws and rules uncritically parroting/peer pressure/pursuit of the rewards of society as though they contained any of the seeds of interior growth. None of this is to say that if you follow rules, obey the laws of the land, or wish to be recognized by your society as a major contributor, you are thereby not "intrinsic." It all depends, as the Existentialists have stressed from their beginning, on how you come to act in any of these ways. If you choose self-consciously to abide by the laws of the land, and identify with the aims and objectives for which they were instituted, then you are authentic, and possess a high degree of interiority. It is not that non-intrinsic valuers squint at the interior self but do not see it clearly, but that they are looking the wrong direction altogether. In a word, they have not yet discovered their own interior, or they repress what knowledge of the self they do have because of the cognitive and emotional dissonance created by the discrepancy between who they ought to be, and who they actually are; between what their country is doing, and what they claim or wish it was doing; between what their reputation or position seems to say about them, and what they really see themselves as being like. The interior is sacrificed in order to preserve the external semblance, which is supposedly a reflection of their true inner being.

This interiority of self-consciousness, of existential subjectivity, is more a way of being-in-the-world than the growth of a faculty or organ. To try to objectify it, or even to freeze it conceptually or descriptively is already to lose it; is to be looking in the wrong direction. Hence, what is caught is never what did the catching, and what does the catching is what you wanted to catch and missed, not what you actually caught. All attempts to ensnare it fail, for the very reason that all such attempts are made by the very thing to be ensnared. If you would concentrate on the power and process of ensnarement itself, then you would be as close to it as you can come objectively. You already have it subjectively, of course, if you but look within. The interiority of self-consciousness is the self, and while you can never objectify it, you can become aware of your interiority continually through your own activity of reflection. It is that which cannot itself be seen by itself, and yet which does all seeing, and makes all seeing possible. It is like your own eye, which (except in a mirror) can see everything but itself. It is beyond all description and objectification, and yet makes all describing and objectifying possible. It is not a measurable, objectifiable self, but not because it does not exist, or, like claims of fairies and unicorns, must simply be believed in. It is the most "empirical" of facts, if you allow direct experience to count as empirical. Can you catch your self trying to catch yourself, trying to catch your self.... All of this takes place in direct self-consciousness, in direct experience. It is not a mere belief. And this power of reflexivity, i.e. of casting your attention back on what you are conscious of, and on your means of consciousness, is also the power of critical reflection and self appraisal and awareness. Your habits, prejudices, beliefs, hopes, projects, loves, sexual fantasies, human heartedness, fears, discomforts, and pains and pleasures may all be looked at directly by focusing within.

Transparency and Opaqueness

The late Robert S. Hartman termed this reflexive capacity the "transcendental Self":

Now everybody has a Self, but not in the same degree. In other words, the awareness of self force can be very opaque, and that is the case when the empirical self is confused with the transcendental Self. And this is what the positivists do. They are very opaque selves. And the Self can develop, differentiate itself, articulate itself to complete transparency. If one has a very transparent self, then one has peculiar experiences such as what people call telepathy. But it is not really telepathy, because you are not away from anything, that is really closepathy, you see. You are really close up to everything. And to others - you have immediate 'intuition,' you have greater sensitivity, and so on. (Hartman & Carter, p. 62)

To be unaware of a value dimension is to be "opaque," in this respect. The more aware you become, the less opaque and the more transparent you are. Hence, the measure of your capacity to value intrinsically is your degree of opacity, or transparency of self by means of which you are enabled to empathize or interpenetrate with all that comes to you, including your awareness of the nature of your own way of life, character, and fulfillment of chosen projects. If you are intrinsically aware, you are "as large as the whole universe. Man is as large as the whole universe, because he is defined by the range of his consciousness." (Hartman & Carter, pp. 66-67) And insofar as you continue to transcend any and all previous views, even of yourself, you continue to transcend your "range of consciousness." "In other words, even the most transparent consciousness still has infinite depth, of further transparency. That is the measure." (Hartman & Carter, p. 67) The transcendental self is the capacity for reaching out to embrace, and for taking into itself what it is aware of. This capacity to embrace, to empathize, to love is measured by the degree of transparency achieved. Transparency is the awareness of your own conscious self in terms of its reflective capacity to evaluate itself, and to determine itself, thereby allowing it to become free from its own determinations in order to be able to reach out and embrace another in total concentration and caring for that something as it is in itself, and apart for all other considerations. Greatness of character is measured by the extent, and by the nature of your concern.

Transparency begins with the pure awareness that you are, .1. and is typified by the capacity for the total abandoning of self, and all other extrinsic considerations, in the act of intrinsic valuation. To focus on a raindrop on an autumn leaf is to allow the raindrop to fill your full field of consciousness. You don't ask questions about what raindrops are made of, or about why a raindrop is a raindrop. You are totally and completely aware of the raindrop as a raindrop. You see as though for the first time, and with the same concentration and appreciation of mystery which occasions any engrossing and remarkable first time experience. As a result of this "whole world" concentration (at its height both totally selfless and objectless in that only the experience itself is attended to) you are wide open to the fullness of experiential immediacy given in the now. You approach this whenever you can concentrate on a task, a person, or an object. The immediacy and total filling of consciousness by whatever is there in front "makes a person feel very deeply." There are no distractions, no negative emotions to cloud your transparency, no fears or bad memories, ambitions, hopes - there is just being-here-now. It is the freedom to be able to put your self totally into anything, to take anything into your self as ultimately concerning, to become a tree, a raindrop, or another person (in another's shoes).

