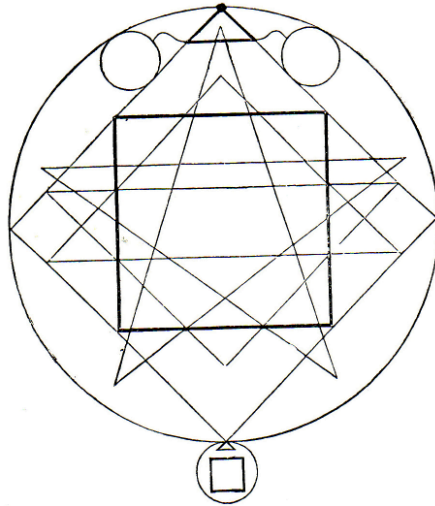


# Meditation Triangle Units



## Some Collected Works of Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

(Compiled and arranged by Philippe L. De Coster, D.D., responsible for  
the French Section of MGNA and CMG)



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## Foreword by Philippe L. De Coster, D.D.



This volume of the Collected Works of Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D., contains extracts from his books, essays, interviews and conferences given at Sundial House, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK. This collection is only a small part of the psychologist's life work, today translated in many languages, and world-wide spread. Through his pioneering work in psychosynthesis, he brought so much to our understanding, clarifying that which was formerly so obscure about the microcosm (*man*), and the macrocosm (*cosmos, universe*), psychic and physical energies. In a way, he brought light to much obscure Jewish and Christian Dogma's, exactly the way the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin did. The last was totally unheard in the Vatican, even avoided, but he persisted in his work.

Especially through Carl Gustav Jung and Roberto Assagioli, we now know, that:

- Psychic energies possess quantity and mass, just like physical energies.
- As different forms of psychic work and psychic potentiality, they can be transformed into one another.
- They can be converted into physical energies and vice versa, by means of psychological processes.

Dr. Roberto Assagioli went even further than Carl Gustav Jung, he worked out another discipline, and that is psychosynthesis. However, he remained closer to Jung than to Freud, emphasizing that dynamic psychology should not only be concerned with depth (*the unconscious*), but also with the height (*the superconscious*). And, he found that "visualization" was very useful in making concrete the difference between therapeutic interventions which went downwards into unconscious material (*mountain tops and chapels*). Assagioli's 'egg diagram helps to make it all clear.

The view of psychosynthesis is that the subpersonalities must become aware of one another before any integration can take place, so a phase of coordination is necessary where this happens. During this phase, there are inner changes within the subpersonalities – they cease to be dominant and

exclusive, and start to take the others into account. These changes and discoveries make it easier for all to work together.

Contemporary understanding of human functioning is rapidly tending to abandon the old notion that mind and body can be brought of as being separate entities and is adopting more holistic concepts, such as the soma: the total living, breathing, experiencing, indivisible being, whose parts cannot be meaningful considered except in the light of the whole person. Man defines himself by his project.

The collective unconscious is neither a philosophic construct nor a religious dogma; it is an attempt, though sometimes a primitive attempt, to present an accurate description of the “inner world” of the psyche and its relationship with the outer material world. The story of the knowledge and power hidden within, and the moral conflicts caused by that knowledge and power religiously, was to fascinate Roberto Assagioli throughout his life.

When I look back 1960 ending, beginning 71's , I feel indebted to Michal J. Eastcott and Nancy Magor, to have accepted me as co-worker with them and others at the headquarters of both the work of Dr. Roberto Assagioli, and of the two Meditation Groups at “Sundial House”, Nevill Court, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK represented by the two wonderful ladies. Tilla Grenier, a quite elderly lady at the time, arduously represented Sundial House's work in Brussels (Belgium). She translated all the MGNA booklets (*Meditation Group for the New Age*); and partly, the CMG booklets (*Creative Meditation Group*), continued by me and those willing to assist me. I was for the very first time at Sundial House in 1971 joining the Wesak Festival. For me “Sundial House” was as for many others, a centre where creative meditation was promoted, opening as such the New Age, where we are now in. This “New Age” is, indeed, influenced by the Laws and Principles of the Kingdom of God. The life-work of Michael Eastcott can be presented in straightforward terms, namely the long journey of humankind to find and live in the High Self., the Soul, the only true Self, the other god.

Michal always worked and wrote from an open heart and an experienced mind, her work reflecting Dr. Assagioli's studies and Alice A. Bailey's esotericism, infusing the personality life with the wisdom and the love of the divine within each human soul.

Michal J. Eastcott and Nancy Magor were hard workers, moving all the time from Italy to UK, translating for Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D. He, himself, came often to Sundial House, his second home. Today, I certainly miss them both. And, I am so sorry never having met Dr. Roberto Assagioli.

Working with Light — Michal J. Eastcott

By lighted thought, directed by the power of dedication, (disciples) can supply sublimated substance needed by the Hierarchy in its efforts to bring increased light content to the planet.

Finally, Dr. Roberto Assagioli was one of the first psychologists who recognized the spiritual nature of man, along with Abe Maslow. His work came to be known as Psychosynthesis which was a more clinically applied form of psychotherapy incorporating the transpersonal aspect of human experiences.

Dr. Roberto Assagioli's life had a wholeness offered to few men or women as Michal J. Eastcott and Nancy Magor; whole, in the sense that the bold innovator born more than a century ago lived to see his ideas take form in hundreds of articles, books in many languages, students in numerous countries, a body of theory pregnant with new implications and consequences, and centres continuing to develop his work in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, , Italy, Switzerland, France, Greece and Argentina.

Be that as it may, the achievement of the outstanding man he was, both public and personal, recalls our attention and deserves to be always remembered.

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**In Memory of Michal J. Eastcott  
Meditation Group for the New Age  
and  
Creative Meditation Group  
Sundial House, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK**



**Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D., and Michal J. Eastcott (at the centre in front)**



**Tilla Grenier, responsible for the French Sections of MGNA and CMG,  
assisted by Philippe L De Coster, D.D. from 1969**

## **Joy — A Special Wisdom**

**By Michal J. Eastcott**

Joy is one of the soul's fundamental qualities. Let it once touch the heart and mind, and we can never be the same again. All right human activity can spark off a real experience of joy. We can be the athlete straining every muscle in a race; we can be the musician, artist or writer reaching up to that true inner beauty; we can be the mother giving birth to her child; we can be the political leader battling to ground a new and needed ideal, or the scientist penetrating deeper into one of the universe's mysteries. Joy can also come to us out of the blue, as it were, when we are faced with difficulty and crisis in our personal lives. All these are situations when somehow we break through the barriers to spiritual awareness. In fact, whatever our outer circumstances, we can always allow the energy of the soul to permeate our being with a deep joy.

Knowing it to be the expression of a deeper reality, joy confers on us a special wisdom. We can understand the truth of Julian of Norwich's insight, born of joy, that "all things will be well; all manner of things will be well". This is a profound and timeless realisation. Yet this sense that, deep down,



all is well cannot excuse distorted human actions and relationships. It does not justify suffering, and it should certainly not be used as an alibi for inaction. Rather, it points to the fact that, whatever the human condition, the energies of transformation, the soul's innate joy and its spiritual vision and ideas are eternally present. These gifts are always available to the individual, to the group and to humanity as a whole whenever we choose to live and act according to what we know is true and just.

Joy is a special wisdom. When we touch the soul ourselves, we actually become a strand in the bridge that links humanity to the higher kingdoms. When we experience joy ourselves, we can bring this quality into the wider field of humanity's awareness.

The worldwide network of triangles is of course an important vehicle for achieving this, and many have commented on the special joy they experience as they participate in the work. So, as we do our daily triangles meditation, thinking in the heart and loving with the mind, we can know that our directed thought, winging through the channels of light that we are creating, is bringing the time of right human choice ever nearer.

## **Joy Lets In The Light**



**Be joyful, for joy lets in the light, and where there is joy there is little room for glamour and misunderstanding.**

**Alice A. Bailey**

In spite of difficulties, treasure the higher joy of achievement. This joy of achievement must be cultivated in oneself as well as in others. This is most essential, since only in it lies the pledge of the salvation of humanity, the pledge for the approach of the New World! ... The joy of the future is ordained, but, indeed, the period of waiting at the threshold is always wearisome.

**Helena Roerich**

The salient characteristic of sympathetic joy is gladness, its essential property the opposite of envy, its manifestation the abolition of disaffection, its proximate cause the sight of the success of others. To one who is in ecstasy of joy, contemplating the consciousness of beings who for some joyous reason are rejoicing, his (the Buddhist's) heart becomes stored with and possessed by that consciousness. (Thus) sympathetic joy refers either to a state of joy in others, or in oneself, or just to the feeling impersonally considered.

**From the Visuddhi Magga of Buddhaghosa**

I think the attitude of meditation should be a kind of interested joy. The quality of joy is the best proof of the efficacy of meditation. If it gives you more joy, it is worthwhile. If it doesn't, don't force it.

**Lama Anagarika Govinda**

Joy is perhaps one of the greatest healers; we are apt to overlook its role in this respect, associating it only with pleasure. But joy runs deeper than the personality life, its roots lie in the realms of the Soul and link us with the lasting things, with the harmony, beauty, love, unity, and all the other glories of the spiritual life. To cultivate joy is one of the most valuable aspects of self healing.

The suggestion that joy be deliberately cultivated may at first seem an anomaly, for the qualities we attribute to it most of all are spontaneity and depth. But just as a beautiful flower has to be grown with care and nurtured to attain its full radiance, so such qualities as joy have to be tended and encouraged in our selves to reach their flowering. They are easily shut out, given no room, offset by other activities which we crowd into our lives, so that they have little chance to grow even though their seeds be there.

**Michal J. Eastcott**

Joy is the concomitant of productive activity. It is not a 'peak experience', which culminates and ends suddenly, but rather a plateau, a feeling state that accompanies the productive expression of one's



essential human faculties. Joy is not the ecstatic fire of the moment. Joy is the glow that accompanies being.

**Erich Fromm**

By keeping a diary of what made me happy I had discovered that happiness came when I was most widely aware. So I had finally come to the conclusion that my task was to become more and more aware, more and more understanding with an understanding that was not at all the same thing as intellectual comprehension. And, by finding that in order to be more and more aware I had to be more and more still, I had not only come to see through my own eyes instead of at second hand, but I had also finally come to discover what was the way of escape from the imprisoning island of my own self-consciousness.

**Marion Milner**

Learn to feel joy, a joy which is based on the knowledge that humanity has always triumphed and passed onward and forward in spite of apparent failures and the destruction of past civilisations; a joy, which is founded upon the unshakable belief that all men are souls, and that "points of crisis" are factors which are of proven usefulness in calling in the power of that soul, both in the individual man, in a race, or in humanity as a whole; a joy which is related to the bliss which characterises the soul on its own level whereon the form aspects of manifestation do not dominate. Ponder on these thoughts and remember that you are grounded in the centre of your Being and can, therefore, see the world truly and with no limited vision; you can stand unperturbed, knowing the end from the beginning and realising that love will triumph.

**Alice A. Bailey**



The beautiful and well-kept lawn at Sundial House, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK  
Michal J. Eastcott found the time to mow the lawn herself.



Happy conversation with Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

To Phil, Mike,  
Wishing you great  
Joy on your own  
Silent Path & hope  
you welcome to the  
Group.  
Michal  

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March 1971

**Michal Eastcott, dedicating her book, "The Silent Path" in 1971.**

This introduction to meditation, first published some 40 years ago, covers the function of meditation and the relationship between the two parts of ourselves. It discusses states of consciousness and the experience of illumination and it gives practical advice and relaxation techniques, and much more.

## Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

*'Psychosynthesis is a method of psychological development and self realization for those who refuse to remain the slave of their own inner phantasms or of external influences, who refuse to submit passively to the play of psychological forces which is going on within them, and who are determined to become the master of their own lives'. Roberto Assagioli*



Psychiatrist, psychotherapist, and parapsychologist. He was born February 27, 1888, in Venice, Italy, and educated at University of Florence (M.D.). As a young psychiatrist he became disenchanted with first Freudian and then Jungian psychoanalysis. Thus he turned his attention to the development of a new psychology he termed psychosynthesis. Psychosynthesis assumes that in addition to the conscious self, or "I", every person also has a pathway to a "Higher Self," which is a reflection of the divine. The purpose of each human life is to participate as fully as possible in self-evolution along that pathway. The system was left open so that both individuals and

any psychologists could participate in developing psychosynthesis and incorporate the various occult tools of transformation.

He was born under the name **Roberto Marco Grego**, however, his biological father died when Assagioli was two years old, and his mother remarried Alessandro Emanuele Assagioli soon afterward. As a youth, Assagioli was exposed to many creative outlets at a young age, such as art, and music, which were believed to have inspired his work in Psychosynthesis. By the age of 18, he had learned eight different languages, namely Italian (his native tongue), English, French, Russian, Greek, Latin, German, and Sanskrit. It was at this age he also began to travel, mainly to Russia, where he learned about social systems, and politics. In 1922 he married a young woman by the name of Nella, and they had one son together, Ilario Assagioli.



Assagioli received his first degree in neurology and psychiatry at Istituto di Studii Superiori Pratici e di Perfezionamento, in Florence, Italy, in 1910. It was during this time he began writing articles that criticized psychoanalysis, in which Assagioli argued a more holistic approach.

Once he finished his studies in Italy, Assagioli went to Switzerland, where he was trained in psychiatry at the psychiatric hospital Burghölzli in Zürich. This led to him opening the first psychoanalytic practice in Italy, known as Istituto di Psicosintesi. However, his work in psychoanalysis left him unsatisfied with the field as a whole, as he felt that it to be too incomplete.

