Integrity in Depth

John Beebe

Foreword by David H. Rosen

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Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world.
—EMERSON

JOHN BEEBE has successfully carried out an immense task of understanding one of the most challenging subjects: integrity, and in depth! He has completed his archeological work extremely well, excavating from the surface to the center, and we progress through layers of philosophy, psychology, and literature, as well as western and eastern spiritual disciplines. In the process, Dr. Beebe uncovers innumerable elements that compose the whole. Integrity comprises responsibility, uprightness, standing tall, being untouched, staying intact, completeness, perfection, honesty, moral obligation, delight, inner psychological harmony, continuity, psychological and ethical eros, sincerity, chastity, virginity, obedience, conscience, prudence, purity, constancy, amiability, and holiness. And all this makes sense, because the definition of integrity or integritas is the entire. Integrate and integration come from the same Latin root as integrity. Integrate means to combine all the disparate elements into one harmonious entity. This is what Beebe does, and his labor of integration is an act of renewing and restoring integrity. The circle is complete, and it is meaningful that Beebe makes the connection of integrity with the Self, which represents the center and the totality in Jung’s psychological system. Both integrity and the Self are spiritual concepts that unify and facilitate transcendence and transformation.
John Beebe was an instructor of mine at the C. G. Jung Institute in San Francisco; he was an accomplished teacher. This volume reveals that he is still teaching, but now his wise words come out of more years of clinical work and human experience. When Beebe first mentioned his title to me, it clicked. It was a natural because I had always thought of him as a person with integrity. Therefore, it does not surprise me to sense Beebe emerging from this work with enthusiasm, revealing that he has gone to the center and glimpsed the Self. He breaks through the surface of the water after his in-depth dive as an integrity-full person renewed.

John Beebe begins his book with “A Psychological Definition of Integrity,” chapter 1. In the first section, he provides us with a map of the territory, in which we embark on an arduous journey to understand integrity, “to risk the mystery.” We dive deep below the surface into unexplored waters. We focus on the supraordinate dimension of integrity, which parallels Jung’s concept of the Self. Beebe posits that “integrity must be pursued as a desideratum in itself.” He further states, “The implication is that the real pleasure in exercising integrity in dealings with others is the discovery of integrity itself.” Beebe’s maxim is similar to the well-known statement by Francis Peabody in medicine: “The secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient.”

Beebe then develops the relationship between integrity and psychology, which he sees as linked through the Self. Discussing psychological types, he underscores that feeling is as significant as thinking, and intuition as important as sensation. Emphasizing the particular salience of intuition, Beebe states, “Intuition brings us a sense of the ecology of integrity, for intuition is the function that gives a feeling for the entire pattern operating in a given moment.”

Beebe introduces Eastern spiritual concepts from the I Ching
and *Tao Te Ching*. From the latter he principally focuses on *te*, which has been translated from the recently discovered Ma-wang-tui manuscripts as integrity by Victor H. Mair. Professor Mair was kind enough to send me a reproduction of an actual Chinese pictograph, which serves as the frontispiece of this book. It includes an eye looking straight ahead, the heart, and the sign for movement or behavior. The eye, symbolizing inner and outer vision, must be in harmony with the heart (feelings or soul), and with the movement or behavior of the person to determine if the individual’s actions are integrity-full. After providing a map of the territory of integrity and an introduction to its psychological realm, Beebe then leads us into the darkest part of the journey.

Chapter 2 is titled “The Shadow and Integrity.” It first focuses on the shadow. Beebe introduces the supposition that in our anxiety about the unknown other (the other within, the one that we project outside, or the other outside that causes anxiety inside) lies the actual field where the seeds of the shadow are planted. These grow into shadow plants that can be harvested, as this part of the book shows, yielding much food for thought. Beebe casts anxiety in a helpful way. For example, he tells us that “the signal is not wrong, it is telling us that our integrity is somehow at risk.” After exploring the fertile ground of the shadow and how we can benefit by going into the scary realm of anxiety, he moves on to rediscover the Puritan Forefather in the next section. Through John Milton’s poetry, Beebe challenges us to recapture some of the lost moral high ground of the Puritans. Milton had a conception of the education of integrity and, like Benjamin Franklin (who is discussed earlier in the book), lived a life of integrity.

In search of an archetypal image of integrity, Beebe turns to Marina Warner, who tells the story of Tuccia, a vestal virgin of Rome. Tuccia, accused of breaking her vow of chastity, proves how chaste she actually is by filling her sieve with water,
which miraculously holds it. Tuccia’s sieve, made whole by the power of her own wholeness, provides us with a symbol of ideal integrity. In many ways this symbolic image is like a Zen Koan. Beebe takes this intriguing symbol of the sieve from Warner’s book *Monuments and Maidens*. He then makes a great leap forward in linking Tuccia’s sieve with the “image of the analytic container, the ark of the psychotherapy relationship.” Beebe adds, “Analytical psychotherapists have grown used to working within this closed but open space.”

Other related metaphors come to mind, such as the cell, which on a microcosmic level is a contained whole system that has a permeable membrane. On a macrocosmic level, the earth also is a spherical entity that breathes and is alive. Like the psychotherapy relationship, both are intact, closed but open systems. Currently the earth is in danger from pollution and nuclear weapons and, as Jung claimed, we are the real danger. That’s why Beebe’s topic is so timely and of critical import. Beebe outlines three stages of integrity as related to the shadow: denial that there even is a shadow; a turning point that is the acceptance of the shadow; and a sense of restored wholeness, when the shadow has been integrated (here is that word again).

