

The Self System: Toward a New Understanding of the Whole Person (Part 2)

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Of all psychology concepts, perhaps none has a more lengthy history or engendered more controversy and ambiguity than that of the self. Indeed, the self has come to mean so many things that it hardly means anything at all. Consequently, there is currently no single theory integrating all the various meanings of the self concept. Therefore, the primary purpose of this article is to develop an overarching metapsychology by which all aspects of the self can be understood.

To accomplish this purpose, this article engages in a hermeneutic analysis of the self as it appears in cognitive-behavior psychology, the psychoanalytic theories of ego and self psychology, and humanistic–existential theories of the self. In so doing, it is possible to identify three principle concepts by which the various aspects of the self can be compared and classified: *the Conflation Frame*, the collapsing of entity, intellect, and identity into a single rendering of the self; *the Integral Interface*, the overriding theoretical framework within which each of these aspects of self can be differentiated and subsumed; and the *Integral Axes*, the two fundamental tracks by which the individual grows and develops, which consist of self-actualization and self-emancipation.

The individual can be understood to be a whole person (Schneider, Bugental, & Pierson, 2002), which has significant implications for not only an understanding of the development of human beings generally, but also the delivery of mental health services. In a statement of recommended principles for the provision of humanistic psychological services, the term “whole person” is defined as follows: “Persons are irreducible to the sum of their parts. ... [O]verall we focus on the whole person who is choosing, setting goals, pursuing meaning, establishing and living in relationships, and creating” (Bohart et al., 2003). According to this idea, the person cannot be thought of except as a single, irreducible aggregate—a *whole*.

A similar idea has been put forward in cognitive psychology:

A single system (mind) produces all aspects of behavior. It is one mind that minds them all. Even if the mind has parts, modules, components, or whatever, they all mesh together to produce behavior. Any bit of behavior has causal tendrils that extend back though large parts of the total cognitive system before grounding in the environmental situation of some earlier times. If a theory covers only one part or component, it flirts with trouble from the start. (Newell, 1990, p. 17)

Yet, this is precisely the situation for theories of the self at this time; it is just a matter of which part or component takes precedence at the time.

To arrive at a truly integral theory, the ambiguity inherent in these terms can be sorted out by replacing them with a single formulation that incorporates them all. One way of clearing up the confusion is according to the themes derived from the hermeneutical analysis of this work, allowing the interjection of more ordinary nomenclature: *entity, intellect, and identity*. Unfortunately, these three aspects of the self are frequently referred to as a single structure, or what could be called a *Conflation Frame*. Separating out these terms according to their distinct natures is the proposed solution to the Conflation Frame. It is suggested that “entity” is the appropriate term to use when referring to the phenomenological experience of the individual, especially relative to sentience and volition. Likewise, cognition is best referred to as the intellect.

Identity is perhaps the most troublesome aspect of structural theory to understand. The principal reason for this stems precisely from the fact that entity, intellect, and identity are so frequently conflated in theories of psychology. Perhaps even more to the point, entity is typically mistaken *for* identity. Nonetheless, the two can be easily differentiated:

Heidegger referred to the individual as *dasein* (not as “I” or “one” or “ego” or a “human being”) for a specific reason: He wished always to emphasize the dual nature of human existence. The individual is “there” (*da*), but also he or she constitutes what is there. The ego is two-in-one: It is an *empirical* ego (an objective ego, something that is “there,” an object in the world) [i.e., intellect and identity] and a *transcendental* (constituting) ego which constitutes (that is, is “responsible” for) itself and the world [i.e., entity]. (Yalom, 1980, p. 220; emphasis in the original)

Although Heidegger does not speak in precisely these terms, it is the consciously aware, living person that is the transcendental self. It is this self that experiences reality. However, it is the intellect that presents experience *to* the self, as a result of some incident taking place at the interface between the organism and environment. Likewise, it is the intellect that devises the appropriate response to this

experience, and ultimately downloads it into behavior. These arrangements can be understood to comprise an “*Integral Interface*” (see Figure 1).

In sum, experience is processed by the intellect—the joint processes of imagery and memory (see Achterberg, 1985; Anderson, 2000), and intuition and reasoning (i.e., primary and secondary process; Freud, 1900, 1933). Yet, at any time, this processing can be interceded and influenced by the contents of memory: perspective and identity—the latter of which comprised of two aspects: ambition and ideals (i.e., the bipolar self; see Kohut, 1971, 1977). Further, influence coming from any part of this assembly can perhaps originate within the unconscious. Consequently, the therapeutic objective of psychoanalysis is straightforward: Make the unconscious conscious. It is in this manner that the individual is able to become aware of deep-rooted conflicts, providing them with the material necessary for insight and transformation. However, in the end, a question remains: To *whom* does this consciousness occur?

