

## Final Integration of a Bibliographical Puzzle

By Patricia A. Burton

Psychologists and analysts are in the habit of studying children or mentally ill people and drawing conclusions about the fully integrated and mature personality structure from these studies. It is less usual to find one seeking material on the final integration of the adult personality in the lives and writings of the mystics. A Persian psychoanalyst teaching in the United States has written a suggestive article along these lines, in which he draws mainly on the tradition of Persian Sufism, notably on Rumi. There are also passing references to other Oriental mystical traditions, especially Zen, which has attracted much attention among Western analysts. Dr. A. Reza Arasteh concludes that the way of the mystics is the way of full integration. It begins with the dissolution and self-emptying of the empirical self, the self that is constituted by its attachment to social realities. The dissolution of this social and cultural “self” is attended by great anxiety, and is in fact a kind of death. Few people are really able to face it. Hence few can really go beyond it to be reintegrated, after what the author calls “an existential moratorium,” on a level of higher and more universal insight, or true creativity, and of the “awareness of multiple realities” united in oneness. This is a “transcultural state” in which the (experience of) the subject object division disappears. The “fully integrated man” is then one who has become perfectly one in a state of final rebirth. In order to remain on the level of science, the author treats his subject phenomenologically rather than theologically and there is no reference to mystical union as such, i.e. as union *with God*. Also he makes no reference to Christian mysticism. We are grateful for this excellent and suggestive study which establishes that the full integration of the human personality is to be found not merely in “sublimation” and adjustment to society, but at the end of an arduous and sacrificial path of spiritual seeking. The monastic ideal has always centered on this aspect of pilgrimage in search of light beyond and outside the ordinary framework of social and cultural forms.<sup>1</sup>



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This short item by Thomas Merton, written for his order’s quarterly journal as a brief review or “*chronique*,” sits at the center of a tangle that has challenged bibliographers for decades. At every stage of recording this *chronique* and a later

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review-essay by Merton,<sup>2</sup> mistakes were made, and subsequently compounded by the reappearance of the *chronique* in the compendium *Merton and Sufism*.<sup>3</sup>

### Arasteh's Article "Final Integration"

The story undoubtedly began because A. Reza Arasteh wrote an article entitled "Final Integration in the Adult Personality," published in the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*,<sup>4</sup> which was subsequently made available as an offprint in booklet form, and then expanded into a book with the same main title, followed by the new subtitle *A Measure for Health, Social Change, and Leadership*.<sup>5</sup> As he subsequently told the story, Arasteh had delivered an address at the Twenty-seventh International Congress of Psychology in Washington, DC in August, 1963. As a result, he had "received numerous letters and comments from colleagues all over the world encouraging [him] to complete the work." Among the colleagues were some illustrious names: Abraham Maslow, Erich Fromm, and Gordon Allport of Harvard, who contributed what would later be used as a blurb: "It deals with a problem almost totally neglected in Western thought, viz., the most comprehensive of attitude levels. How fragmented are most of our Western approaches! We look at bits and pieces of human nature, never at the final intention that marks many lives" (Arasteh, *Final Integration* xiii).

The article and the book were discussed by Merton in two separate writings using the same main title, "Final Integration." In their bibliographies, both Frank Dell'Isola<sup>6</sup> and Marquita Breit and Robert Daggy record the *chronique* about the article as if it were a review of Arasteh's subsequent book. The Breit/Daggy bibliography records Merton's review-essay of the book (written for publication in *Monastic Studies*) as if it were an article called "Final Integration" by Merton (rather than by Arasteh), published in the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis (AJP)*.<sup>7</sup> The editors of *Collectanea* had already introduced an error by getting the volume number of *AJP* wrong in the printed headnote to Merton's *chronique*, listing it as volume XIV (the volume for 1954) instead of volume XXV (1965). The editors of the subsequent collection *Merton and Sufism* published both pieces, but did not realize that Merton's original English version of the *chronique* was still extant in the Merton Center files, and instead printed a re-translated version of the French, which was present in the Merton Center files in galley proofs.