Assagioli founded the Institute of Psychosynthesis in 1926. He met Alice Bailey during the early 1930s, and they became friends; their organizations have retained a working association. Psychosynthesis was suppressed during World War II, and Assagioli was arrested. He spent his prison days exploring meditation and altered states of consciousness. After the war he revived his work and promoted the founding of institutes in the United States, Greece, and England.

In 1938, Assagioli was arrested and imprisoned by Mussolini's Fascist government, due to his Jewish heritage, and his humanistic writing. He was placed in solitary confinement for over a month, until he was released and returned to his family. During World War II, his family's farm in Florence, Italy was destroyed, and both he and his family fled underground. Tragically, his son died at the age of 28 from lung disease, which was accredited to severe stress from the harsh living conditions during the war. Once the war had ended, he returned to his work, and began his legacy, known as psychosynthesis.

The years after the war were relatively calm, and it was during this time that he founded various foundations dedicated to psychosynthesis, in Europe and North America. Assagioli lived a long and prosperous life, and had a happy forty-year marriage, until he died at age 86.

In 1958 Assagioli became chair of the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation at Greenville, Delaware, and editor of *Psiche-Rivista di Studi Psicologici*. During his mature years, he authored a set of books which became the major statements of psychosynthesis. He died in Capaiona, Italy, on August 23, 1974. The cause of his death was unknown.

# **Psychosynthesis**

## **Inspiration and development**

Assagioli is famous for developing and founding the science of psychosynthesis, a spiritual and holistic approach to psychology that had developed from psychoanalysis. Assagioli insisted that psychosynthesis was a legitimate science, which was continuously developing, and which agreed and disagreed with theories formulated by other psychologists, particularly Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

Trained in psychoanalysis but unsatisfied by what he regarded as its incompleteness as a whole, Assagioli felt that love, wisdom, creativity, and will, were all important components that should be included in psychoanalysis. Assagioli's earliest development of psychosynthesis started in 1911, when he began his formal education in psychology. He continued his work on psychosynthesis right up until his death.

He was largely inspired by Freud's idea of the repressed mind and Jung's theories of the collective unconscious. Freud and Assagioli were known to have corresponded, although they never had the chance to meet. Assagioli considered Jung's theories to be closest in the understanding of psychosynthesis.

Assagioli accredited much of his inspiration for psychosynthesis to his month-long incarceration in solitary confinement in 1938. He used his time in prison to exercise his mental will, by meditating daily while in prison. He concluded that he was able to change his punishment into an opportunity to investigate his Inner-Self.

## **Psychology Today interview**

In the December 1974 issue of *Psychology Today* Assagioli was interviewed by Sam Keen, in which Assagioli discussed the similarities between psychoanalysis and psychosynthesis:

In the practice of therapy we both agree in rejecting 'pathologism' that is, concentration upon morbid manifestations and symptoms of a supposed psychological 'disease'. We regard man as a fundamentally, healthy organism in which there may be temporary malfunctioning. Nature is always trying to re-establish harmony, and within the psyche the principle of



synthesis is dominant. Irreconcilable opposites do not exist. The task of therapy is to aid the individual in transforming the personality, and integrating apparent contradictions. Both Jung and myself have stressed the need for a person to develop the higher psychic functions, the spiritual dimension

Assagioli also highlighted the differences between psychoanalysis and psychosynthesis:

Perhaps the best way to state our differences is with a diagram of the psychic functions. Jung differentiates four functions: sensation, feeling, thought, and intuition. Psychosynthesis says that Jung's four functions do not provide for a complete description of the psychological life. Our view can be visualized like this: We hold that outside imagination or fantasy is a distinct function. There is also a group of functions that impels us toward action in the outside world. This group includes instincts, tendencies, impulses, desires, and aspirations. And here we come to one of the central foundations of psychosynthesis: There is a fundamental difference between drives, impulses, desires, and the will. In the human condition there are frequent conflicts between desire and will. And we will place the will in a central position at the heart of self-consciousness or the Ego.

Assagioli also asserted about the will:

The will is not merely assertive, aggressive, and controlling. There is the accepting will, yielding will, the dedicated will. You might say that there is a feminine polarity to the will –the willing surrender, the joyful acceptance of the other functions of the personality.

At the end of the interview, Keen himself concluded:

It is hard to know what counts as evidence for the validity of a world view and the therapeutic it entails. Every form of therapy has dramatic successes and just as dramatic failures. Enter as evidence in the case for psychosynthesis an ad hominem argument: in speaking about death there was no change in the tone or intensity of Assagioli's voice and the light still played in his dark eyes, and his mouth was never very far from a smile.

## Continued impact

Since Assagioli's death in the early 1970s, psychosynthesis has continued to be embraced as a comprehensive psychological approach for finding inner peace and harmony.

The Psychosynthesis & Education Trust centre in Britain was founded by Assagioli in 1965, and is currently being run by President Lady Diana Whitmore. The Trust is affiliated with Humanistic and Integrative Psychology Section of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP), and is a founding member of the European Federation of Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy (EFPP). At present time, the group consists of a large group of psychosynthesis practitioners who mediate students. The Trust offers workshops, courses, and a newsletter, to anyone who is interested in learning more about psychosynthesis.

The Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis (AAP) was formed in August 1995, as a non-profit organization in the United States, with approximately two-hundred members across the country. Members of the AAP run programs, workshops, and conferences, to discuss Assagioli and psychosynthesis, and publish a newsletter to discuss new topics related to the field.

The Will Project Wiki was created in 2007, and was based on the Will Project proposed by Assagioli when he was alive. The Will Project consists of over 63 articles based on Assagioli's published book *The Act of Will*.

Roberto Assagioli was one of the first psychologists who recognized the spiritual nature of man, along with Abe Maslow. His work has come to be known as Psychosynthesis which was a more clinically applied form of psychotherapy incorporating the transpersonal aspect of human experiences.

Battista (1996) summarizes Assagioli's work:

Assagioli saw that people had two major phases to their psychological growth. The first was the development of the "I" or the centre of the personality (*see below*). There are "subpersonalities" within an individual which are internal structures that are formed through conflicts of normal human experience. The healthy development of an individual integrates and balances these subpersonalities into the I. Therapeutically, this process can

be helped by "mapping" the unconscious through dreamwork , and psychological testing. He called this phase "personal psychosynthesis." (pp. 57-58)

The second phase in psychological growth according to Assagioli occurs as a "spiritual psychosynthesis" when the personal psychosynthesis is completed. It is a phase where the individual begins to locate their superconscious , transcendent self or spiritual centre which is when a sense of connection to all of humanity and nature and is experienced as unity. This process is also fostered in psychotherapy through techniques such as meditation, inner dialogue with an inner sage or teacher, and active imagination exercises (Battista, 1996).

Assagioli recognized that moving from the personal psychosynthesis phase of development to the spiritual psychosynthesis phase often was prompted by a spiritual crisis. Battista (1996) compares this to an existential crisis, where the individual begins to actively question their existence. He finds similarities of psychosynthesis with humanistic psychology by both begin concerned with the growth and development of consciousness; existential psychology where both are concerned with values, meaning, identity and choice; Jungian psychology where there are subpersonalities and tension of opposites; and eastern practices of yoga and Buddhism where the therapist is the sage or teacher to the person undergoing psychosynthesis in therapy.

In The Psychosynthesis and Education Trust's introduction to *Psychosynthesis* (2002), the phenomenology of the synthesis is summarized.:

We find when the various elements of our being are in conflict, our energy becomes blocked, and this causes pain. However, each time that a synthesis of two or more parts of our personality occurs, energy is freed and we experience a sense of profound well-being. This is the essence of psychosynthesis: the harmonious integration of all our component parts around a unifying centre. The tendency towards synthesis is inherent within us. Psychosynthesis, rather than being an artificial imposition of techniques, simply unblocks and stimulates a process that is more closely allied to us than any other: becoming who we are.

## **Personal Reflection**

Whenever I run across work or quotes by Robert Assagioli, I have to pause

and I feel captured. I am not so much interested in his ideas of "subpersonalities" although I can understand them in the sense of internal constructs developed through patterns of reactions to experiences of living. However, I am very wary of using labels which are similar to "ego", "id", and "superego" am even a little suspicious of the term "unconscious" and I'm sure this comes from my layman's interpretation of Freud at an earlier age where primitive drives rule the human encounter. What I am captured by is the idea that healing or growth occurs through the integration of these aspects, with a fully realized spiritual self. I like the simplicity of his stages, being just two, although I would not split them into distinct parts or levels of experience. I also like the therapeutic practices he has developed and hope to learn more about them in time.

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## The 'I'

*If this first task of self-knowledge is undertaken in the right way (avoiding the danger of losing oneself in a labyrinth of endless investigations), we become aware that within us there are many more or less conscious aspects, roles and attitudes with which we from time to time identify ourselves, to the point of forgetting or repressing the rest of our personality.*

*When we are identifying this way with one single part of ourselves, we become ruled by it, we are enslaved by an illusion. For example we have all seen someone dominated by anxiety or depression, or by a prejudice, or by ambition, and we have all felt ourselves at times to be prisoners of oppressive psychological patterns which appeared to be beyond our control.*

*Such identification is a universal process which can be reversed only by its opposite: disidentification, an attitude whereby we consciously detach ourselves from all the various aspects of our personality, thus allowing ourselves to discover our true 'EI', our centre. This experience of being centred gives us a clear impression of inner freedom, helps us to perceive who we really are, and opens innumerable psychological possibilities; and so it evokes joy.*

*Assagioli was clear that psychosynthesis could not pretend to be a spiritual teaching, but it could attempt to re-interpret universal spiritual wisdom into psychological insight. Although, like many spiritual teachers he made much of testing things out through experience rather than just believing them, his was not truly an empirically based psychology - despite claims to the contrary by such as Ferrucci. He took key principles from different esoteric spiritual approaches and put them into a psychological context. Assagioli based psychosynthesis on esoteric psychology and the work of Alice Bailey in particular.*

# What is Synthesis?

by **Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.**

(Handed out from The Psychosynthesis and Education Trust)

Until now we have persisted in disputing two widely spread errors held not only by the public, but also by some scientists and philosophers. Firstly, that the human psyche is an organic and coherent unity.

Secondly, that psyche and consciousness are identical and co-existent. We have seen how an observation made without preconceived ideas or theoretical “blindness” reveals, even in the conscious part of our mind, a multiplicity of heterogeneous elements full of contrasting tendencies from which the great complexities, anxieties, mutability and contradictions of the human being derive. Then we saw that, beyond the illumined part of consciousness, numerous psychic activities take place, all quite different in nature, level and value, which range from elementary instinctive tendencies, to the highest manifestations of artistic creation and spiritual enlightenment.

But after establishing these points, we can, or rather we must, consider the other aspect of reality and give it all the importance and value that it merits. Psychic elements and tendencies do not co-exist side by side, in total independence from each other, in everlasting conflict, mitigated only by temporary compromises, by alliances or a fusing of instincts and desires. This concept, to which the more conventional psychoanalysts hold more or less explicitly, is a pessimistic and desperate theory, which fortunately does not correspond to reality. It is a derivation from the empiricists’ theory, supported in modern times by Condillac and by other associationists and in general by the positivists and materialists of the past century. But the representatives of this concept did not take into consideration, or did so only partially and totally insufficiently, the fact that there is, in the human psyche, another fundamental tendency, that of union, synthesis, which is more profound and vital than the simple, mechanical association of sensations and ideas. It is a tendency that is an expression of a universal principle, whose manifestations can be found at an elementary level before the formation of individual human psychic life and which surpasses it on a higher and vaster level, forming the great inter-human and super-human syntheses.



Synthesis is a word derived from the Greek: Syn-thesis, which corresponds to: composition. The basic principal of synthesis is already seen in its simplest form, in inorganic material and is evident from the difference to be found between chemical mixtures and chemical combinations. In mixtures two different chemical substances are in contact with each other, but no matter how much they are mixed and blended together they do not form anything new. A mixture is a simple sum of the properties of the single elements. A typical example: air, a mixture of oxygen, carbon dioxide and water vapour (except for a few other trace elements). Every one of these elements is free and easily isolated. Therefore when we breathe, we can retain the oxygen and expel the carbon dioxide. On the other hand, the water vapour is formed in the air by evaporation and leaves it by condensation independently from the oxygen and carbon dioxide.

Something very different occurs when a chemical combination is formed, as when oxygen and hydrogen combine to form water, which is a substance completely different from its components. These, at a normal temperature are gas, while water is a liquid. Besides which, water is a stable substance, fixed and special laboratory procedures are necessary in order to disintegrate it, needing great expenditure of energy. It is interesting to note that the act of combining chemical substances often requires a great expenditure of energy which man uses for dynamic purposes and also for destructive ends. An example of the first type: combustion engines, whose power of propulsion derives from the combination of petrol and oxygen. An example of the second type is dynamite. We will discuss later on the interesting analogies, the dynamic and explosive combinations of psychic elements.

There is another interesting fact that also has a suggestive analogy in the field of the psyche. Often it is not enough to put the two chemical substances in contact: it is necessary to light a fire, or even a spark (there are elements in us that have existed for years, inert side by side, but a spark is enough to cause them to combine).

But the recent progress made in physics allows us to go a step farther. The atom itself, that at first was considered a simple and indivisible element, is really a dynamic synthesis of electric charges: from the central nucleus and from the elements that rotate dizzily around it. The atom is a delicate equilibrium of attraction and repulsion, of centripetal and centrifugal forces. The projection or shifting of an electron is enough to change the properties of an atom, to produce all kinds of radiation, electro-magnetic vibrations, luminous phenomena and sounds that emit enormous qualities of energy. It is

these continuous, extremely rapid plays of force that produce all the phenomena of the cosmos, that makes every vital manifestation possible.