THE DUAL-DOMAIN

The account described thus far highlights an essential condition taking place within the psyche: Entity exists independently from identity—as well as the intel-

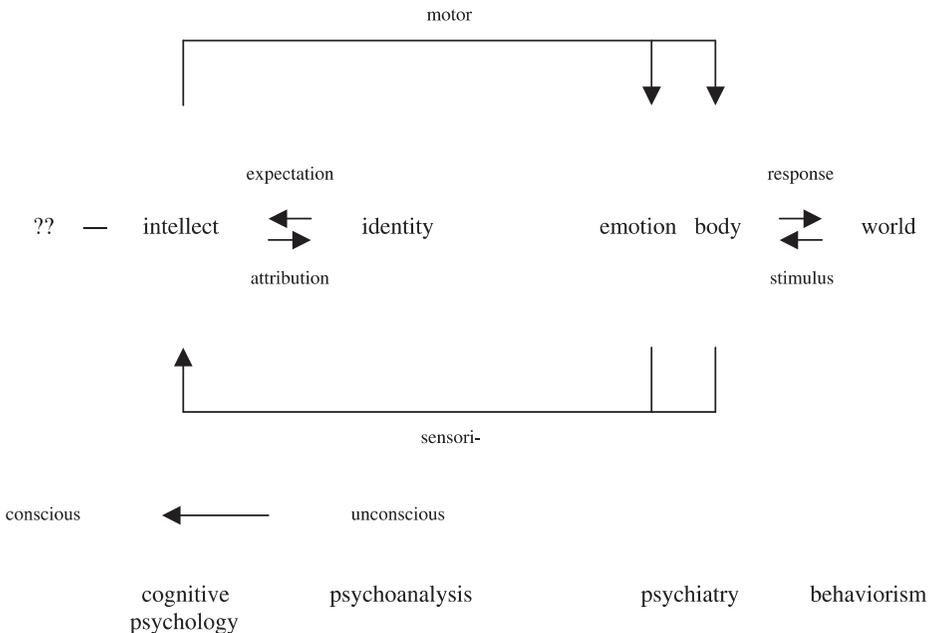


FIGURE 1 The Integral Interface.

lect within which identity is situated. In other words, the self exists *outside* of the parameters of the intellect and identity system, as an auxiliary component. As a result, there is a distinction between the self and mind, what could be called the “Dual-Domain.”

Yet, the two sides of the Dual-Domain represented by entity and identity are intimately in contact—even if via the intermediary of intellect. In this way, entity and identity can be thought of as the “I” and the “Me” of the psyche:

The “I” and the “Me” continually alternate in ongoing conduct. At one moment, the individual acts as an “I,” responding to a particular situation ... at the next moment that response becomes a part of the past and so is part of the “Me.” Because the response has passed into recent memory, it is now available as an object of reflection. The person further responds as an “I” to this image of self—this “Me”—which was itself a moment ago an “I”. ... This constant alternation of “I” and “Me,” of action and reflection, is the way human beings achieve control over their conduct. (Hewitt, 1994, p. 76)

According to this account, the “I” (entity) is constantly in a process of undergoing a transformation into the “Me” (identity). In other words, the choices made by the “I” that occur during one’s ongoing awareness and experience ultimately get subsumed within the “Me” of memory. It is precisely this distinction that underlies such orientations to the self as Rogers’s (1961) therapeutic principle *unconditional positive regard*. There are limits to unconditionally positively regarding the “Me,” as can be seen in Rollo May’s (1992) criticism of Rogers. It is the storehouse of human frailty. For example, consider rape, murder, or sexual abuse of children. Even hardened criminals find this last frailty particularly troublesome and excluded from positive regard.