### Merton Discovers Arasteh

On October 31, 1965, Thomas Merton wrote to Linda (Parsons) Sabbath, "I like very much the article of [A. Reza] Arasteh. I have written a note on it for *Collectanea*, and would like to have his book on Rumi for review. Where can I contact him?"<sup>8</sup> The "note" Merton referred to was part of a special section in *Collectanea Cisterciensia*, requested by the editor, Charles Dumont, OCSO, regarding "Non-Christian Monks and Religious."<sup>9</sup> These notes, called *chroniques*, were of a form with which *Collectanea* readers were familiar, in a regular section of the journal called "Bulletin de spiritualité monastique," a kind of literary telegraph allowing monks to exchange comments about useful and interesting things to read, encompassing not only books but individual articles or parts of books about Christian monastic subjects (indeed, Merton had headed up his typescript of the above passage "For *Collectanea* Bulletin I," but repurposed it later on). For the *chroniques*, Dumont had

widened the subject matter to include monastics or mystics in other traditions, which had been an abiding interest of Merton's. Sets of *chroniques* appeared in *Collectanea* in 1965 and 1967, and almost all were written by Merton.<sup>10</sup>

Merton subsequently got into contact with Arasteh and they corresponded.<sup>11</sup> They traded books: Arasteh's *Rumi the Persian* for Merton's *The Way of Chuang Tzu*.<sup>12</sup> On December 27, 1965, Merton wrote that he had been taken to task by his publisher for writing too many prefaces for the books of others: apparently Arasteh had asked for a preface for *Final Integration*, and the correspondence suggests he was looking for an American publisher.<sup>13</sup> On December 30, 1967, Merton asks Arasteh for a contribution to his planned periodical *Monks Pond* (HGL 42). Merton forwarded a copy of his essay "Rebirth and the New Man in Christianity."<sup>14</sup> Arasteh's contribution to *Monks Pond* was an essay "The Art of Rebirth and Process of Self-Liberation in Near Eastern Sufism" although Merton curtailed Arasteh's extensive notes.<sup>15</sup> A projected visit by Arasteh was referred to, but appears never to have come off.

### **The Book *Final Integration***

Arasteh's lecture to the International Congress of Psychology and his article in *AJP* had led to the development and publication of his book *Final Integration in the Adult Personality* in 1965. The original paper was used as the basis for the second part of the book, which explained his theory and its applications. To this he added a literature search and detailed analyses in which he examined not just ordinary patients but also artists: the Persian poet Rumi and the German poet Goethe, among others. As mentioned above, Merton had written the note on the original article for *Collectanea* in 1965 although it did not appear in the *chroniques* feature until 1967.

The scene shifted now to the beginning of 1968, when Merton recorded in letters and journal entries that he was "reading Arasteh's fine book *Final Integration* and think[s] it brings a whole lot of threads together and makes much sense – as opposed to so much of the fragmentary and short-sighted views of sociology and psychology in America. This really has something new to say – and yet it is in line with the wisdom of the millennia. And very germane to monasticism."<sup>16</sup> Merton offered to write a review of the book for Basil DePinto, editor of *Monastic Studies*.<sup>17</sup> On March 21, 1968, waiting for some workmen to do construction on the hermitage (it was raining, and they did not arrive) he recorded in his journal that he had occupied the time by writing the review (*OSM* 70), initially published in *Monastic Studies*, and reprinted in the *Journal of Pastoral Counseling*.<sup>18</sup> It appeared in book form in the posthumous collection of essays *Contemplation in a World of Action*<sup>19</sup> and subsequently was reprinted in *Merton and Sufism* (266-77).