To give an idea of this I will quote a single fact referred to us by one of the greatest astronomers, Eddington. He says, "The solar cromosphere contains a cloud of atoms of calcium that seem to ride on the solar rays. Each of the atoms contains 20 electrons, 18 of which are solidly attached to the central nucleus, around which they turn vertiginously. Two, on the other hand are semi-detached. According to the conditions of the solar cromosphere one of these becomes detached, while the second when it becomes stimulated by a luminous ray, is projected onto a more distant orbit, from which it falls, spontaneously onto the original orbit. This fact must be repeated 200,000 times a second in order to maintain the atom in equilibrium on the cromosphere. This twenty-thousandth of a second is divided into two periods: the longer one, during which the atom waits patiently for a luminous wave to collide with it and project the electron further away. The other, during which the electron remains in the more distant orbit. This lasts on an average, on hundred millionth of a second, during which it travels along its orbit a million times".

Now we come to the organic world. Biological life immediately appears as a synthesis. We see that the single organs of an animal or human organism are coordinated in their action by a superior unity. There is a vital, unifying principle, showing many manifestations that appear intelligent, which makes possible the life of the organism. A life that, above all seems to be a dynamic equilibrium of antagonistic systems.

Recent biological and physiological studies have thrown much light on this admirable phenomena. There is a fundamental dualism between the parasympathetic and the sympathetic systems, and in this antagonism groups of glands and internal secretions participate, the first in one field, the other in another. One of these groups tends towards catabolism, that is, to life in relation to the organism, to its external activity, with spending of energy. The other group tends to anabolism, to the reconstruction, to the accumulation and conservation of energy.

The excesses of the catabolic phase causes exhaustion, while excesses to the anabolic phase produces an excessive accumulation of unused energy. These two phases alternate rhythmically. The most obvious and normal analogy is that of sleeping and waking. During waking hours the catabolic functions reveal, external activity, the life of relationships. During sleep the anabolic

activity prevails, for the reparation and conservation of the organism. Whenever one of these phases prevails excessively over the other, there is illness. Basedow's disease, the hyperactivity of the thyroid gland, a catabolic organ, causes loss of weight and other disturbances of a catabolic nature.

Another morbid manifestation even more accentuated, due to a defect in the regulating ability, are tumours. These are formed by rebellious cells that do not obey the normal rhythm of growth. Continually in the organism, every day thousands of cells die and about as many are born. Altogether quantitatively and qualitatively there is an equilibrium. When this is broken, when some groups of cells begin to proliferate rapidly, a foreign organism is formed, a parasite of the principal organism, that is a tumour. This, violating the law of self-regulation, provokes the destruction of the organism and with this its own destruction.

The importance of this self-regulation is seen at the moment of death. Then the action of the unifying principle ceases. Every cell acts individually and this results in the dissolution of the organism. This interests us particularly as an analogy for the study of life of the psyche. Here the tendency to synthesis is no less strong and fundamental, in fact it reaches a superior degree of complexity and finesse.

Sensation, that was held by the "sensists" to be a simple and elementary fact, like the atom by the chemists, is actually on par with the atom and more than this, a complex phenomena. Philosophers and psychologists have preceded the physicists in this discovery.

Limiting our discussion to modern thought, already Leibnitz, responding to Locke who maintained that intelligence does not contain anything that cannot be perceived by the senses, declared: "Yes, if not intelligence itself." In fact no sensation exists unless it is felt, perceived by a subject, unless it becomes part of a system, to integrate in a psychic synthesis, to unite itself to something pre-existent. Leibnitz shows how, in reality, sensation is a grouping together of numerous little elements not clearly perceptible, that is, subconscious. In a sense one could say that Leibnitz was, in modern times, the precursor of the discovery of the subconscious.

After Leibnitz, the synthetic character of psychic activities was made well evident by Kant, who demonstrated it in perception, judgement, concept and later by Wundt, Hoffding and Janet.

James has given a clear and ingenious analogy of this. He says, "Take 12 people and say to each one of them, one of these words. Then arrange these men in a line, or all massed together. Make each one of them think about his word with the greatest possible attention. This will never produce, to anyone, the consciousness of the entire phrase." Therefore the simple mechanical juxtaposition of sensations, particular elements, never produces a significance, produced only by the combination of various elements.

The synthesis of opposites has particular importance in psychic life. This great principle, which is the key to understanding and resolving so many theoretical and practical problems, was intuitively sense by Plato, but expressed more clearly by Cardinal Da Cusa. He affirms that unity exists before duality, the synthesis of the opposites before their schism. That thought was energetically supported by Cusano's great disciple, Giordano Bruno. He proclaimed the synthesis of the opposites as the principle tenet of a forgotten philosophy that must be revived. He speaks of the unifying of the opposites: of acute and obtuse angles, of heat and cold, of love and hate, of poisons and their antidotes, of concave and converse. He who wishes to know the great secrets of nature must examine and contemplate the smallest and greatest of the contrasts and opposites. Profound magic lies in knowing how to discover the contrary, after having found the point of union."

This principle is expanded upon even more by Hegel, who made it the key of his philosophic system, called "dialectic". The opposites are "opposed" between themselves, but not opposed in regard to unity, since real and concrete unity is only the unity and syntheses of opposites. Immobility is not movement, nor is unchangeableness change.

The truth is that unity is not faced by opposition, but by itself, and that without the opposition reality would not be reality because there would be no change and life. The two abstract elements, or opposites taken by themselves, in their state of separation are called by Hegel, "moments" with the image drawn from the moment of the levy. And "moments" is sometimes called the third term, that of synthesis. The relationship of the first two with the third is expressed by the words "resolve" and "surpass". The two antithetic, opposing terms are resolved and surpassed in the synthesis. It is important that the two opposing moments are denied, when taken in a detached stage, but preserved in the synthesis. The principle triad that Hegel presents and from which other triads would derive, is that of being, of nothing and of becoming.

But I cannot enter into philosophic discussion. It is enough to mention the principle, then we will apply it to living, concrete, human psychology. In psychic life, as in organic life, we find a rhythmic alternating of two opposing principles, that of extraversion and of introversion. Extraversion, that is the turning outward of the vital interest, corresponds to what in organic life is catabolism, the life of relationships, of expenditure, of the dispersion of energy. Introversion, on the other hand, that is turning of vital interest inward, corresponds to anabolism, to the inner life. A harmonious succession of these movements should constitute the rhythm of life. And to reach this rhythm an “art of living” is necessary.

The same could be said about all the other contrasts or polarities of which the human psyche is so rich – we are tempted to say “too rich”. They should not be abolished, but could persist with a certain degree of autonomy.

As organic life is not the abolition of contrast between catabolism and anabolism, between the life of relationships, of consuming, and the life of reconstruction, so psychic life does not mean the abolition of one of the terms in favour of the other. It is necessary to have both, necessary that a tension exists between them, but a creative tension. It is necessary to force them to integrate into a more expansive, fuller life, into a superior reality that contains them and at the same time transcends them. This is the real synthesis. To realize it, there needs to be the continual presence and powerful action of a higher regulating principle. This principle, in its highest aspect, is the spiritual element, superior to the psychological, that remains more or less latent in the human spirit, but when it is freed and becomes effective, brings order, harmony, beauty, joy. It gradually transforms weak and insecure man, divided in himself, agitated by violent contrasts and grief's, into a bright and purified being, complete and consistent; into a centre of fire and light, from which radiate high and benefic spiritual energies.

# **Psychosynthesis - Individual and Social**

**by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.**

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Psychosynthesis presupposes psychoanalysis or, rather, includes it as a first and necessary stage. There is in this respect a close analogy with chemical processes—both with those produced in the scientific laboratory and with those, even more wonderful, which are consistently going on in the human body. For instance, the complex molecules of the proteins contained in food are subdivided into the simpler molecules of peptones by the biochemical analytical processes of digestion. Through a process of synthesis, these are combined to form larger molecules constituting the specific proteins of our own organism.

The same thing occurs in the human psyche, in which processes of dissolution and reconstruction are being carried on incessantly. Sometimes these processes of psychological assimilation (one might say of ingestion and digestion) take place easily and spontaneously, but often psychological indigestion and toxic conditions occur and psychopathological abscesses and tumors are developed in the unconscious of the individual.

The need for studying and curing these troubles has led to the creation and use of new methods of investigation and treatment, and to varied theories and interpretations, the most generally known being psychoanalysis.

The lot of psychoanalysis has been peculiar. What has happened we must deplore because of its many unfortunate consequences, but which, with our psychoanalytic knowledge of human nature, should not surprise us. The more questionable, excessive and dangerous aspects of psychoanalysis have been those most emphasized and widespread. The sexual theory (or the alleged sexual origin of most manifestations of human life) and a system of often arbitrary and far-fetched interpretations have had a great vogue among the public, arousing unwholesome curiosity and frequently furnishing a pseudo-justification for an uncontrolled indulgence of the instinctive nature. At the same time the higher aspects, the fine flowerings of human nature such as express themselves through religion and art, have been subjected to a destructive analysis that misses their true and deeper essence.



In consequence of these excesses and deviations, a number of psychologists and psychiatrists have been led into a wholesale denunciation and condemnation of psychoanalysis, and a rejection of the important elements of truth it contains and the useful psychotherapeutic and educational techniques it has developed.

We may say that its most fruitful contribution has been the demonstration that there can be no real health, no inner harmony and freedom, and no unimpaired efficiency without first a sincere, courageous and humble acknowledgement of all the lower aspects of our nature, all the impulses, passions and illusions, plus their manifold combinations and deviations, which dwell and seethe in our unconscious and which delude, limit and enslave us.

Psychoanalysis, *in its best aspects*, is effective in helping us to overcome the resistances and repressions produced by our ignorance, our fear, our pride and our hypocrisy; these prevent us from seeing clearly the dark sides of our nature. Their recognition is a prerequisite in dealing with them satisfactorily and thus laying a sound and stable foundation for all our subsequent work on the psychological building-up of our personality.

As Freud (2) stated, psychoanalysis can aid us in passing from the “pleasure-pain principle,” from the unceasing oscillation between these two poles in vain attempts to cling to the first and avoid the second, to the “reality principle,” that is, to the recognition and the conscious acceptance of reality—with its laws and just claims. Thus a well- understood and applied psychoanalysis may help us to pass from the world of passions and emotions, of vain imaginations and illusions, to the realm of healthy reason, to an objective and scientific vision of ourselves and of others. But sometimes this help, even when given by the best kind of psychoanalysis, proves inadequate for the solution of man’s psychological and spiritual problems. It has been observed again and again that, while the bringing into the light of consciousness of the diverse tendencies at war in our unconscious may eliminate some morbid symptoms, it is not sufficient to solve the conflicts. Sometimes, as when the patient is unable to stand too sudden or premature a revelation, it may even complicate the condition. Furthermore, a too insistent and one-sided delving into the lower aspects of the human psyche can be definitely harmful.

Therefore the practice of psychoanalysis requires much caution and should be kept within definite bounds; but above all it should be integrated by active

psychosynthetic procedures. This integration enables therapists to help patients, and educators to help the young, to utilize, transmute and sublimate their exuberant vital and psychological forces.

There are specific psychological laws regulating the uses and transformations of emotional and mental forces which bear a close analogy to the laws of hydrodynamics, and on such laws are based the techniques by means of which these forces can be directed into the desired channels and applied to constructive purposes. These methods are being increasingly developed and perfected to the point of constituting a specific branch of applied psychology, *psychodynamics*.

Thus we can foster and deliberately direct the formation and development of a complete, well-integrated and organized human personality. This is psychosynthesis in the strict sense of the word, the result of the use of psychosynthetic methods.

But there is another and more important fact that has been discovered, or rather scientifically ascertained and recognized, in the practice of psychotherapy, chiefly by Jung. It is the existence in man of qualities, energies, urges and needs which are higher in kind and level than those present in the consciousness of the normal, average man and woman.

These tendencies and energies, which can be labelled superconscious, have relationships and interactions with the conscious personality which are curiously analogous—at a higher octave—to those of the lower unconscious urges. It has been ascertained that these higher energies are often repelled and rejected from the “field of consciousness” for similar motives: lack of understanding, fear, preconceived ideas, depreciation, unwillingness to be disturbed or fulfil new inner tasks and to renounce selfish attachments and satisfactions.

But in these cases also, repressions and denials produce reactions, conflict and many kinds of nervous and psychological troubles. As Jung (3) definitely stated:

“To be ‘normal’ is a splendid ideal for the unsuccessful, for all those who have not yet found an adaptation. But for people who have far more ability than the average, for whom it was never hard to gain successes and to accomplish their share of the world’s work—for them restriction to the normal signifies the bed of Procrustes, unbearable boredom, infernal sterility

and hopelessness. As a consequence there are many people who become neurotic because they are only normal, as there are people who are neurotic because they cannot become normal.” (p. 55)\*

Consequently some of the more advanced psychologists have recognized the existence, and have started the scientific study, of the superconscious, that is, of the psychospiritual realm where are organized and developed, and from whence penetrate into man’s consciousness, all higher inspirations, philosophical and scientific institutions, telepathic impressions, exceptional healing powers and impulses to heroic and self-sacrificing deeds.

Indeed, it is high time that science fully recognized the existence and value of these inner realities and realized that those who have such experiences would welcome an unbiased, sympathetic investigation. Churches and other religious organizations, founded on revelations originating on those *transcendent* levels, would have nothing to fear from the light that greater psychological knowledge can throw upon them. That which is true and real is like an adamant that no metal tool can scratch; it is like pure gold, which withstands the acid test of any analysis. The time has come for religion and science to end their long and unnatural conflict, the outcome of mutual misunderstanding and the unwarranted claims of both. The time has come for them to enlighten and integrate each other in a higher, broader synthesis.