On the other hand, it is the “I” that can be unconditionally positively regarded, for it is the very presence of the living being. No attributes sully its presence. It is precisely this aspect of the human being that is created equal. The attributes within identity are anything but equal among people. Indeed, every attribute within identity exists as part of continuum of possible referents, ranging from positive to negative (e.g., honest vs. dishonest, charitable vs. self-serving), with the meaning of each contingent on the context of the circumstances. (For example, even honesty can be negative if the circumstances within which it is being done lead to a bad outcome.) It is a constant battle to maintain boundaries between these two aspects of the Dual-Domain and which can only be done by maintaining one’s attention and awareness on the “I”—the here and now—rather than the memory depository of the “Me.” Indeed, it is for this reason that Kohut (1984) recommends the primacy of the *experience-near* self, as opposed to abstract versions of the self that exist within mind and memory. It is entity that is aware of experience, not identity.

Put somewhat differently, confusing the two subjects the individual to the Conflation Frame, by which consciousness is imploded into cognition. Unwittingly, Descartes gave perhaps the first formal account of this process, and its significance for the Dual-Domain:

At least the “I” who is conscious of doubting, the thinking subject, exists. ... *Cogito, ergo sum*—I think, therefore I am. ... Thus *res cogitans*—thinking substance, subjective experience, spirit, consciousness ... was understood as fundamentally different and separate from *res extensa*—extended substance, the objective world. (Tarnas, 1991, p. 277)

As can be seen, Descartes conflates the two sides of the Dual-Domain and, thereby, makes a basic error in judgment: he confuses consciousness for cognition. Descartes is frequently faulted for having established a false dualism within the primal unity of the body-mind (Levin, 1992; Mann, 1994), and in the process imposing on the individual a solipsism that is both shocking and suffocating: “I recognized that I was a substance whose essence or nature is to think and whose being requires no place and depends on no material thing” (Descartes, 1642/1951, p. 75). By being thus separated from the material world, full of its inherent joys and pleasures (as well as pains), the individual is imprisoned in a dungeon of their own mind. Descartes was never able solve this estrangement.

But this is only one half of the difficulty for Descartes. The mind–body problem is superseded by an even more intractable conundrum, what could, in a similar vein, perhaps be called the “self-mind problem.” Simply put, the duality of mind and body is based on a mistaken understanding of the actual structure of the psyche—not because it represents the psyche as a duality but, rather, because it represents the psyche as the *wrong kind* of duality:

But it is obvious even to an untrained mind that in uttering the first “I” Descartes had already assumed his conclusion “I am.” ... [Further] the assertion “I am” is by all measure the one of which I am most certain. ... : “Existence precedes essence.” (Morris, 1990, pp. 12–13)

In other words, there is an unspoken premise in Descartes’ proposal: “*I am aware that I think, therefore I am*”—which has a perhaps surprising implication: “*Entity precedes identity*—as well as the intellect upon which identity is based.”

Confusing these two domains can have detrimental repercussions for the individual. It is for this reason that Kant introduced the self-as-subject into philosophical discourse. For Kant, the self is a unified awareness that necessarily precedes and is antecedent to any kind of experience.

As a result of this analysis, Kant now has two selves: the phenomenal (empirical) self that I sometimes can catch in introspection, and a noumenal self. ... The phenomenal self is, in principle, knowable and is, to some extent, known. ... The noumenal self is a self-in-itself, which is the *I am* that transcendently must accompany every thought. ... [T]he noumenal self is seen as free, that is, outside the realm of necessity, and as potentially immortal. It becomes something like the traditional soul. ... (Levin, 1992, p. 40; emphasis in the original)

Yet, it can transform into lesser states. However, the transformation in which “I” becomes “Me” is metaphorical, not literal, and the two should not be confused. The proximate self (entity) is not literally split off from itself. Rather, it *identifies* with some aspect of the distal self (identity) that is split off from *itself*. The split takes place on the identity side of the equation. The entity side is never actually fragmented. It is only *seemingly* fragmented, as a result of identifying with psychic structure that actually is fragmented.

Yet, this seemingness does not take place without real cost. Certain mental disorders attenuate the entity in its misguided identifications. This distinction can be seen reflected in the nomenclature of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text rev. [DSM-IV-TR], American Psychiatric Association, 2000). For example, dissociative disorders are defined as those disorders whose predominant feature is a dissociative symptom, that is, a disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity, or perception of the environment. These types of symptoms can manifest as either disturbances in entity or identity. Dissociative amnesia and dissociative identity disorder indicate disruptions in the functioning of memory and identity. Depersonalization disorder, on the other hand, is characterized by the persistent or recurrent experience of feeling detached from, and as if one is an outside observer of one’s mental processes or body. This is to say that entity is detached from intellect and organism. Similarly, derealization is the sense of one not being a real or actual person—that is, a real or actual presence (i.e., entity). As can be seen, the two have extremely important differences.