### ***Merton and Sufism***

A new level of complexity was added to the comedy of bibliographic errors by the editors of *Merton and Sufism*, where both the *chronique* and the review-essay are reprinted, the *chronique* as part of an eight-part section of "Merton's Sufi Book Reviews." The first four of these came from *Collectanea* (1965). Unusually, these first four had originally been written in French by Merton, who in spite of his knowledge of the language, generally wrote material for *Collectanea* in English

which was then translated by the editor, Charles Dumont. In his introduction Dumont even mentions that Merton had “this time sent us his contribution drafted in French.”<sup>20</sup>

These four were translated into English for the first time for publication in *Merton and Sufism*.<sup>21</sup> Dumont’s statement about the first four essays may have led to the description by the editors in *Merton and Sufism* that

the second set of four were set in type (there are page galleys in the Merton Center archives), but were cut from the issue at the last minute, being replaced by other Merton reviews on books about Zen . . . . Scheduled for volume 29 (1967) but never appearing in print, were reviews of Reza Arasteh’s *Final Integration in the Adult Personality* (of which Merton also wrote a long review, in English, for *Monastic Studies*, Volume 6, 1968), Paul Nwyia’s *Ibn Abbad de Ronda*, Dom Jean Leclercq’s essay “Le Monachisme en Islam et Chrétienté,” and Cyprian Rice’s *The Persian Sufis*. (Baker & Henry 240)

Here, however, the Manuscript Essays file records manuscript copies for each (generally carbon copy typescript with holographic corrections), written in English.<sup>22</sup>

The bibliographic jinx was still in full operation. All of the “second quartet” of “Sufi book reviews” had been written in English and translated into French by Dumont. The first essay of that second quartet, the one titled “Final Integration” – a comment on the original article rather than on the book, and therefore not a review “of Reza Arasteh’s *Final Integration in the Adult Personality* (of which Merton also wrote a long review, in English, for *Monastic Studies* . . .)” – had in fact been published in French translation in *Collectanea*. What appears in *Merton and Sufism*, then, is a translation at two removes, of an English article translated into French and then back into English, and the text has suffered somewhat in consequence.

Comparing a text of the original English against Dumont’s French, I found that Dumont had been fairly free in his translation and had re-arranged the word order in some places, and had particularly used more words than Merton had, and thus had wound up sounding more formal than Merton’s original, with a corresponding effect on the English re-translation. As a comparison, the first four items written in French by Merton and translated in *Merton and Sufism* indicate that his French was energetic and expansive, not at all formal. The translation of the first item back into English in *Merton and Sufism* picks up Dumont’s terminology and wording, and sometimes adds a bit as well. There are some mistranslations of individual words, and places where the meaning is inexact and the wording vague. Some examples: a simple sentence by Merton: “It is less usual to find one seeking material on the final integration of the adult personality in the lives and writings of mystics”; Dumont introduces complexity: “Il est moins courant d’en rencontrer un qui, pour decrire cette integration finale de l’adulte, prenne ses données dans la vie et les écrits des mystiques” – “prenne ses données,” an unnecessary extra twist in the sentence, is rendered in *Merton and Sufism* (312) as “takes his givens,” a verbal awkwardness in English that is does not associate well with Merton’s writing style. The word “self” in Merton’s original becomes “moi” in Dumont’s French and “I” in the *Merton and Sufism* translation. Merton’s expression “we are grateful for this excellent . . .” is correct in Dumont’s French but becomes “we can see ourselves in this excellent . . .” in the re-translation.

## The Pieces in History

This essay has not tackled the contents of the two pieces, and can do so only briefly here. Merton's writing clearly shows that he liked Arasteh's terminology, as did Arasteh's colleagues in psychotherapy. "Existential moratorium" sounds a bit like a dress-up term for "complete nervous breakdown" but the authors suggest it was more: a break in life, followed by a rebirth of something else. "Final Integration" is a term that gripped Merton to the extent that he made his review-essay a takeoff point for his ideas on monastic renewal. What is most central is the term "transcultural consciousness," something that Merton strove to practice and proselytize. The subtitle of the review-article, "Toward a Monastic Therapy," is vague: it is hardly likely that Merton would suggest entering the monastic life rather than undergoing a course of psychotherapy.

Arasteh was writing in a time before the mid-1970s bestseller on "stages of life," Gail Sheehy's *Passages*, had popularized the theories of Erik Erikson in developmental psychology. The term "midlife crisis" had not yet become commonplace. Unusually for a scientific treatise, Arasteh's introduction of the book is stated in personal terms, recounting his own experience as he explored his ideas and also as he made the transition from Iran to the U.S. in his teaching and research. The book and its then new ideas make the author and his reviewer appear prophetic, as indeed they were.