Then the irruption (often sudden and violent) of the higher energies would no longer produce conflicts, exaltations, deviations, fanatical reactions, mistaken interpretations and valuations, strange mixtures of truth and illusion, as they often do when they descend into the middle and lower psychological levels. Instead we will learn how to sustain the impact of these descending currents of energies, to direct and assimilate them in a proper way, to skilfully reduce, so to say, their potential by adapting—through our power of resistance—their regenerative action upon ourselves and upon those on whom they radiate. In other words, it is possible, and it should be our aim, to reach a harmonious integration and cooperation between the normal and the higher spiritual energies—that is, to achieve a *Spiritual Psychosynthesis*.

Such a conception brings out another basic point, namely, that psychosynthesis is not a task which can be completed, which leads to something final and static, as does the construction of a building. Psychosynthesis is a vital and dynamic process, leading to ever new inner conquests, to ever broader integrations.

All this is true for each of us as individuals, but it is just as true concerning the relationships which exist, or which can and should be established, among human beings.

Indeed, an isolated individual is a nonexistent abstraction. In reality each individual is interwoven into an intricate network of vital, psychological and spiritual relations, involving mutual exchange and interactions with many other individuals. Each is included in, and forms a constituent part of, various human groups and groups of groups, in the same way in which a cell is a tiny part of an organ within a living organism.

Therefore individual psychosynthesis is only a step towards *inter-individual psychosynthesis*.

Just as an organ (for instance the liver) and a system of organs (for instance, the digestive apparatus) constitute significant functional units, so the various human groups constitute definite psychological units or entities which fulfil specific functions and have consequently each its own peculiar life, activity and reality or being.

The first of such human groupings is that of a man and a woman, the couple. It is the smallest and the simplest from the *quantitative* standpoint, that is, considering the number of its component elements. But qualitatively it is one of the most complex, owing to the multiplicity and closeness not only of the mutual interactions, but also of the intimate physio-psycho-spiritual interpenetrations and fusions that occur in the man-woman relationship. This explains why it is so difficult for a spontaneous, almost automatic, psychosynthesis or harmonious relation and cooperation to happen, as people with a naïve and disastrous ignorance of the complexities of human nature generally expect.

Abundant evidence of this difficulty is provided by the almost universal conflicts and the frequent dramas that jeopardize and not infrequently break up the marriage relationship.

Adequate psychological knowledge and understanding and a conscious use of the methods of psychosynthesis would effectively help humanity to avoid and to eliminate an incalculable amount of suffering.

The second psychological group or entity is the family. In the past its members were closely knitted together, and it often exerted a limiting and coercive influence on them.

At present the family group is passing through a serious crisis, chiefly owing to accentuated differences, and consequent acute conflicts, between the older and the younger generations. The study and elimination of these conflicts and the establishment of harmonious and constructive relations between the members of the family group is an important part of psychosynthetic education. May we emphasize that this includes the education of the parents no less than the education of the sons and daughters.

Then there are wider groupings of various kinds, which have a greater or lesser coherence or degree of unification. There are, for example, the different communities formed of people belonging to the same class or caste, or to the same trade or profession, or to the same organization. Clear instances of this are offered by the typical mentality of the aristocratic class in the past; by the “esprit de corps” of the military caste; and by the psychological coalescence in a sporting or working team, or between men who, though physically far apart from each other, are engaged on the same specific work, such as the astronomers of the world. It is not, however, our intention to occupy ourselves with such groups, but rather to give closer consideration to the kind of group that is at present raising some very acute problems, i.e., the group constituted by a people or a nation.

In order to understand adequately the nature of such a group, we will avail ourselves of the close analogy that exists between a nation and a human being. This is frequently recognized, more or less clearly, for we often hear or read statements about the “soul” of a people, about its “psychology,” its “mentality,” its faults and qualities, its development and its education. Such expressions correspond to a definite psychospiritual reality—a concept upheld by the Polish philosopher W. Lutoslawski as long ago as 1911 in his paper, *Nations as Metaphysical Entities*, given at the “International Congress of Philosophy” at Bologna in that year.

The study of a nation as a living entity is very illuminating and from it we can draw many practical deductions and rules for action. The first fact revealed by such a study—a fact which should not shock us, but rather be regarded as a source of reasonable optimism, for it explains and justifies many things—is that the “personality” of each nation is still at a stage corresponding to the troublesome pre-puberty age, or if more advanced, to

adolescence. It is the stage at which the boy or girl is reaching an initial degree of self-consciousness; and its early demonstrations generally take an uncontrolled and exuberant form of separative and aggressive self-assertion.

An objection to this view may be advanced on the score that a number of peoples have a glorious past with high cultural achievements. To this we would reply that we are not dealing here with peoples in general but with nations as they exist at present, whose formation is comparatively recent. Moreover, one must take into consideration that a people can produce great works of art and literature through the medium of a few superior individuals, just as some artists may create outstanding works in their early youth and yet remain like children or adolescents for the rest of their lives, without developing a really mature "personality."

The evolution of peoples does not proceed along a straight line but in a "cyclic" manner, as the historian G. B. Vico (6) pointed out in his theory of "historical recurrences" long before the contributions of more recent thinkers such as Spengler (4) and Toynbee (5).

Even in individuals the psychological and spiritual ages often do not parallel the age of the body. They have noticeably alternating periods of activity and inaction, of speeding up and slowing down, of maturity or senility and rejuvenation. The life of Goethe provides a typical example of this. It had a definitely cyclic development with recurrent periods of an amazing rejuvenation. During the last of these, at the age of seventy-four, he fell in love with a nineteen-year-old girl, Ulrika von Levetzow, and he wrote one of his most inspired lyrical poems for her, in which he expressed sentiments of an almost adolescent character.

Moreover, at present the particular cycles of each nation are subordinate to a larger cycle involving the entire planet. This cycle marks the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. It thus involves a psychological rejuvenation of humanity accompanied by the eruption of elementary, primitive, barbaric forces.

A second important fact (related to the one just considered) is that the psychological life of a nation corresponds to a great extent to that which is *unconscious* in individuals.

Modern investigation of unconscious psychological activities has ascertained that these are chiefly instinctive, emotional and imaginative. They are easily

influenced by suggestion, and are often dominated by the collective unconscious, directed by ancestral “images” or archetypes, as Jung called them. A genuine and unbiased observation of the psychological life of all peoples demonstrates that it is dominated by the same characteristics.

The conscious part of an individual corresponds, in a people, to a minority constituted by its thinkers (philosophers, historians, psychologists, sociologists and other scientists), who endeavour to develop the self-consciousness of the nation, to interpret its past, to assess its present conditions and to point to the future. But such a minority is as yet more at the stage of research and discussion than at that of sure conclusions and definite action.

Those who belong to it are often at variance with each other, and their influence on the life of their nation is limited or unstable.

The Self, the “Soul,” the true spiritual Center, is, in both nations and individuals, *superconscious*. It does exist, but in a realm or at a level that is ordinarily above the reach of the personal consciousness. Its reality is revealed by its manifestations, which usually occur only on exceptional occasions, but which are so vivid, potent and of such a different quality that they bear a sure proof of their higher origin.

In individuals this is outstandingly demonstrated by geniuses, mystics, holy men and heroes, in whom we cannot but recognize the manifestation of the “something other” than ordinary human characteristics. It happens also at times that these great individuals become inspired not only from their own Selves, but also from the soul of their nation, which uses them as its instruments and representatives, in order to reveal itself and achieve its group purposes. Examples of such inspiration or “overshadowing” have been Moses, Dante, Joan of Arc and Lincoln.

The psychological examination and evaluation of a people is a difficult and complex undertaking, and this might partially explain the fact that the researches made to date on the psychology of the various peoples are not, as a whole, very satisfactory, and that those made in a truly scientific, objective and unbiased way are rare. Indeed, irrational impulses, illusions and pride are so influential as to blur the vision and thus distort the assessment of even the material resources of a nation. How much more, then, must the same deluding influences obscure the recognition of psychological factors, which are more fluid, complicated and difficult to interpret.

Therefore the psychological study of the various peoples should be made only after special preparation and with due caution; that is, after the investigators have undergone an earnest and sincere self-analysis, in order to eliminate as much as possible their own unconscious complexes, their emotional reactions and the bias and illusion which tend to colour and distort their judgment and conclusions. Owing to the difficulties of being objective and impartial in this matter, it would be advisable for the study to be made by groups of investigators, and for each group to include members not belonging to the nation under examination. Often those who are “outside” and therefore look from a certain “psychological distance” may discern more clearly than those who are “within.”

From this standpoint, a severe critic—and even an enemy—may prove more useful than a blind admirer. The old Indian sages went so far in this respect as to assert: “An enemy is as useful as a Buddha!”

Finally, all human individuals and groups of all kinds should be regarded as elements, cells or organs (that is, living parts) of a greater organism which includes the whole of mankind. Thus the principle of, and the trend to, synthesis carries us from group to group in ever wider circles to humanity as an integral whole. The essential unity of origin, of nature and of aims, and the unbreakable interdependence and solidarity between all human beings and groups are a spiritual, psychological and practical reality. It cannot be suppressed, however often it may be negated and violated through the numberless conflicts in which men, foolishly and painfully, squander their precious energies and even deprive each other of the sacred gift of life.

In spite of all contrasts, all oppositions and all negative appearances, the principle of interdependence, of solidarity, of cooperation, of brotherhood—that is, of synthesis—is rapidly gaining recognition. An increasing number of men and women are animated by the will to implement it, and are actively working within different groups and in all fields, outwardly unorganized but inwardly closely connected by common dedication to the same purpose: *the psychosynthesis of Humanity*.

\* This point has been further developed in the author's essay: "Self-Realization and Psychological Disturbances" in his book, *Psychosynthesis: A manual of Principles and techniques*. (1)



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# Psychosynthesis: Height Psychology

## Discovering the self and the Self

An Interview with Roberto Assagioli , Conducted by Beverly  
Besmer,

Source: Interpersonal Development. 4: 215-225 (1973/4)

### Abstract

An interview was conducted in Florence, Italy, April 1974, with Roberto Assagioli, originator and developer of Psychosynthesis. The concepts of Psychosynthesis are briefly described. The process of "dis- identification" is discussed, and issues such as "will", "height psychology", "psychological functions" and personal "identity" are considered. The significance of Psychosynthesis for humanistic psychology, psychotherapy and education is assessed.

### Key Words:

Psychosynthesis

Dis-identification

Will

Height psychology

Psychological functions

Identity

Psychotherapy

Education

When I first wrote to *Dr. Assagioli* about training in psychosynthesis, he replied in his letter: "My body has 85 years." He was an Italian speaking English, quaintly, I thought, for the standard usage is, "I am 85 years old."

But *Dr. Assagioli's* reply was quite correct and precise. He was doing psychosynthesis, which is his life's work. You will see what I mean shortly.

I requested this interview with *Dr. Assagioli* while in the course of training in personal and didactic psychosynthesis in Florence, under his supervision, with his co-worker *Dr. Piero Ferrucci*. I wanted to ask *Dr. Assagioli* some questions that were not covered in the Psychosynthesis manual. He read the questions I wrote out for him in advance (*Dr. Assagioli* does not hear well) and then he asked me to write my answers. (This is his usual policy.) To my surprise, I was largely able to do this, by consulting the manual.

After reading those original questions and answers, *Dr. Assagioli* prepared the following statements, which we recorded on April 12, 1974. The opening remarks focus on certain areas of his thought that are keys to understanding the process of psychosynthesis. Following this are his comments on the scope and practical applications of psychosynthesis, and future directions for humanistic thought and psychotherapy—interpersonal development. Thirdly he takes up the subject of psychosynthesis in education.

I asked *Dr. Assagioli* about the psychology and psychosynthesis of women, and he referred me to an interview with *Claude Servan-Schreiber* in the first issue of the new journal *Synthesis* (see bibliography). To my questions about his private life, *Dr. Assagioli* made no comment. I would have liked to hear him talk about his personal history, but it is clear that his work here and now occupies his time and thought, even at his advanced age.

One sees that *Dr. Assagioli's* work has evolved from his own experience. He uses the techniques daily. To me he personifies the spirit and vision of psychosynthesis. Many regard him as an extraordinary human being. Warmth, joy, vigour, graciousness and generosity, humour and lucidity radiate from him and permeate his work.

Psychosynthesis is based on a conception of the human being, and the human being in relation to others.

Through the process of psychosynthesis, the individual eventually attains a dynamic, harmonious integration of body, emotions, mind and spirit. And with this comes the outward active demonstration of dynamic harmony in human relations. In this conception of inner harmony and outward action, psychosynthesis brings together what we have come to think of as distinctively Eastern and Western modalities.

On first reading the Psychosynthesis Manual, many remark, as I did, that the content seems obvious. At first much of it slips by unnoticed or gets just a cursory nod of agreement. This is due in part to the deliberate simplicity and unpretentiousness of the exercises and *Dr. Assagioli's* verbal style. Perhaps it is due also to what I sometimes experience as dazzlement by the fullness of meaning. Certainly, the fact that it is obvious does not reduce its validity or utility, or its subtlety. On the contrary, we have here a profound comment on the nature of human consciousness: we are apt to disregard obvious truths and simple practices. One needs to listen and to reflect, to hear, to realize the import of this work: discovering the self and *Self* (BB).

**Roberto Assagioli:** The first question I am generally asked is: What is psychosynthesis and in what ways does it differ from other therapies or conceptions of the human personality. First, it is based on experience; it is empirical and existential in the sense that it has grown out of my own experience and that of others. The description of the results is not a theory. It is a report of subjective experience.

Let us make a hypothesis that there is at the centre of the human personality a *core*, a conscious self, which is not the whole personality but only a point of pure self-awareness—the observer of all the contents of the personality. How can this hypothesis be verified? Through a series of experimental techniques!

The basic technique is the exercise of dis-identification of the consciousness from all the various contents of the personality, with the subsequent unveiling or discovering of self—pure self-awareness. It is described in full in the Psychosynthesis manual.