Overall, entity can be thought of as comprised of two distinct attributes: *awareness and will*. The two are combined in a process Rollo May speaks of as intentionality:

[Intentionality] ... is the structure of meaning which makes it possible for us, subjects that we are, to see and understand the outside world, objective as it is. In intentionality, the dichotomy between subject and object is practically overcome. (1969, p. 225)

Intentionality does not simply intimately relate one to their objects, but relates them to their objects in certain ways. For example, while a renter looks at houses according to the prospects of them being habitable, a realtor looks at houses according to the prospects of them being profitable, and an artist looks at houses with

aesthetic in mind. Each derives meaning from essentially the same sensory experience according to the intentions or objectives to which that experience will be put. Consequently, very different features become salient in each case, which depends on one's intention.

It is in this sense that the function at the core of the operation of the psyche is decision. It is actually this executive capacity that underlies and precedes all other operations of the psyche, and is a characteristic of the self and entity. The mind, along with its functions of intellect and identity, exists merely as a mechanical automaticity, devoid of the living presence associated with entity. It is precisely for this reason that existentialism focuses on awareness and presence, for it is here that one is able to intervene in the multifarious events of life and, thereby, ascribe meaning to life (Yalom, 1980). The mind simply reflects the occurrence of this decision-making process, recorded within memory as self and object representations. It is the self that actually engages in the process of decision making. People only truly emerge into being, fully and completely, via the choices they make. Any other choice (since to not choose is *itself* a choice) is nothing more than the abdication of one's freedom.

Perhaps the troublesome circumstance underlying human experience could be put this way: *when you make choices, you take your chances*. The problem with freedom is not so much in the choice as the chance. Yet, as everyone knows, choosing which socks to wear in the morning will hardly put you in an existential tizzy. The real problem stems from a certain kind of choice, the *difficult* choice, that which might result even in your own death (Becker, 1997), if not your alienation from a deeply held sense of self and being (Loy, 1996). No wonder freedom makes us anxious. Freedom sends shivers down our spines precisely because it puts us on the spot to choose (Fromm, 1941). And *we* must do the choosing. There is no use looking around for an expert or an advisor. Even in choosing someone to guide us, we have selected *their* expertise over others (Morris, 1990). There is no escaping the angst of our freedom.

Yet, still we must choose—regardless of any attempt to get out of it. It is precisely at this point that the will becomes such an important adjunct to awareness. Intentionality does not simply carve up the input according to one's objectives. It also forces the issue of the final outcome and imposes its will on the objects of experience. In doing so, the will could be said to operate as follows: Wherever attention is focused, a *hold* is put on whatever object or event happens to be in awareness. Consequently, these aspects of reality are given saliency, or priority. This allows intention to *pause* the machinery of the mind (May, 1981), so that experience can take place without interference. This is why addiction and anger management protocols so frequently stress tactics of delay, such as counting to 10, or speaking with a confidant before doing anything rash (see Eggert, 1994; Gorski, 1997). This pause creates *space* within the psyche. This space provides something essential to the operation of the psyche: an opening into which one can insert their will. As the impersonal and indifferent machinery of the intellect takes place, attention forces cognition to remain engaged and confront whatever experience is

presently occurring. In this way, one could be said to *dam up* their stream of consciousness (James, 1890). As a result, whatever understanding is currently the case will persist in awareness and force cognition to act on it accordingly. When the will is weak, attention wanders. In that case, cognition becomes capable of shifting gears on its own and offer up more preferable substitutes to awareness instead. However, when the will is strong, it can persist in engaging experience, even if unpleasant or objectionable. Likewise, it is also capable of letting the individual remain indifferent to objects in awareness and allow them to pass by uneventfully.

Since it is by definition the decision-making function, it can decide to permit influence by some memories and not others. By maintaining a detached, observing attitude toward the other memory traces, it can allow them simply to pass away and dissipate. *Buddhi* [i.e., the self] can decide to step outside the chain of cause and effect. It can decide not to remain caught up in that cycle of action and reaction determined by previous programming. By using its full potential it acquires the property of “will” ... (Rama et al., 1998, p. 93)

Focusing awareness on experience takes attention off of conceptual interpretation, thereby creating the possibility for greater interpersonal empathy and identity integration (Yontef, 1993). It is precisely the process of direct experience that allows the self to engage in awareness as a present act, even though the content of awareness may be distant, or experience-far. The act of remembering occurs in the here and now, even though that which is remembered does not. Whenever the situation requires attentiveness to the past or future, effective awareness takes this into account. It is for this reason that access to awareness is most effectively accomplished through direct experience. These arrangements can be incorporated into the Integral Interface (see Figure 2).