Beebe concludes this packed second chapter with a section he calls “Dialogue with Shame.” He provocatively, but I think accurately, suggests that in addition to anxiety we will find integrity on the other side of shame. He suggests that we embrace shame, and his source for this wisdom is the *I Ching*. In an act of integrity, Beebe admits to the common problem of colluding with the attitude that shame is something to be ashamed of. He agrees with Andrew Morrison that for any individual with major deficits of the self, shame, not rage, is the principal affect. Beebe advocates “a psychology of healing through shame.” He goes on to say that “such shame is healing only if it is held with integrity. The alchemical name for holding
shame with integrity is mortificatio, the rot of human chemicals in a closed container—truly a mortifying experience.” It occurs to me that Primo Levi’s survival in Auschwitz and his reflections thereupon support Beebe’s premise. In Levi’s last book, *The Drowned and the Saved*, he even has a chapter on shame. It is clear that Primo Levi’s integrity emerges out of mortification—out of the umbra of witnessing mechanized disgraceful mass beatings and killings of innocent men, women, and children.

Survival has to do with enduring and transcending obstacles, which is facilitated by the flame of hope, the bedrock of faith, a strong sense of self, and *integritas*. In fact, it is the virtue of hope that interrelates the first psychological issue (trust versus mistrust), the second (autonomy versus shame and doubt), and the last (integrity versus despair) in Erik Erikson’s eight stages of human development. It is revealing that Erikson saw the otherwise stepwise and epigenetic stages in his developmental schema as becoming circular with the last and the first stages, with hope providing the spherical union. It seems to me that hope is the *temenos* (sacred place) for integrity.

Chapter 3, “Integrity and Gender,” starts off with a section on “The Sensibility of Continuity,” which relates to Jane Austen’s work. Beebe links the practice of psychotherapy and the constancy of the process to the feminine receptive holding environment. Austen emphasized the unconscious wisdom of wholeness resulting in an image of the closed circle that parallels Jung’s concept of the Self. Beebe stresses that the idea of wholeness, or unbroken continuity, has a central feminine virtue like a good mother. He emphasizes the similarity to “our modern idea of ecology, which has the Gaia hypothesis behind it.”

After discussing integration through the anima, Beebe introduces a subtly differentiated post-Jungian view of gender. It draws upon Jung’s alchemical conception of *sol* and *luna*, but
as revised by Howard Teich. Teich sees solar and lunar not as gender principles in themselves, as Jung had done in equating sun with masculine and moon with feminine. Rather he approaches solar and lunar as psychological characteristics that can modify the expression of either gender. There is a lunar as well as solar masculinity, and a solar as well as lunar femininity. Although they are complicated, Beebe makes these concepts understandable. It seems to me that he ends up with something very like an ancient Yin/Yang view of wholeness in which the Yang (masculine) contains the feminine and the Yin (feminine) contains the masculine. Jung’s image of the coniunctio, union of gender opposites—the same concept as conscious androgyny—is “our culture’s strongest vision of moral wholeness,” according to Beebe.

The fourth chapter of the book is “Working on Integrity.” In its opening section, “Fidelity to Process,” Beebe shares a poignant therapeutic interchange in which he makes a mistake that leads to the patient’s being angry at him. This rage facilitates the patient’s discovery of her own integrity and precedes Beebe’s healing through shame and a renewal of his own integrity.

In the next section, “The Paradoxical Dream,” Beebe postulates “that monitoring integrity is one of the chief functions of the dream, and that it ought to guide the way we look at dreams and the way we work with them.” He shares a patient’s very brief dream regarding a bottle cap that leads to the termination of therapy as well as the patient’s marriage and job. This is a clear and amazing example of the transformative healing power of a single dream.

Beebe then outlines three “paradoxical conditions which the Jungian analytic tradition has set up for understanding and working with the dream.” Paradox one honors the fact that “the dream is alive, yet operates to bring an old attitude to its ‘death.’” As Beebe states, “That the dream is alive is of course at the
heart of Jung's approach to the psyche. His notion of the living reality of the inner environment, the psyche, implies that the dream needs to be approached, like Yosemite, with an attitude of respect, with an ecological mindedness. We should back-pack the dream, not strip mine it. We should be careful how we develop it. We can pollute it." According to Beebe, "the second paradox of Jungian dream work concerns the therapeutic relationship in which the dream, and the work on the dream, happen." The dream registers the therapeutic relationship, as a "picture of an objective, unconsciously structured transference/countertransference which is evolving, like an alchemical experiment." Beebe characterizes the third and final paradox: "The dream depicts the actual situation in the unconscious, yet its symbolic language defends against direct insight into that situation and can be exploited by sophisticated defenses against taking its meaningful content seriously."

In the last section of the book, entitled "A Fantasia on Integrity," Beebe offers a fairy tale of "Three Army Surgeons," which concerns a lack of integrity. The tale teaches us what is involved in preserving and acting on our own integrity. In other words, taking responsibility for our actions. Beebe deduces that the three surgeons, "the would-be healers of integrity, are left with a longing for wholeness." The moral Beebe draws from the fairy tale is that "the chastened recognition of compromised integrity has produced a hunger for genuine healing."

To conclude, John Beebe has accomplished an astonishing feat of integrating the myriad elements of integrity into a whole. This book itself has integrity; it stands on its own as a sound treatise. In the very act of reading it, we find that John Dewey's words ring true: "Aesthetic experience is experience in its integrity."

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