### **Exercise of Dis-Identification**

I put my body into a comfortable and relaxed position with my eyes closed....The first step is to affirm with conviction and to become aware of the fact: 'I have a body but I am not my body.

My body may find itself in different conditions of health...

"I have emotions, but I am not my emotions. These emotions are countless...

"I have desires, but I am not my desires, aroused by drives, physical and emotional and by outer influences...

"I have an intellect, but I am not my intellect. It is more or less developed and active..."

After this dis-identification of the 'I' from its contents of consciousness (sensations, emotions, desires and thoughts), "I recognize and affirm that I am a Centre of pure self-consciousness..." (from Psychosynthesis, pp. 116-119).

The exercise of disidentification is based on the realization that we have in our personality many things, but we are not those things. For instance, we have a body, but we are not the body. We have emotions, but we are not the emotions, because emotions are changing, contradictory and so on, while the self-awareness is always the same. For instance, when we say, "I am tired", it is a mistake of psychological grammar. The "I" cannot be tired; the body is tired. So the exact formulation would be, "My body is tired."

Instead of saying, "I am angry", say, "the emotion of anger is present in my self, in my awareness". And the same with the mind. It works all the time, registering many things. But I am not the mind. "I have a mind, but I am not a mind." What remains? Simply the "I", the observer of the whole panorama, phantasmagoria, of the changing personal life.

**Beverly Besmer:** That's a vivid picture. I wanted to point out that the meaning you give here to self-identification and dis-identification is different from some other current uses of the terms. Also, from my experience there is a tendency to overlook the affirmative thrust of the exercise. It's a simple and amazingly worthwhile experiment.

**RA:** The trouble is that up to now psychologists and others have not made this simple experiment. It is as scientific an experiment as those which they do with rats, or in other ways. Everybody who has honestly and willingly made this experiment has arrived at the same conclusion.

**BB:** Does this bear any relation to meditation?

**RA:** In order to strengthen and make stable the pure self-awareness of the observer, it is necessary to have periods of inner silence, gradually longer, to make what is called the void in the field of consciousness. Then one discovers another important function of the self: that it is not merely an observer, but it can also be active in *modifying* the personality. That is, it can direct and regulate the various functions of the psyche. It can be a *will-er*.

**BB:** This brings up the question of the will.

**RA:** This has also been curiously neglected by psychology, and it has been rightly called the Cinderella of modern psychology. I have dedicated a whole book to the subject. (*The Act of Will*, see bibliography.)

The discovery of the will in oneself, and even more the realization that the self and the will are intimately connected may come as a real revelation which can change, often radically, a man's self-awareness and his whole attitude toward himself, other people, and the world. He perceives that he is a 'living subject' endowed with the power to choose, to relate, to bring about changes in his own personality, in others, in circumstances. This enhanced awareness, this "awakening" and vision of new, unlimited potentialities for inner expansion and outer action, gives a new feeling of confidence, security, joy - a sense of "wholeness".

But this initial revelation, this inner light, however vivid and inspiring at the moment of its occurrence, is apt to grow dim and to flicker out or give only intermittent flashes. The new awareness of self and will becomes easily submerged by the constant surge of drives, emotions, and ideas. It is crowded out by the ceaseless inrush of impressions from the outer world. Thus the need to protect, cultivate, and strengthen the initial attainment becomes evident, in order to make it a constant possession and utilize its possibilities. ("*The Existential Experience of the Will*" in *The Act of Will*, pp. 9, 10.)

A proper understanding of the will includes a clear and balanced view of its dual nature: two different but not contradictory poles. On one hand the "power" element needs to be recognized, appreciated, if necessary strengthened, and then wisely applied. At the same time it must be recognized that there are volitional acts which do not require effort. On the basis of experimental research, Aveling and others have observed that "a volition ensuing even in difficult action may be absolutely effortless..." ("*The Qualities of the Will* Chapter 3 In *The Act of Will*, p. 21.)

**RA:** The will is experiential. We can become aware of it and use it through experiment. It is there. We have only to discover and use it.

**BB:** So psychosynthesis is a process of discovering the personal self—an observer and willer.

**RA:** A third step in psychosynthesis is the recognition that the personal self, the pure self-awareness at the core of the personality is the reflection of a higher Transpersonal Self.

**BB:** The term "higher" is problematic.

**RA:** Many resent this distinction between a higher and lower self. In the introduction to my forthcoming book *Height Psychology and the Self* I explain this.

Psychosynthesis: Parallel to this (historical) trend (of a two-dimensional psycho-physiological and mechanistic study of human and animal beings from the outside, as objects of observation and description), clinical psychology has been developed—the psychological study of abnormalities...dealing with real human problems and living people, and creating inevitable...a human rapport between patient and therapist... The observation of abnormalities, and especially of what was called first "subconscious" psychological activities... brought to recognition another dimension of psychology, the dimension of "depth" ... Thus was made the beginning of a three-dimensional psychology.

But its emphasis was put almost exclusively on the lower aspects of the human personality, ignoring and even denying the higher aspects. Therefore, it can be called a psychology with two-and-a-half dimensions that is, the two surface dimensions and the direction of depth, "downwards" towards the lower aspects. This has been frankly recognized by Freud in a statement in his letter to Binswanger...implying recognition that there are other stores, other levels in the human being. (However) Freud was not interested in them, and therefore he developed a psychoanalytical theory and practice which ignored them...

In recent times a new psychology has been developed... dedicated to the study of the normal and higher aspects of human nature. ... Humanistic Psychology....Within the field of Humanistic Psychology, a further development has been made, which deals with the recognition, investigation and valuation of the farther reaches of human nature...

There are two confusions or misconceptions which have to be clearly recognized and clarified. One is that the denomination of "depth psychology" has been used by several psychologists to indicate both the direction

downwards, so to speak, of the lower unconscious, and the higher aspects of the unconscious, which for clarity sake, should be called "superconscious".

A typical example is Jung. ...For instance in his doctrine of the archetypes, he includes both archaic primitive concepts and higher ideal models, which bear affinity with Platonic Ideas. Thus when he speaks of "unconscious", he does not make clear the difference between its various levels.

Others too have used the term "depth" in this higher, transpersonal or spiritual sense. ...Several mystics, in describing their experiences...speak of the "deeper" Self, the "ground" of the Soul. It is basically a question of semantics, but the "depth" terminology has had the unfortunate effect of confusing the two directions which are not only different but opposite to each other.

The denomination "high" and "heights" has been used both in the East and in the West to designate what are called religious or mystical attainments. Mountains were considered to be the abode of gods or higher beings. ...and therefore sacred. ... Maslow has extensively used the words "low" and "high" in his description of human needs. He speaks of...a hierarchical order (... particularly in *Motivation and Personality*, p. 97ff.).

A general reason for the hostility toward the designation "high" is a semantic one. There is an unfortunate connection between the words "high" and "low" used in the psychological sense, and the moral valuations attached to them. ... The word "low" is considered to (denote) something inferior in the moral sense, something to be eliminated or repressed. But this is a false conception. "Low" and "high" can, and often do, designate simply a stage of development. ... A very simple biological instance shows this clearly. A child is lower in stature than an adult; a child is at a less evolved stage of development than an adult. But that does not mean at all that the adult, as such, is "better" or "superior" to the child. Both from the psychological and the moral standpoint, a healthy child is better or superior to a neurotic adult. ... The existence of these different stages of development is an incontrovertible fact.

It has been objected that (the word "high") implies moral valuations which are extraneous to objective science. However a purely objective psychology (in this sense) is not valid, because values are psychological facts. ... They have to be taken into account in an inclusive psychology, an inclusive study of human nature...



In general there is resistance (to acknowledge) these higher reaches because they seem to imply an obligation to achieve them. Or there is a fear of that realm, as Maslow has pointed out very well, and there is a fierce hostility to admit that fear. ... Behaviourists of every brand are opposed to it...

Another reason or pseudo-reason for the hostility... is a false concept of the equality of human beings and the democratic ideal. ... It seems... almost an insult to admit that there are people of a higher stature, psychologically and spiritually. This attitude is demonstrated by the neglect of...and (suspicious) hostility towards...gifted and super-gifted individuals, especially children and adolescents...(which occurs among) those of the same age (as well as) educators, who really should know better...

As Maslow has well pointed out, there is a basic ambivalence; some are attracted in an exaggerated and even fanatical way... to peak experiences and breakthroughs and insights, and use artificial means to achieve them also, while others are actively opposed to them. And sometimes this ambivalence exists within the same individual.

Anyhow, the "culprit" is not the word "high", but the existence itself of these farther reaches. Even if they were not called "higher", the situation would be the same...

However, in spite of all the existing confusion and conflict in conceptions of human nature,... there is a rapidly growing... interest in and appreciation of what is called the human potential (Excerpted from the Introduction to R. Assagioli's forthcoming book, *Height Psychology and the Self*.)

**RA:** But to please those who have these biases against the Higher Self, now we prefer to speak of the *Transpersonal Self*, which is a neutral descriptive term, meaning that it is beyond and transcends the personal self. But it is not something different; it is the source of the reflection. For instance, the sun can reflect itself in many mirrors. There are not two suns (in our solar system). It is just the same reality that is reflected at another level of reality. The essential quality is the same. It is always light and heat, however attenuated and coloured.

But I shall not deal with the Transpersonal Self further because often in Psychosynthesis it is enough to have a clear realization of the personal self. There is much more to say here at the personality level—other points of more direct practical application.

**BB:** I would like to hear about practical applications.

**RA:** Psychosynthesis started and is still used as a therapy for nervous and psychological disturbances and their psychosomatic repercussion on the body. But it is becoming more like preventive medicine. One might call it "mental hygiene". Another important field of application is that of self-actualization, in the sense of the full activity of the various functions of the personality.

**RA:** A further field of application is that of interpersonal relationships. The individual is not isolated. It is within a network of personal relationships. In psychosynthesis we have developed extensively the study of interpersonal relationships. The first basic interpersonal relationship is that of couples. The original couple is mother-child, the infant. Later comes the man-woman couple.

Another personal relationship is that of therapist-client and teacher-pupil. Here it is good to clarify that there can and should be a genuine interpersonal relationship which is not the transference of which psychoanalysis speaks, that is, projecting infantile drives and fantasies on the therapist. This may exist at the beginning. But what can actually be developed is a genuine constructive relationship between therapist and client. The various stages of this interpersonal relationship are described in my pamphlet on "*Jung and Psychosynthesis*" (PRF Issue No. 19).

(a) *The transference*—in the strict sense originally attributed to it by Freud, i.e., the projection onto the doctor of the patient's impulses, attachments and emotions felt in childhood towards his parents...

(b) The specific relationship created by what may be termed *the therapeutic situation*. In it the therapist represents and exercises an essentially "paternal" function. He must, to some extent, take on the role and task of protector, counsellor, and guide...

(c) A *human relationship* which is developed as the treatment proceeds and creates psychological reactions at various levels and of different kinds. ... The transition from the second to the third type of relationship is valuable, even indispensable, for a variety of reasons; above all to promote the patient's growing autonomy...

(d) *The resolution of the relationship* at the conclusion of the treatment. This is a critical point and needs to be handled with wisdom. I have said "resolution" and not termination of the relationship because the positive relationship can continue afterwards in some form, either as a friendship or collaboration or both...

**RA:** Then come social relationships, a very important and urgent field of application for psychosynthesis: between individuals and groups, between groups and groups on increasingly larger scales. A good analogy to understand the right relationship is that of the physical body. A biological cell is a tiny individual in itself. It has its own functions. It receives material from the blood and the lymph and it sends out some products. But for healthy functioning it is necessary that the enviroing membrane of the cell be neither too thick, nor too loose.

If it is too thick, the exchanges are difficult or may cease, and the cell dies. If it is too loose, too permeable, then the cell itself disintegrates. So it's a question of the right kind of permeability.

The same happens with individuals and groups, and groups of groups. Now let us imagine that the cell has an individual consciousness and that gradually it becomes conscious of cells of the same kind, and gradually of the organ which they together form, for instance a gland. And then the individuality of that gland expands its consciousness and sees its relationship with other glands, and then with a whole organ like the liver, or the stomach. Then these big groups of cells can become aware that they belong to a whole organism, and that their true purpose and meaning and function is the general health of the whole organism. In a healthy human body, there is a *marvellous* correlation of these inter-functionings.

Unhappily in humanity we are very far from that. But that should represent the model toward which we should work in humanistic psychology: right relationship between couples of individuals, groups of individuals, groups and groups, and ever larger groups until it includes the whole of humanity.

Psychosynthesis can be called, in this respect, a process of development from the individual to the universal through successively expanding groups. And the fine design of the cover of this journal shows it very well.

This leads up to the essential identity between the individual and the universal—what we could call the central mystery of life.

**BB:** Are you now referring to the application of psychosynthesis for spiritual or transpersonal development?

**RA:** Yes. There is an essential identity between the individual and the universal. But it is not a realized fact in consciousness. Let me clarify this with an analogy. If a drop of water had a consciousness and expanded it to the sea and the ocean, it would say, "I am of the same nature and essence as all the water on the globe. They are all hydrogen and oxygen." But it would be preposterous if the drop considered itself to be the ocean. There are some extreme theories especially in the East that emphasize this identity. Well, at the level of essences they are true. But it is a mistake to relate these theories to other levels of reality and personal functioning. Such phrases as, "I am Brahman, I am The One", need to be clearly qualified. They may express a metaphysical ontological truth, but the personal self certainly has not reached that level of expansion of consciousness. It's a difference of *development*. Like the drop of water, though being of the same essence, it has not developed the universal consciousness of the ocean.

**BB:** I like this analogy so much. It really does make clear the distinction between the personal self, the transpersonal Self, and the universal. In these last comments I think you have also responded to my question on future directions for humanistic thought and psychotherapy. Now I am interested in hearing your ideas on psychosynthesis in education.