Although experience originates within the organism, it is presented to the self via the intellect. Yet, even though the intellect is the medium by which experience is made known to the self, the intellect is wholly indifferent *to* that experience, as it is the entity that is the living presence of the person. This is why existentialism focuses on the experiential impressions taking place within the cognitive apparatus—perhaps, at times, even eschewing the importance of the input coming from the self structure of identity. Nonetheless, operations from *both* sides are crucial for the optimum functioning of the psyche.

It is at precisely this point that the insights of postmodernism are so pertinent, for the frame of reference coming from one’s identity is utterly crucial to attributing meaning to experience (Gergen, 1985; Rorty, 1989). Yet, when postmodernism is extended beyond its area of applicability, it can distort a right understanding of other aspects of the psyche. Put simply, self and consciousness (i.e., entity) is a separate component of psychic structure from that of mind and cognition (i.e., in-

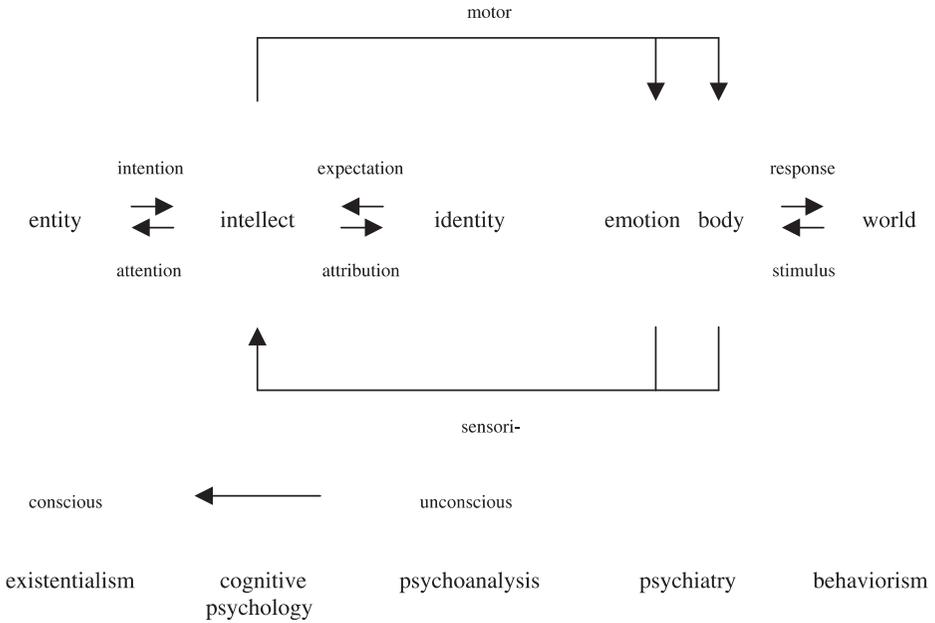


FIGURE 2 The Integral Interface (Dual-Domain).

tellect and identity)—and operates, therefore, according to principles that are independent from constructivism, contextualism, or perspectivism.

THE INTEGRAL AXES

It is at the point of interface between entity and intellect that one becomes aware of their experience and, therefore, acts on it with their will. But in the absence of awareness and will, the intellect tends to operate out of control and according to its own directives—which are short-sighted and invariably contrary to the best interests of the self. In such a state, the mind may even attempt to assert domination and control over the self, often to disastrous effect. The affiliation one happens to have to either set of dynamics influences the way that they will understand the operations of the psyche, which can even affect entire schools of psychology.