## Conclusion

The review-essay "Final Integration – Toward a 'Monastic Therapy'" is considered one of the more significant pieces Merton produced in his full maturity as a writer, so the story deserves to be properly recorded, as bibliography helps us to do. It furnishes a good example of what can be done, both rightly and wrongly, by the description of a piece of writing. As an example of what can go wrong: listing an essay of Merton's as if he were expert enough in the relevant field to be published in such a scholarly journal as the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* is not only inaccurate but misleading. Telling the story in the correct order, with accurate dates, helps us track Merton's thinking, especially on the subject of spiritual rebirth and monastic renewal, which interested him at the time.

What is most intriguing is how the retranslation exercise brings out the disciplined quality of Merton's writing, as he had trained himself to his maturity as a writer in the 1960s. The *chronique* is written with precision, no words lacking, nothing extra needed. In the French translation, extra words have appeared, as if the translator wanted to dress it up a bit, and in the end, the resulting English translation has drifted from the austere wording of the original, and produced monsters like "takes as his givens." Fuzzy and inexact language has appeared, as with the Merton text "it begins with the dissolution and self-emptying of the empirical self, the self that is constituted by its attachment to social realities," which in retranslation turns into "it opens the person to the 'void' of Self, through the dissolution of the empirical 'I,' the 'I' constituted by its ties to social realities," wherein the "void" has been added, to no good purpose, and the Self, suddenly substituted for the "I," has acquired a capital letter to suggest, perhaps, a professional psychological concept. Certainly presenting a Merton piece in its long-hidden original English will help his readers see more clearly what he was getting at.

## Aftermath: Arasteh in Paperback

Arasteh enlarged the *Final Integration* story a bit when a paperback edition of the book finally arrived in 1975, retitled as *Toward Final Personality Integration*. He made good use of Merton's friendship and his review-essay of the book, in a rather startling statement in his second edition preface:

The concept of *intentional isolation*, developed in *Final Integration*, stimulated the late Thomas Merton to explore the historical contribution of monasteries in assisting sensitive men to re-examine their assumptions about life. Later I myself re-examined the concept of intentional isolation and perfected it in terms of "group participation and individual reflection" for the training of high-level executives. While intentional isolation is essential for those who have experienced existential anxiety in combination with group conferences, it can provide a creative situation for any mature man who holds a decision-making position.<sup>23</sup>

Assisting in the training of high-level executives was obviously not quite what Merton had in mind when he wrote his review-essay. However, Arasteh's second preface indicates that a visit to a monastic milieu could be therapeutic, whether to high-level executives or others not so grand, and that idea is borne out by the experience of the monastic communities which offer retreats: they are often booked far in advance by people who simply want a quiet existential pause in their busy lives, a final integration with peace and quiet.

1. Original English of a "*chronique*" by Thomas Merton, published in French translation in *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 29.1 (1967) 179-80; published here with the permission of the Merton Legacy Trust. The original typescript is dated October 28, 1965.
2. For a full bibliographic description of the two pieces, see the entries "Final Integration in the Adult Personality" and "Final Integration – Toward a Monastic Therapy," in Patricia A. Burton, *More Than Silence: A Bibliography of Thomas Merton* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press and the American Theological Library Association, 2008) 119. The listings of Arasteh's article and book, and of Merton's reviews of each, are on the Thomas Merton Center's list of manuscript essays, but they are not at the moment correctly related: article #2304 gives the *Collectanea chronique* but states its first appearance in a book was in *Contemplation in a World of Action*; article #2802 describes the essay-review but indicates that its first publication was in *Merton and Sufism* – the references to book printings should be reversed.
3. Rob Baker and Gray Henry, eds., *Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999) 312-13; subsequent references will be cited as "Baker & Henry" parenthetically in the text. Merton's full-length article is also included in this volume (266-77).
4. A. Reza Arasteh, "Final Integration in the Adult Personality," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 25 (1965) 61-73.
5. A. Reza Arasteh, *Final Integration in the Adult Personality: A Measure for Health, Social Change, and Leadership* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965); subsequent references will be cited as "Arasteh, *Final Integration*" parenthetically in the text.
6. Frank Dell'Isola, *Thomas Merton: A Bibliography* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1975). Dell'Isola treats the *chronique* as review of a book (title in italic) [C299], and lists the essay "Final Integration" simply as an excerpt from Merton's *Contemplation in a World of Action* [C384].
7. Marquita E. Breit and Robert E. Daggy, *Thomas Merton: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1986), lists Merton's essay "Final Integration" as having been published in *AJP* [2.328a], and the *chronique* in *Collectanea* as if it were a book review [2.329].
8. Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William H.

- Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985) 520; subsequent references will be cited as “HGL” parenthetically in the text. The editor of *Hidden Ground of Love* identifies the “article of Arasteh” as “A Unitary Theory of Natural Experience,” from the *R. M. Bucke Society Newsletter-Review* (September 1966), but the “note” Merton wrote was not about this as yet unpublished article but about “Final Integration in the Adult Personality.” The book Merton refers to is A. Reza Arasteh, *Rumi the Persian, the Sufi* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1965); this book was subsequently published in paperback, with the subtitle *Rebirth in Creativity and Love*, by Routledge and Kegan Paul in 1972, and reissued by Routledge in 2007.
9. In his article “Merton, Marco Pallis and the Traditionals,” Rob Baker describes the exchange of correspondence about the matter between Merton and Dumont (Baker & Henry 240-42).
  10. “Moines et spirituelles non-Chrétiens,” edited and translated by Charles Dumont, *OCSO: Collectanea Cisterciensia* 27.1 (1965) 71-84; the first entry (72-73) is by Dom Bede Griffiths, the rest by Merton. In the second installment of the feature, “Moines et spirituelles non-Chrétiens II,” *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 29.1 (1967) 179-94, all the notices were by Merton; the first item in this set was the *chronique* about Arasteh’s article (179-80).
  11. The file at the Thomas Merton Center (listed as correspondence #59), has two letters from Arasteh to Merton and various other correspondence regarding Merton and Arasteh’s friendship. Merton’s side of the correspondence is in *HGL* 40-43.
  12. Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York: New Directions, 1965).
  13. Merton later tried to help, and proposed the book to poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti of City Lights Books – rather an odd choice for a treatise on psychoanalysis (*HGL* 43).
  14. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone and Brother Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979) 192-202; first published in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 13 (1978) 289-96.
  15. A. Reza Arasteh, “The Art of Rebirth,” *Monks Pond* 2, as reproduced in *Monks Pond: Thomas Merton’s Little Magazine*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989) 89-93.
  16. Thomas Merton, *The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey. Journals, vol. 7: 1967-1968*, ed. Patrick Hart (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998) 45 [1/23/68]; subsequent references will be cited as “OSM” parenthetically in the text.
  17. Thomas Merton, *The School of Charity: Letters on Religious Renewal and Spiritual Direction*, ed. Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990) 363; subsequent references will be cited as “SC” parenthetically in the text.
  18. Thomas Merton, “Final Integration: Toward a Monastic Therapy,” *Monastic Studies* 6 (1968) 87-99; *The Journal of Pastoral Counseling*, 4.1 (Spring 1969) 3-13.
  19. Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971) 205-17.
  20. Charles Dumont, *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 27.1 (1965) 71: “qui nous a envoyé cette fois sa contribution rédigée en français.”
  21. The Manuscript Essays source now on the Merton Center web site confirms that the originals were in French. See records as follows: Tagore, *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* [2937]; Lings, *A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century* [2230]; Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* [3212]; Meier, “The Transformation of Man” [3136]. The general address for the Manuscript Essays is: [merton.org/Research/Manuscripts/E.1.asp](http://merton.org/Research/Manuscripts/E.1.asp).
  22. The records for the four pieces written originally in English: “Final Integration” [2304]; *Ibn Abbad de Ronda* [2938]; “Le Monachism en Islam” [3027]; *The Persian Sufis* [3331].
  23. A. Reza Arasteh, *Toward Final Personality Integration: A Measure for Health, Social Change, and Leadership*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Schenkman, 1975) xv.