**RA:** The application of psychosynthesis in education. These applications would in a sense revolutionize the whole concept and practice of education. There is already a growing movement to consider education not as "giving information", but as developing the personality of the child or pupil. But one can go much further in that direction: to consider education just as a process of development that is very gradual growth into adulthood and maturity which is potentially *already there*.

Here another analogy can help: that of the seed and the full grown plant, let us say an oak. In the germ there are all the potentialities of the oak. So the educator or teacher has not to bring in something new. He has only to create the most favourable conditions for the *healthy development* and growth of the seed through the little plant and the seedling to the full-grown tree. That seems obvious, but the practical applications are in a sense revolutionary.

For instance, the parent should see in every child an adult in process of development, and therefore treat him as such, as a potential adult—

potential—and see clearly the various stages in the child's development, each of which requires a special handling. The same with a teacher. It is a kind of e-vocation of latent possibilities. And this can be done individually, and in groups, and especially through activities—creative activities of the child and the group of children, which are facilitated by the teachers, but not supplied ready-made by them. And there are all kinds of applications of this.

It can be said that education in this sense is a constant *experiment*, and a constant cooperation between the adult and child or pupil.

**BB:** I like that—cooperation between adult and child. What you say may be obvious, yet where in education is this reflected in practice? Please give us an example of what you mean.

**RA:** This is an actual example. There was a region in the States, a mountain region, where the people were rather poor and neglected by the authorities, and there was a great need for a school. But the people could not get it. Then came a teacher, a creative teacher, who said, "Let us build it ourselves." And he gathered a group of young people, adolescents, and said, "Let us build a school." They began to fell trees, and they made a house of trees, and then gradually they furnished it and got all the materials necessary. And the parents cooperated and gave money and material and so on. But it was built by the group themselves, led by the teacher. And through that he did not merely direct a physical recreation; he taught them all sorts of things: the price of things, the use of money, the kinds of materials, the use of tools, procuring tools. And he experimented and divided tasks according to the abilities of the young people. And finally, not only did they get a school, but they got a "confluent education". (Confluent education seeks to integrate, in teaching and learning, the realm of emotions, attitudes, and values (affective domain), with that of thought and intellect (cognitive domain).

See PRF Reprint 14 by George Isaac Brown, "I Have Things to Tell", and "Human Teaching for Human Learning" by George Isaac Brown.)

That was the chief result. In a sense, the material school was a by-product of the education of a group of young people.

**BB:** That's a beautiful example. But in schools today, that already exist, the occasion for such a revolutionary enterprise does not often arise. The trouble is, it can't happen yet because schools and teachers are involved in other work. How can psychosynthesis be used in the classrooms of today?

**RA:** The classroom should gradually become a workshop, that is a place where creative projects are invented and carried through in cooperation. But always with the aim in view that the carrying out of the project is not the main thing. It is only an occasion for developing the full functioning of each participant of the whole group, including the teacher. Of course the application should be very different according to elementary schools, or high schools or universities. So there is opportunity for inventing a great variety of appropriate projects for each unique situation. This is for me both interpersonal development and psychosynthesis.

**BB:** Before we conclude, I would appreciate your further comment on the future of humanistic thought and psychology.

**RA:** It is included in the wider subject of the future of humanity through the implementation of the psychosynthesis view, and the many techniques available for that purpose. The future of humanity depends on psychology. I'll give a very present instance, the problem of aggressive drives and averting war. History has proved that all other means, all legal means, treaties and agreements did not work, and do not work. We have to go at the root. And the root is the existence of aggressive drives, of self-assertion and the consequent conflicts which arise in all groups. Therefore, there is in psychology, and particularly in psychosynthesis, the principle of transmutation of energies. Thus instinctive psychological energies can be transmuted and utilized, directed, and channelled to other constructive purposes. I have written on this subject (see in particular "*Transmutation and*

*Sublimation of Sexual Energies*", in *Psychosynthesis*, pp. 267-277). I think that those who want peace really should make an extensive study and application of the general principle of transformation of psychological energies, and particularly of the aggressive combative tendency in individuals and groups.

**BB:** May I ask you, what is your objective in doing this interview, and in choosing the line of discussion you have taken?

**RA:** To give a genuine image of psychosynthesis and of its usefulness and application.

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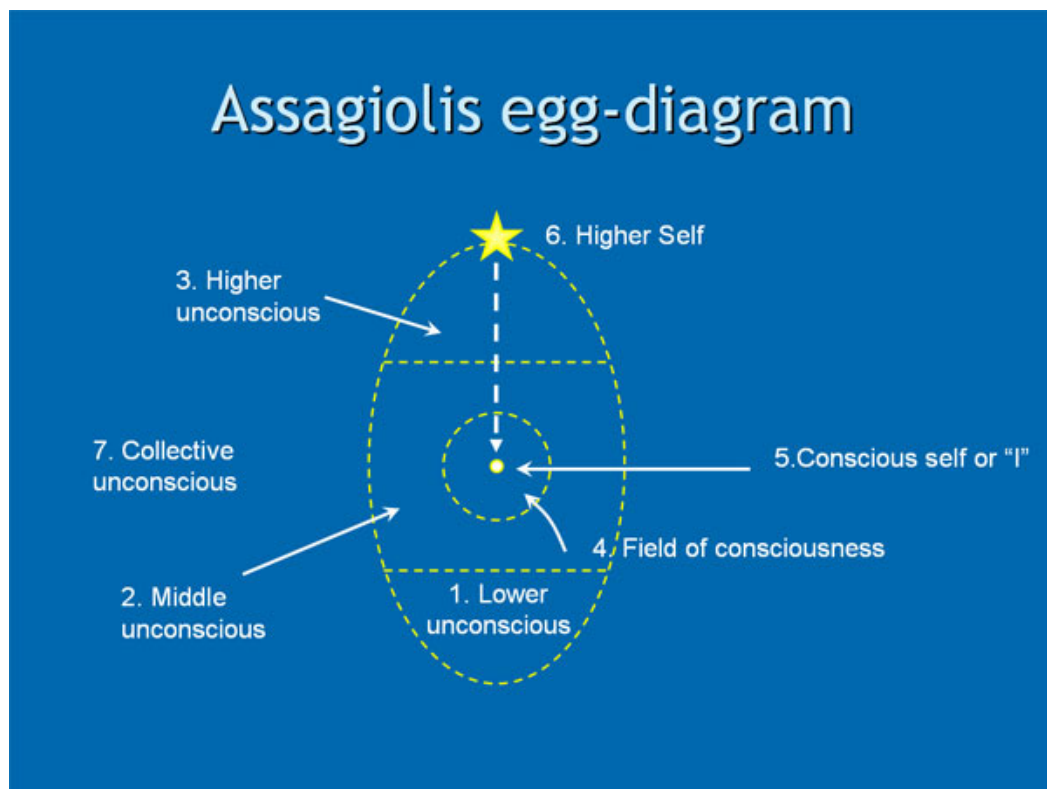
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# The Rebirth of the Soul

## Interview with Roberto Assagioli

An interview by Stuart Miller, source Intellectual Digest, August 1973

For the past 60 years Roberto Assagioli has worked as a doctor, psychotherapist and teacher. He lives in an old stone house on the outskirts of Florence, where, at age 85, he continues to put in a ten-hour day. Recently, Assagioli's ideas have attracted increasing international attention. They combine such diverse elements as common sense, Freudian psychoanalysis and concern for the highest reaches of human nature. Last October, Intellectual Digest published the first major American article about his work, "The Will of Roberto Assagioli," foreshadowing his book, *The Act of Will*, which is being published this month by The Viking Press as "An Esalen Book."

Here, Dr. Assagioli talks about his current project, a volume tentatively entitled "*Height Psychology and the Self*" Playing on the phrase "depth psychology," Assagioli maintains that psychology needs to recognize man's highest qualities in order to complement and complete the prevailing emphasis on man's instincts, drives, complexes, pathology and so forth.

The central, but subtle, concept in this height psychology is the notion of the "Self" with a capital "S." From a certain point of view, "Self" and "soul" are the same. This new book will attempt to return the concept of the human soul to the centre of empirical psychology.

**Assagioli:** In classical or philosophical psychology, the soul was a central concept. But with the advent of modern psychology, one was likely to hear that "souls are out of fashion." Well, they remained out of fashion for a considerable time, but now a curious thing is happening. Much to the disgust of many psychologists, various independent thinkers are returning to the concept of the soul.

This is gratifying, but the word "soul" is rather unfortunate because it is used in different and contrasting senses. The traditional concept of soul is that of a spiritual *entity* - it is at the core of the Christian religion and also of an important branch of Indian philosophy, Vedanta. But elsewhere in religious language, "soul" is used in a different sense, more or less as a synonym for the ego, personality or consciousness.

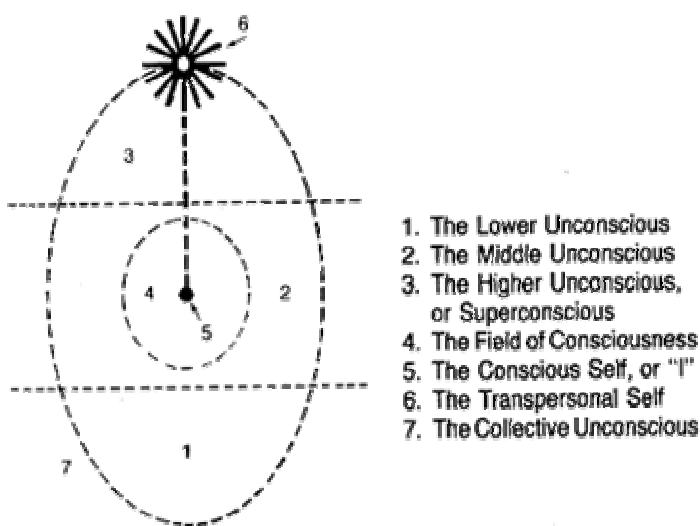


Philosophers and psychologists have also used the word "soul" with different meanings. The German philosopher Keyserling equates "soul" with the emotional nature in general. Jung described his rather complicated concept of "soul" in his book *Psychological Types*:

With the same justification as daily experience furnishes us for speaking of an outer personality are we also justified in assuming the existence of an inner personality. The inner personality is the manner of one's behaviour towards the inner psychic processes; it is the inner attitude, the character, that is turned towards the unconscious. I term the outer attitude ... the *persona*, the inner attitude I term the *anima*, or *soul*.

In popular parlance one speaks of "soul" of a nation and so on. Therefore I find it better to avoid, as much as possible, using this word (or at least to qualify: each instance to bring out the particular meaning desired). In general, it is more useful to employ, instead, the term "Self," distinguished by a capital "S." The ordinary word "self" is usually used to refer to an individual's *personal* self as it is discussed in relation to such concepts as "self-identity," "self-actualisation" and so forth. I am not speaking of that level when I speak of Self but rather what can be called each person's Higher or *Transpersonal* Self.

The diagram clarifies this distinction. My students have taken to calling it the "egg diagram." Their levity is a way of underscoring that the diagram is only a crude map and not the territory of the human psyche. Still, I have found it to be a useful aid. The lower level corresponds to what Freudian psychology calls



the unconscious: the fundamental drives, complexes charged with intense emotions and so forth. The central band represents the Middle Unconscious – those things that are latent, quiescent; or active in our personality but that we are not aware of at the moment. An above that is the Transpersonal or Higher Unconscious, the Superconscious, which is the source of much that, we

consider to be the best of the human: artistic inspiration, ethical insight, scientific intuition and so on.

The circle in the centre of the diagram represents in a rough way the area of our existing awareness. The contents of the Lower Unconscious, new data from parts of the Middle Unconscious and also impulses from the Superconscious pour into this area of awareness.

The personal self, however, is represented as a point, independent of any particular contents, data or impulses. Each of us has this central point of personal awareness, which we can experience simply by acknowledging that we are aware of various contents of consciousness, but we are not those contents. That is, we experience our emotions, but we know, in a fundamental way, that they are not us. We have thoughts, we are aware of having thoughts, but they are not us. We have bodies and aches and pains and ecstasies, but they are not us. How else could our emotions or our thoughts or our bodies change, so often, while we retain a fundamental sense of our identity? In fact, by deliberately and carefully dis-identifying from all these passing contents, these acts of awareness, we can become *aware that we are aware*. And that awareness is *self-awareness*-the awareness of the personal self. This personal self is the human core at the ordinary level, the level of personality. It is the centre of our ordinary psychological functions: mind, emotions, sensation, imagination, etc.

Likewise, at our higher human level there is an entity that is at the centre of the higher functions -artistic inspiration, ethical insight, scientific intuition. This is our real core: it is there in all of us, but the personality is generally not aware of it at the ordinary level. Hence, in many cases, it does not affect the feelings or thoughts of people. But often it does. In fact, the personal self can be considered as a reflection of this higher reality, and the personal self and its usual functions (emotions, mind, sensation, etc.) can become infused with vital energies from one's Transpersonal Self [see diagram]. When a great artist gets a major inspiration, that is roughly what happens - the artist's Transpersonal Self, acting through the Superconscious, sends energy into the personal field (the central circle); This is true for all kinds of major inspiration.

**Q:** Is this experience reserved only for great artists and scientists and religious geniuses? Or can "ordinary" people experience it too?

**Assagioli:** We not only can, we frequently do: but the "farther reaches of human nature," as Abraham Maslow calls them, are subtle reaches, and it is often useful to refer to well-known people, at least as a point of departure. Thomas a Kempis, provides an example in his book *Imitation of Christ*. From the psychological point of view, we can say that the "Christ" with whom Thomas talks is Thomas' own Higher Self. This is not to deny that there are realities beyond the individual. As you see in the diagram, the star of the Self is located partly within the oval of the individual and partly without, indicating that the individual Self is in contact with what might be called the Universal Self.