For example, humanistic psychology can be understood in two decidedly different ways, depending on which set of dynamics is dominant:

It could be that Maslow and Rogers are basically very broad, and actually are talking about a range of experience reaching from the mental ego (ordinary consciousness) to the [self-actualized self] (existential consciousness). ... It could also then be that

Mahrer and May are just concerned with the [self-actualized self] (existential consciousness), and not with the mental ego or the subtle self. This would make them more narrowly and purely humanistic than Maslow and Rogers. (Rowan, 1989, p. 226)

In other words, this passage suggests that Maslow and Rogers are oriented toward psychological theory as it pertains to development and self-actualization—perhaps even beyond existential consciousness to that of transpersonal consciousness, or even further still to what could be called transcendental consciousness (see Beck & Cowan, 1996; Cook-Greuter, 2000; Loy, 1998). Mahrer and May, on the other hand, are oriented toward psychological theory as it pertains to structure, at least structure as it exists at one particular level of development—the existential self.

As such, there are two essential dynamics of operation taking place within the psyche, each of which aligning with one of two orientations:

1. Identity and Self-Actualization: the ever-evolving emergence of the individual's innate potential.
2. Entity and Self-Emancipation: the here-and-now encounter with the individual's inherent presence.

Clearly, these two processes operate according to very different principles. Perhaps better said, they influence very different domains of the psyche. Whereas self-actualization is purposed toward the growth and development of identity, self-emancipation is purposed toward simply existing as entity. Consequently, not only do these two processes operate according to different principles, they can also be thought of as heading in different directions: one vertical (i.e., self-actualization) and the other horizontal (i.e., self-emancipation). Taken together, the two comprise the fundamentally dual nature of the psyche: *the "Integral Axes."*

Yet, much of psychology conflates entity and identity into a single theoretical approach, as can be seen in the following example:

Gestalt therapy provides a way of being authentic and meaningfully responsible for oneself. By becoming aware, one becomes able to choose and/or organize one's own existence in a meaningful manner (Jacobs, 1978; Yontef, 1982, 1983). ... The existential view holds that people are endlessly remaking or discovering themselves. There is no essence of human nature to be discovered "once and for all." There are always new horizons, new problems and new opportunities. (Yontef, 1993, p. 126)

This captures the conflation of consciousness and cognition perfectly. The emphasis in this passage is on process over that of structure. But it overlooks that there is a *sequence* to the process, which implies structure: Once a stable sense of aware-

ness is established, then one is able to organize their existence in a meaningful manner. In other words, although it is true that identity cannot be discovered once and for all and consists of an endless procession of gestalten entering into awareness, entity is *precisely* the essence of human nature—that awareness to which the various gestalten appear, and, as a result of which, are experienced, worked through, and, ultimately, assimilated or integrated back into identity.

As can be seen, entity has to be considered according to an entirely different process than that of self-actualization. Indeed, it would be better to think of entity as undergoing transition rather than transformation, from lesser to greater states of authenticity. That is, whereas self-actualization is purposed toward the growth and development of intellect and identity, self-emancipation is engaged in a different purpose entirely: existing fully as one's entity. This provides a very specific account of authenticity: "By authenticity I mean a central genuineness and awareness of being. Authenticity is that presence of an individual in his living in which he is fully aware in the present moment, in the present situation" (Bugental, 1981, p. 102). This presence is what Heidegger (1927) spoke of as *dasein*, or "being there"—the simple presence of conscious awareness, or being itself.

But authenticity can be thought of in two different ways:

1. Identity: one's personality and its structure.
2. Entity: one's presence and its process.

In existentialism, the latter sense of authenticity is usually regarded to be the preeminent nature of human existence, relying on an even more fundamental contingency: freedom. It is by this process that one engages in the choices that ultimately imbue their life with meaning. Unfortunately, however, this only applies to one half of the Integral Axes. The former sense of authenticity is usually regarded to be the preeminent nature of human existence in humanism, occurring as a result of the individual establishing themselves in the upper reaches of self-actualization. Consequently, authenticity can be understood as pertaining to the two points of interface surrounding the intellect—entity and identity (Figure 3).

Overall, there is a reciprocal relationship between self-actualization and self-emancipation: The fulfillment of one is contingent on the auspices of the other. That is, as one is able to self-emancipate and reside authentically as mere presence, the dynamics innate to the process of self-actualization are able to operate unimpeded by the self collapsing on the mind (i.e., Conflation Frame); and as one is able to self-actualize and reside authentically at their fullest potential, the dynamics inherent to the process of self-emancipation are also able to operate unimpeded, for the greater developmental capacities inherent to self-actualization support self-emancipation. The more one is able to engage in *both* sides of the equation at once, the more they are able to enjoy a benevolent cycle.