Compassion

Hartman contends that "compassion is one of the properties of a transparent person, for if you are transparent, you live with, indeed you live or exist as every other thing, living or non-living. You are St. Francis' "Brother Fire," Schweitzer's "Brother Africans," the "living rocks" of a Zen stone garden, and the universe of "Living God" of the mystics.

Universality of empathy, or affinity, or concern is a characteristic of the transparent you. "You can actually gauge a person's transparency of consciousness by his compassion." (Hartman & Carter, p. 73)

If you are not particularly sensitive to intrinsic values, i.e. are opaque, then you need crude, or blunted, or extreme stimulation in order to feel anything at all. You would be aware enough of interiority to know that you craved such experiences involving the entire self, but would be nearly intrinsic-value blind, and so would have to be drenched before sensing rain. As an opaque character, you often identify with disorder, distortion and destruction simply because only by the extremes which these terms imply can an intrinsic (dis)value experience be bold and powerful enough to get through. You can identify with intrinsic disvalue in just the same intense ways that you identify with intrinsic value. Hartman's heart-rending example of the Nazi Irma Greese, who tied the legs of women in labour together, is a poignant example of such intrinsic dis-valuation. Irma Greese used life to kill life, and we are told of the sadistic pleasure she took in the screams of agony which served as indicators that what she wished to achieve was occurring. She was perhaps unable to identify with another human being deeply enough to give her moments of transparency and total concentration. She may never have thought twice about a raindrop, completely insensitive to its uniqueness and mystery. But she could presumably get "high" on the agony of others, particularly other women with whom she could identify, but only identify with in the act of torture and murder. It is likely that she knew the characteristics of the sort of experience she craved, but could only find them in acts of extraordinary cruelty and savagery. It is not clear that early training in sensuality, a la John McMurray, or in Kohlberg's putting yourself in another's shoes through imaginary situations would ever turn an Irma Greese into a normal person able to gain satisfaction from non-destructive and appreciative acts. It is less doubtful, however, that part of the task of civilizing and educating is to assist the young in being able to appreciate and become increasingly sensitive to the people around them, the world around them, and their own intrinsic goodness or unique positive capabilities. The opaque character is like a blind person who wants to see something, but nothing gets through. "So, you give him the greatest nuclear explosion possible, and maybe he sees something then." (Carter & Hartman, p. 79) If you were a valuational dullard, particularly at the level of intrinsic value, you would be nearly totally insensitive, living only for yourself, lacking badly in compassion, and requiring heavy, chaotic, and loud stimulation. You would become a success at all costs, but still remain unsatisfied. You could enjoy a film in which thousands of people are killed, or burned, for fewer killings would leave you bored and unmoved. Perhaps you might eventually shoot a famous figure, but still you would be nobody. But the little Zen Master is what he is. He accepts that, cherishes that, then gives up even the cherishing, and just fully engages in the experiences of life. He is stimulated to ecstasy by a single drop of dew, or a reflection of the moon in a puddle, or by a cricket in the night. "The more transparency, the more intensity of experience" is possible. (Hartman & Carter, p. 88) This is axiomatic, for it is your whole world, and one which fully engages your whole being, physically, emotionally, intellectually, volitionally. *An aim of education is the development of the capacity for intrinsic valuation, the attempt to create an intrinsically responsive human 'instrument.'* And whereas the opaque consciousness implodes, withers and shrinks until the ego becomes the whole world, and nothing else is of interest in itself, except insofar as it stimulates your ego pleasures and satisfies your ego needs, the transparent consciousness explodes, until the ego embraces the universe, then loses itself and finds that even little things afford one the possibility of infinite appreciation. Everything becomes aesthetically sacred, and religiously worthwhile for its own sake, as a centre of intrinsic value. Even the tiniest experience may be the trigger for a giant explosion in the self - and thus in one's Cosmos. The intentional crushing of an ant may reveal as much insensitivity as the beating of a child, and may occasion intense sorrow if you observe it. Perhaps it is because you have become such an intense instrument of sensitivity and identification with people, growing things and things, that you may become a defender of morality, human worth, and the right of all things to be left alone, unless there is an overwhelming reason to the contrary.

Conclusion

It is through one's habits of looking at others and the world that one's character, or basic attitudes come to exist. The way one looks at one-self, others and the world determines how one interacts and acts. If the intrinsic valuation of the person is taken to be the norm, or most basic valuational stance, then it is imperative that a teacher, psychotherapist, social worker, unemployment officer, or correctional official have the courage and capacity to, *at least in part*, greet a client each time as though for the first time, and as a locus of worth. Hard, and disappointing as it may be, the allowing for the possibility of a "breakthrough" must be ever-present, even though the breakthrough never comes. It may never come because you and I give up, and so the unspoken prophecy of habit is a self-fulfilling one. The capacity to be "open" to experience and interaction may be an important measure of both intellectual acumen and affective capacity and honesty. But it is precisely this capacity that we have become so adept at blocking out, or systematizing out of existence. That a person does not fit the norm of the average, or the healthy, may be the nicest thing that you could say about him. Indeed, it may be his or her greatness - and, for that matter, yours that you were able and willing to notice!

Notes

1. Hartman & Carter, p. 69: "Transparency is the pure awareness that you are. Well, this happens, for example, just the split second before you wake up. You just wake up, and before you even know where you are, you have the awareness *that* you are."

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