In any case, thousands of individuals, millions perhaps, have had the experience of the Self and have given testimony to it. In India it, is traditionally called the "Atman." Some of the deeper Christian mystics have been aware of it and have called it variously, the "divine spark" of the person, the "apex," the "base," the "centre" and the "innermost essence." I am fond of Auguste Gratry's description of contact with the Transpersonal Self because it is so vivid:

I felt as [if] it were an interior form ... full of strength, beauty and joy ... a form of light and flame, which sustained all my being: a steadfast, unchanging form, always the same, which I recovered again and again during the course of my life; yet I lost sight of it and forgot it at intervals, but always recognized it with joy and the exclamation: "Here is my real being"

There are many other accounts, but most of them are coloured by the individual's particular experience, and are confused by such elements as the means of the experience, its results or the individual's particular religious beliefs. This is due, in part, to the fact that the Self is a most difficult subject to speak about or understand. It can be, and has been, experienced as an immediate fact of consciousness. But it is outside the pale of rational conceptualization. It is, like aesthetic sense or intuition, an immediate conscious experience, outside the mental and intellectual realm.

This is not to say that it is "irrational" in any negative sense. I might coin the expression "para-rational" and, for certain cases, "supra-rational."

**Q:** I take it this soul or Transpersonal Self can be thought of as an inner voice from on high. Can you distinguish the voice of the "Higher" or "Transpersonal" Self from a more familiar, psychological concept - the superego or Freudian conscience? Are these the same with a different name?

**Assagioli:** No. The Self is different from the superego or "conscience." To begin with, it is structurally and ontologically different. The superego, unlike the Self, cannot be considered to be an "entity." It is a composite, made up of different elements having diverse origins. Freud describes the superego as being formed by the sum of introjections and commands and inhibitions and feeling of guilt and condemnation, all derives from the words and actions of parents and from the "moral" attitudes of a particular culture. To activate the living relationship existing between the Self and the personality, I frequently ask my clients to do an exercise. It consists of entering into written dialogue with one's Higher Self and hoping for and expecting a response. This disarmingly simple technique often has good results, if one is wary of false messages intruding from other parts of the personality.

Recently, one client, a 35-year-old American professor, set himself to write this dialogue. He found that he began to get glimpses of his Self, and then gradually his Self began to "speak" rather clearly and wisely. My client spontaneously brought up the difference between the Higher Self and the superego:

The Higher Self, insofar as I know him, is not like the superego. The Higher Self does not issue orders, he is not compelling, he is not harsh. He makes suggestions, he indicates ways - he is more mental, in a pure sense of the word. The superego, on the other hand, has a lot of emotional voltage. He pushes and urges ... The Self appears serene, clothed in white strong (though dimly seen) and radiant - like Fra Angelico's [The Transfiguration]. He *speaks* to me ... He has the quality of a teacher. Interested and concerned but detached. *If* he demands anything, he demands to be embraced. He opens himself to that. Take him or leave him, is what he says. He is there. He is to be CHOSEN.

I imagine my superego, instead, as dark, more fleshy and even stonelike. There is a scowl on his face, a hammer in his hand. He bangs and chips away. He threatens and coerces. He exhausts me and he compels me. One is the principle of Freedom and Love, the other the dark principle of Bondage ....

This is an evocative piece of writing but it is only one way of experiencing the difference - conditioned by the author's particular circumstances. The mention of Fra Angelico, for example, comes from his visits to the monastery of San Marco in Florence, where I recommended that he study Angelico's paintings. This use of inspiring artworks is another technique,

among many, to evoke the Self. The client was in what Viktor Frankl calls a "crisis of meaning," and both these techniques, together with other work, were helpful in summoning his highest inner resources to him. I would, however, amend his evocative description by saying that "the superego is not all bad" and leave this paradox without further explanation here.

**Q:** How does Jung's conception of the Self differ from yours?

**Assagioli:** Jung's concept of the Self was not very definite and changed with the development of his psychology. Without entering into a lengthy discussion, one may say that it is different both from Freud's superego and from the conception of the Self as having *a substantial reality of its own*.

**Q:** What is the use of this reality? To what extent are we talking about something practical?

**Assagioli:** One major reason why the Self is coming back into currency is the tremendous search for self-identity. Formerly, an individual took himself-so to speak-for granted. He accepted himself as he was, or, more frequently, he identified himself with the group to which he belonged-family, tribe, clan, class, nation-or, if he was religious, with some great Being or with God. But in our time, which may well be a time of total crisis, all these identifications fall away, and the individual is thrown back on himself. This baffles him, he does not know who he is, and this is the chief reason for the widespread "existential anguish." Now this search frequently takes people into a whole set of new identifications-with some temporary group, or with their sexuality, or with their profession or with a hobby. But sooner or later these identifications fail, and the crisis returns. The way out of the crisis is through the investigation and discovery of who we are-through the awareness of the personal self independent of all identifications and, further, of this self as a reflection of the Transpersonal Self.

To answer your question in another way, I can say that the Self becomes a source of guidance, of *illumination* and inspiration, and, if you will, of developing human potential. I see clients who are quite "normal" in the ordinary sense, even personally and socially successful. But they are not satisfied. Their interest is in further development. This has two levels. One level is the development of their personalities in a rounded way - an ordinary human way - bringing emotions, mind, intuition and so on into harmonious functioning. This has been called "self-actualization." I use the term "personal psychosynthesis."

For many this is enough. But others feel "calls" - to use the old language. They are attracted by the possibility of expanding consciousness into the farther reaches of the Superconscious, up to the experience of the Self. This is true Self realization, what I call Transpersonal or Spiritual psychosynthesis.

Many of the young - and the not-so young- are in crisis over this realm. Some try to induce experiences of high states of consciousness through drugs or other means. Frequently they have these experiences spontaneously. But such experiences are temporary; these people fall down to the ordinary level and then they become disillusioned they wonder why they cannot stay "on the heights." What has happened is that they have entered, to some extent, into what Richard Bucke and others have called "cosmic consciousness," a state reported by men of all times and cultures. But their personality is inadequate to deal with these high experiences, and so they experience a sudden or gradual fall. For these people the awareness, first of the personal self and then of the Transpersonal Self as living realities, provide a needed structure that permits a steady and gradual ascent. From such awareness also comes an understanding of the nature of the spontaneous or induced experiences, leading to their assimilation into the other aspects of the personality.

Therefore, the normal and safe procedure would be: first, preliminary work of personal psychosynthesis, including psychoanalytic phase, though not necessarily a formal, detailed psychoanalysis. After that, and sometimes also concurrently, comes experience of *Self*-awareness. Then, the Self can be called on to guide the whole long process of human development. And to be most practical indeed in answer to your question, the cultivation of Self-awareness on a wide basis will serve to bring into human life the highest human energies and inspirations. And we sorely need to tap these sources. That, I think, is obvious.

# Dynamic Psychology and Psychosynthesis

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

Source: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation (1959)

When we observe the most obvious characteristics of contemporary civilization, we are struck by its extreme extraversion, its desire to know and master the forces of nature in order to satisfy its ever-growing needs and demands. This is indeed the dominating trend of our age, but it is by no means the only one, as a closer study will reveal.

As is well known, in the course of the last seventy years a group of inquirers, which was at first small but which gradually grew more active, turned its attention to the investigation of the phenomena and mysteries of the human psyche. The most important results have not been achieved by academic psychologists, but by independent investigators. Nearly all of them were clinicians, driven by the practical needs of their patients and aided by the greater evidence that certain psychological phenomena acquire when they are accentuated by a morbid condition.

The first scientist to contribute original discoveries in this field was Pierre Janet (27).

Starting with the phenomena of "psychological automatism" he found that there are many mental activities taking place independently of the patient's consciousness, and even real "secondary personalities" living behind, or alternating with, the everyday personality.

Soon after Janet a Viennese doctor, Sigmund Freud (15), began his investigations of the unconscious psychological processes. His starting point was Breuer's cathartic method, which consisted in recalling to the consciousness of the patient the forgotten trauma or impressions which had produced the symptoms and releasing by means of an adequate outlet, the strong emotions associated with them. Breuer used hypnosis for this purpose, but Freud soon found out that the same result could be reached by the use of free association and by the interpretation of dreams, which became the specific techniques of psychoanalysis.

Freud demonstrated that various physical symptoms and psychological disturbances are due to instincts, drives, phantasies, buried in the

unconscious and retained there by resistances and defence mechanisms of various kinds. He also found that many manifestations of our normal life, such as dreams, fancies, forgetting, mistakes and lapses of behaviour, and even some kinds of artistic and literary production, are due to the same psychological mechanisms which determine morbid symptoms in the sick. For instance, the curious forgetting of well-known things or words is due, according to Freud, to some connection existing between the forgotten word or fact and some painful emotion or disagreeable event. He gives an amusing illustration of this: one day he could not remember the name of a well-known resort on the Italian Riviera, namely, Nervi. "Indeed," he writes, 'nerves' (in Italian *nervi*) give me a great deal of trouble."

On this basis Freud developed a wealth of conceptions on the genetic processes and on the structure of the human personality which it is impossible to summarize, the more so because they underwent considerable changes during the many years of Freud's copious production. But his psychoanalytic doctrines are at present well-known and have been expounded or summarized by various writers. (A comprehensive and objective exposition of Freudian psychoanalysis is that by Ruth L Munroe in her book *Schools of Psychoanalytic Thought* (41) which also contains a clear exposition and critical comments on the other main exponents of psychoanalytic thought.)

Freud had many pupils and followers, some of whom contributed various developments and modifications, while remaining in the main stream of the psychoanalytic movement; such were Karl Abraham (1), Sandor Ferenczi (13), Wilhelm Stekel (55), Melanie Klein (30), etc. On the other hand, some of Freud's original pupils and co-workers took independent and even antagonistic positions and developed conceptions, methods and even Schools of their own. The more important among them are: Alfred Adler (2) who, in his "Individual Psychology," emphasized the importance of the drive to personal self-assertion, or the will-to-power; C. G. Jung (28), who investigated the deeper layers of the unconscious, where he found images and symbols of a collective character, and also made original contributions to the classification and description of psychological types; Otto Rank (46), who put particular emphasis on the problem of separation and union, and on the function of the will. Later, specific contributions were made by Karen Homey (25), who pointed out the importance of actual conflicts and of the need for security. Erich Fromm (16) put the accent on the social pressures on the individual.



Various contributions have been made by French psychoanalysts such as Allendy (3) and Hesnard (24). Mention should be made also of "Existential Analysis," put forward and practised by Binswanger (9) and Frankl (14).

If we take into consideration a larger field, which includes both special branches of medicine and of psychology and various independent cultural movements, we find significant and valuable contributions to the knowledge of human nature and to its betterment. Among these are:

1. ***Psychosomatic Medicine***, which has increasingly developed in recent years, bringing to light the strong influence of psychological factors in determining troubles of every kind, including many of an organic character.
2. ***The Psychology of Religion***, which investigates the various manifestations of religious consciousness and of mystical states. The researchers in this field have been numerous; we can mention, among the first, William James (26), with his classical book on The Varieties of Religious Experience; Underhill (61), (Mysticism); Heiler (23); Winslow Hall (20); etc. Lately, a number of books have appeared which discuss the relationship between psychology and religion.
3. ***The Investigation of the Superconscious*** (and its manifestations such as intuition and illumination), of genius and of creative activity; and of highly gifted children. Here we find the study of "cosmic consciousness" by Bucke (10); the contributions of Ouspensky (45), Winslow Hall (20), Urban (62), Maslow (37), etc.; Terman (59) and the group working in the Association for Gifted Children, etc.
4. ***"Psychical Research" or Parapsychology***, which developed from the classical studies of Myers (43) on the "Subliminal Self" and was developed by earnest scientists such as James (26), Lodge (34), Richet (48), Geley (17), Osty (44), Rhine (47), etc. It has given evidence of the existence of supernormal psychophysical abilities such as extra-sensory perception, mechanical action from a distance (telekinesis), telepathy, premonition. It has also gathered much material on the problem of survival.
5. ***Eastern Psychology*** (especially Indian), both ancient and modern. Its valuable contributions are beginning to be integrated with those of Western psychology (52).

6. ***"Creative Understanding,"*** which emphasizes the creative power of spiritual understanding and of inner significance. Its chief champion was Hermann Keyserling (29) who expounded this approach through many books and through the "School of Wisdom" which was active for many years at Darmstadt, Germany.

7. ***The Holistic Approach and the Psychology of the Personality.*** This was first promoted by Smuts (53) in his book *Holism and Evolution* and is being adopted by an increasing number of psychologists and psychiatrists such as: Allport (4), Angyal (5), Goldstein (18), Maslow (37), Murphy (42) and Progoff (45a). The views of the preceding authors were ably summarized by Hall (19). Parallel with this development in America there has been in Switzerland the movement called *Médecine de la Personne*, started by Tournier of Geneva (60), and followed by Maeder (35) and others and, along independent lines, by Baudoin (8). The personalistic standpoint has been also upheld by Stern (56) in Germany.