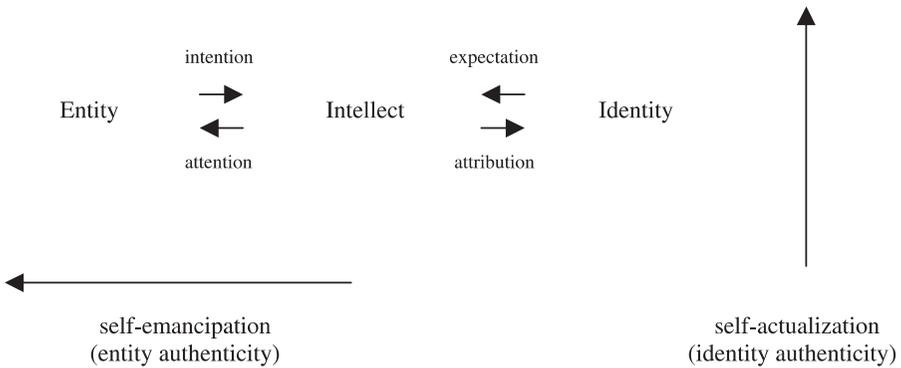


FIGURE 3 The Integral Axes.

It is precisely this arrangement that makes sense of the dispute between free will versus determinism. The relationship of this controversy to the Integral Axes can be put this way:

1. Self-emancipation: Entity operates according to the mysterious, generative principles of creativity and free will.
2. Self-actualization: Intellect and identity—as well as the organism and environment on which they are based—operate according to the fixed laws of causality and determinism.

In other words, whereas entity is the locus point of the conflux between human existence and conscious awareness, intellect and identity operate mechanically, like a machine, concomitantly determined by the causal laws of nature and whatever configuration of self structure has happened to coalesce within memory over time. Consequently, to borrow a phrase from computer science, the relationship between intellect and identity could be accurately put this way: “*Garbage in, garbage out.*” It is only by virtue of the self distancing itself from the operation of the mind that it can operate according to its own principles.

However, some orientations regard the idea of a self to be nonsensical. For example, the Buddha is reputed to have originated the concept of “no-self,” or *anatma*:

In the basic suffering, *duhkha*, however, of all existence, the living beings try to find such a constant, believing it to be part of existence, trying to find “the self where there is no self,” believing it to be release from the suffering of existence, *samsara*. It is nothing but ignorance. ... Thus understanding that all moments of existence, all *dharmas*, are without self, *anatma*, and thus impermanent, *anitya*, and empty, *sanya*, constitutes the basic insight, *prajna*, by which the Buddha was able to free himself

from and completely give up his attachment to all possible moments of existence, which he had realized through his meditation, his *samadhi*. (Braarvig, 1993, p. 196)

As can be seen, according to this view there is no such thing as any kind of permanent or abiding subjective phenomenon. There is only the flux of ongoing experience, the here-and-now of all moments of existence. Yet, this orientation can be understood in a number of different ways, especially drawing on the concept of the Integral Interface. For example, no-self could be thought of as referring specifically to the identity side of the equation. In this case, it is the contents of identity that are nonexistent, or merely illusory—but not the actual self (i.e., entity). In other words, there is only the presence of experience arising within the intellect—as it appears to conscious awareness.

A number of spiritual orientations seem to hold this view. Zen Buddhism puts the situation this way:

When you make some special effort to achieve something, some excessive quality, some extra element is involved in it. ... So try not to ... achieve anything special. You already have everything in your own pure quality. (Suzuki, 1986, pp. 59–61)

The something extra referenced here is precisely that which the individual is typically motivated to value: identity. But only in letting go of this false understanding of self is one able to find their “own pure quality.” According to the Integral Interface, this means not conflating entity into identity.

Other spiritual approaches seem to suggest something similar, exhorting spiritual aspirants to find the Self, looking deep within:

Sri Ramana ... declared that inquiry into “Who am I?” would liberate the seeker permanently from the trammels of the ego and that this quest was the easiest and most direct way to attain salvation. (Murthy, 1990, p. 61)

Again, the self is “in the way” of the Self. Here, it is advocated that the individual go right to the source. In this way the individual is assured of the absolutely highest recourse to truth and wisdom. From there, it is easy to see that all of the choices and decisions comprising the daily life of the individual will be, thereby, fully informed and judicious.

These spiritual orientations suggest that in the absence of a self (i.e., identity), one finds a more pure or profound sense of Self (i.e., entity). But the whole point of *anatma* is more radical than this: *no self of any kind*. In other words, in this view, even entity is understood to be illusory and unsubstantial—which would leave only the intellect as real. But eliminating the self in this way could be thought of as not only the grossest form of reductionism, essentially reducing the self to the primary autonomous ego, but utterly nonsensical:

The first thing to exist is me. . . . One of the ridiculous puzzles of philosophy has been the question: Do I really exist? It is ridiculous because it is not a problem; no philosopher genuinely doubted his own existence. (Morris, 1990, p. 12)

This includes not only St. Augustine and Descartes, but presumably the Buddha.

Yet, the Buddha is attempting to make a point of some kind. Indeed, interpreting *anatma* to mean merely the absence of self as identity is surely a superficial rendering of the Buddha's intentions. Nonetheless, this is precisely the argument put forward by Hume to declare the self does not exist:

I may venture to affirm to the rest of mankind that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which exceed each other with an incredible rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement. . . . The mind is a kind of theater, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. . . . There are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; or have we the most distant notion of the place where these scenes are represented, or of the materials of which it is composed. (1738/1911, p. 238)

Nonetheless, interpreting *anatma* as the absence of entity, too, no matter how true to the Buddha's meaning this might be, seems inane. After all, who is reading this passage if there is no self of this kind? More to the point, who is engaged in the process of making interpretations, making choices, and assigning meaning? The intellect is no more than a brute, a mere automaticity, a chaotic flux of impartial imperatives, blindly operating on directives originating elsewhere. Although it is true that it can think, it cannot think for itself, any more than a computer can. Only the entity has the capacity for decision.

CONCLUSION

Few theorists have even attempted to integrate the multifarious aspects of the self into a comprehensive theoretical system. For a truly integral psychology to occur, every school and system of the psyche must be welcomed into the fold. Yet, powerful forces exist to keep this from happening. Theorists tend to fulfill deep-seated objectives endemic to their own personalities—or, perhaps better said, according to epiphanies influenced by their own “creative illness” (Ellenberger, 1970). Indeed, entire fields of study can become segregated, committed to a particular point of view. Although specialization has significantly increased the expertise of the various fields of psychology, ultimately, it has also served to muddy the water for the profession overall. Each school ends up working their own side of the street.

But the result is untenable: Each ends up working *against* the other, in fact, sometimes seeing colleagues as competitors, if not enemies outright. Obviously, this is not a workable arrangement.

Nonetheless, the profession of psychology seems poised for reconciliation. Each of the main therapeutic orientations can be seen to align primarily with a particular aspect of psychic structure. However, there is considerable overlap between these orientations, which is precisely what has obscured a clear recognition of the segregation that exists between them. In other words, at the center of each orientation is what could be called a “core competency,” or set of tenets sometimes referred to as foundational knowledge—that is, “justified beliefs all of us agree on” (Bruffee, 1993). Yet, as such beliefs extend out from their core, the competency of each orientation becomes ever more peripheral and unreliable, as it blends into the core competency of another orientation.

Even entire schools of psychology can find the core competency of one member significantly encroaching on another:

There has been much debate about whether such a range of theoretical formulations can or should be accommodated under a single rubric of “behavioral therapy” or “cognitive-behavioral therapy,” when alternative formulations sometimes do violence to the core assumptions and conceptual underpinnings of one another. (Follette, Ruzek, & Abueg, 1998, p. 4)

Likewise, the drive mechanics of orthodox psychoanalysis are often thought to be contrary to the relational imperatives of object relations theory, not to say humanism and existentialism (see Bacal & Newman, 1990; Schneider et al., 2002). It is precisely by extending beyond their area of expertise that each can be said to violate the essential directive of clinical psychology: operating outside the scope of one’s practice.

That each theoretical school operates from the position of a particular core competency, at the same time attempting to subsume the other core competencies within it, is better known as reductionism, if not provincialism. Yet, even so, it only makes sense that such schools of thought would develop along sectarian lines, for these divisions are precisely the nature of psychic structure—at least as seen according to its various aspects—and into which the treatment modalities of each school are designed to intervene. Nonetheless, a principal contention of this article is that there is no point in isolating out any one aspect of the psyche and attempting to make a comprehensive theory of it—the remaining aspects will only beg for admission (Watkins & Watts, 1995). Consequently, it is imperative that an integral theory become the industry standard for the profession of psychology. Clearly, such a project can be initiated in only one field: where the whole person is valued above all else.

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