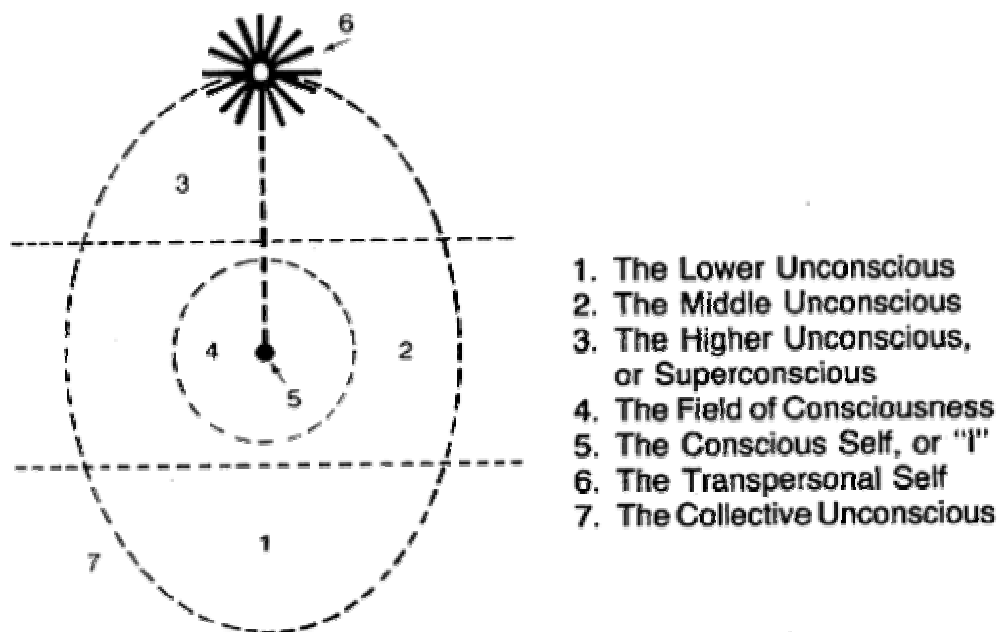
8. ***Inter-individual and Social Psychology and Psychiatry and the Anthropological Study of Man.*** This is a large movement which includes various independent currents. We here find Sullivan (57) with his "Inter-personal Theory of Psychiatry," Lewin (33), and then the investigators of group dynamics as at the University of Michigan (11), the researchers into human relations at Harvard (49), the contributions of Sorokin (54, 54a) on altruistic love, etc., also at Harvard; while in Europe there is the emphasis on the social and moral aspect in psychiatry by Baruk (7). The anthropological approach is ably represented, among others, by Margaret Mead (39).

9. ***"Active Techniques"*** for the Treatment and Development of the Personality. All or nearly all the previously mentioned approaches have led to the adoption and the use of a large number and variety of active techniques. The comparative older ones are hypnotism and suggestion and auto-suggestion, described and used by the two "Schools of Nancy" (Liebault, Bernheim, Coué) and, with greater scientific accuracy, by Baudoin (8); then the autogenous training of Schultz (50); Desoille's "Réve éveillé" (12); Happich's meditation technique (21); Moreno's (40) psychodrama, and other forms of Group Psychotherapy (6). Moreover there are the various techniques, too numerous to be quoted in this rapid survey, for the training of specific functions such as memory, thinking, imagination and will.

This vast amount of studies and research offers enough material for an attempt at co-ordination and synthesis. If we assemble ascertained facts, positive and well-authenticated contributions and well-founded interpretations, ignoring the exaggerations and theoretical super-structure of the various schools, we arrive at a pluridimensional (This apt term indicating an inclusive outlook has been used by Ruth Munroe (41) and by Gardner Murphy (42).) conception of the human personality which, though far from perfect or final is, we think, more inclusive and nearer to reality than previous formulations.

To illustrate such a conception of the constitution of the human being in his living concrete reality the following diagram may be helpful. It is, of course, a crude and elementary picture that can give only a structural, static, almost "anatomical" representation of our inner constitution, while it leaves out its dynamic aspect, which is the most important and essential one. But here, as in every science, gradual steps must be taken and progressive approximations be made. When dealing with a reality so plastic and elusive as our psychological life, it is important not to lose sight of the main lines and of the fundamental differences; otherwise the multiplicity of details is liable to obscure the picture as a whole and to prevent our realizing the respective significance, purpose and value of its different parts.

With these reservations and qualifications, the chart is as follows:



## **1. The Lower Unconscious**

This contains, or is the origin of:

- a. The elementary psychological activities which direct the life of the body; the intelligent coordination of bodily functions.
- b. The fundamental drives and primitive urges.
- c. Many complexes, charged with intense emotion.
- d. Dreams and imaginations of an inferior kind.
- e. Lower, uncontrolled parapsychological processes.
- f. Various pathological manifestations, such as phobias, obsessions, compulsive urges and paranoid delusions.

## **2. The Middle Unconscious**

This is formed of psychological elements similar to those of our waking consciousness and easily accessible to it. In this inner region our various experiences are assimilated, our ordinary mental and imaginative activities are elaborated and developed in a sort of psychological gestation before their birth into the light of consciousness.

## **3. The Higher Unconscious or Superconscious**

From this region we receive our higher intuitions and inspirations artistic, philosophical or scientific, ethical "imperatives" and urges to humanitarian and heroic action. It is the source of the higher feelings, such as altruistic love; of genius and of the states of contemplation, illumination and ecstasy. In this realm are latent the higher psychic functions and spiritual energies.

## **4. The Field of Consciousness**

This term—which is not quite accurate but which is fairly clear and convenient for practical purposes—is used to designate that part of our personality of which we are directly aware: the incessant flow of sensations,

images, thoughts, feelings, desires and impulses which we can observe, analyze and judge.

## **5. The Conscious Self or "I"**

The "self", that is to say, the point of pure self-awareness, is often confused with the conscious personality just described, but in reality it is quite different from it. This can be ascertained by the use of careful introspection. The changing contents of our consciousness (the sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc.) are one thing, while the "I", the self, the *centre* of our consciousness is another. From a certain point of view this difference can be compared to that existing between the white lighted area on a screen and the various pictures which are projected upon it.

But the "man in the street" and even many well-educated and intelligent people do not take the trouble to observe themselves and to discriminate; they drift on the surface of the "mind-stream" and identify themselves with its successive waves, with the changing contents of their consciousness.

## **6. The Higher Self**

The conscious self is generally not only submerged in the ceaseless flow of psychological contents but seems to disappear altogether when we fall asleep, when we faint and lose consciousness, when we are under the effect of an anaesthetic or narcotic, or in a state of hypnosis. And when we awake the self mysteriously re-appears, we do not know how or whence—a fact which, if closely examined, is truly baffling and disturbing. This leads us to assume that the re-appearance of the conscious self or ego is due to the existence of a permanent centre, of a true Self situated beyond or "above" it (The higher Self should not be confused in any way with the super-ego of Freud which is not a real self but, according to Freud's theory, a construction, an artificial product. It is also different from any "phenomenological" conception of the self or ego.).

There are various ways by means of which the reality of the Self can be ascertained. There have been many individuals who have achieved, more or less temporarily, a conscious realization of the Self that for them has the same degree of certainty as is experienced by an explorer who has entered a previously unknown region. Such statements can be found in Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* (10), in Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum* (45), in Underhill's *Mysticism* (61), and in other books. The awareness of the Self can also be

achieved through the use of certain psychological methods, among which are Jung's 'process of individuation' (28), Desoille's 'R  ve   veill  ' (12), the techniques of Raja Yoga (52), etc.

Then we have the corroboration of such philosophers as Kant and Herbart who make a clear distinction between the empirical ego and the noumenal or real Self. This Self is above, and unaffected by, the flow of the mind-stream or by bodily conditions; and the personal conscious self should be considered merely as its reflection, its "projection" in the field of the personality. At the present stage of psychological investigation little is definitely known concerning the Self, but the importance of this synthesizing centre well warrants further research.

## **7. The Collective Unconscious**

Human beings are not isolated, they are not "monads without windows" as Leibnitz thought. They may at times feel subjectively isolated, but the extreme existentialistic conception is not true, either psychologically or spiritually.

The outer line of the oval of the diagram should be regarded as "delimiting" but not as "dividing". It should be regarded as analogous to the membrane delimiting a cell, which permits a constant and active interchange with the whole body to which the cell belongs. Processes of "psychological osmosis" are going on all the time, both with other human beings and with the general psychic environment. The latter corresponds to what Jung has called the "collective unconscious"; but he has not clearly defined this term, in which he includes elements of different, even opposite natures, namely primitive archaic structures and higher, forward-directed activities of a superconscious character. (See C. G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, London, 1928, pp. 118-9).

The preceding diagram helps us to reconcile the following facts, which at first appear to contradict and exclude each other:

1. *The seeming duality*, the apparent existence of two selves in us. Indeed, it is as if there were two selves, because the personal self is generally unaware of the other, even to the point of denying its existence; whereas the other, the true Self, is latent and does not reveal itself directly to our consciousness.

2. *The real unity and uniqueness of the Self.* There are not really two selves, two independent and separate entities. The Self is one; it manifests in different degrees of awareness and self-realization. The reflection appears to be self-existent but has, in reality, no autonomous substantiality. It is, in other words, not a new and different light but a projection of its luminous source.

This conception of the structure of our being includes, co-ordinates and arranges in an integral vision the data obtained through various observations and experiences. It offers us a wider and more comprehensive understanding of the human drama, of the conflicts and problems that confront each one of us, and it also indicates the means of solving them and points the way to our liberation.

In our ordinary life we are limited and bound in a thousand ways—the prey of illusions and phantasms, the slaves of unrecognized complexes, tossed hither and thither by external influences, blinded and hypnotized by deceiving appearances. No wonder then that man, in such a state, is often discontented, insecure and changeable in his moods, thoughts and actions. Feeling intuitively that he is "one", and yet finding that he is "divided unto himself", he is bewildered and fails to understand either himself or others.

No wonder that he, not knowing or understanding himself, has no self-control and is continually involved in his own mistakes and weaknesses; that so many lives are failures, or are at least limited and saddened by diseases of mind and body, or tormented by doubt, discouragement and despair. No wonder that man, in his blind passionate search for liberty and satisfaction, rebels violently at times, and at times tries to still his inner torment by throwing himself headlong into a life of feverish activity, constant excitement, tempestuous emotion and reckless adventure.

Let us examine *whether* and *how* it is possible to solve this central problem of human life, to heal this fundamental infirmity of man. Let us see how he may free himself from this enslavement and achieve an harmonious inner integration, true Self-realization and right relationships with others.

The task is certainly neither easy nor simple, but that it can be accomplished has been demonstrated by the success of those who have used adequate and appropriate means.

The stages for the attainment of this goal may be tabulated as follows:

1. Thorough knowledge of one's personality.
2. Control of its various elements.
3. Realization of one's true Self—the discovery or creation of a unifying centre.
4. Psychosynthesis: the formation or reconstruction of the personality around the new centre.

Let us examine each of these stages.

### ***1. Thorough Knowledge of One's Personality.***

We have recognized that in order really to know ourselves it is not enough to make an inventory of the elements that form our conscious being. An extensive exploration of the vast regions of our unconscious must also be undertaken. We have first to penetrate courageously into the pit of our lower unconscious in order to discover the dark forces that ensnare and menace us—the "phantasms", the ancestral or childish images that obsess or silently dominate us, the fears that paralyze us, the conflicts that waste our energies. It is possible to do this by the use of the methods of psychoanalysis.

This search can be undertaken by oneself but it is accomplished more easily with the help of another. In any case the methods must be employed in a genuinely scientific manner, with the greatest objectivity and impartiality, without preconceived theories and without allowing ourselves to be deterred or led astray by the covert or violent resistance of our fears, our desires, our emotional attachments.

Psychoanalysis generally stops here; but this limitation is not justified. The regions of the middle and higher unconscious should likewise be explored. In that way we shall discover in ourselves hitherto unknown abilities, our true vocations, our higher potentialities which seek to express themselves, but which we often repel and repress through lack of understanding, through prejudice or fear. We shall also discover the immense reserve of undifferentiated psychic energy latent in every one of us; that is, the plastic part of our unconscious which lies at our disposal, empowering us with an unlimited capacity to learn and to create.



## ***2. Control of the Various Elements of the Personality.***

After having discovered all these elements, we have to take possession of them and acquire control over them. The most effective method by which we can achieve this is that of dis-identification. This is based on a fundamental psychological principle which may be formulated as follows:

*We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we dis-identify ourselves.*

In this principle lies the secret of our enslavement or of our liberty. Every time we "identify" ourselves with a weakness, a fault, a fear or any other personal emotion, we limit and paralyze ourselves. Every time we admit "I am discouraged" or "I am irritated", we become more and more dominated by depression or anger. We have accepted those limitations; we have ourselves put on our chains. If, instead, in the same situation we say, "A wave of discouragement is *trying* to submerge me" or "An impulse of anger is *attempting* to overpower me", the situation is very different. Then there are two forces confronting each other; on one side our vigilant self and on the other the discouragement or the anger. And the vigilant self does not submit to that invasion; it can objectively and critically survey those impulses of discouragement or anger; it can look for their origin, foresee their deleterious effects, and realize their unfoundedness. This is often sufficient to withstand an attack of such forces, disperse them and win the battle.

But even when these forces within ourselves are temporarily stronger, when the conscious personality is at first overwhelmed by their violence, the vigilant self is never really conquered. It can retire to an inner fortress and there prepare for and await the favourable moment in which to counter-attack. It may lose some of the battles, but if it does not give up its arms and surrender, the ultimate issue is not compromised, and it will achieve victory in the end.

Then, besides repelling one by one the attacks that come from the unconscious, we can apply a more fundamental and decisive method: we can tackle the deep-seated causes of these attacks and cut away the roots of the difficulty. This radical cure may be divided into two phases:

- a. *The disintegration of the harmful images or complexes.*
- b. *The control and utilization of the energies thus set free.*

Psychoanalysis has demonstrated that the power of these images and complexes lies chiefly in the fact that we are unconscious of them, that we do not recognize them as such. When they are unmasked, understood and resolved into their elements, they often cease to obsess us, and in any case we are then much better able to defend ourselves against them. In order to dissolve them we should use the methods of objectification, of *critical analysis* and of *discrimination*. That is to say, we must employ cold, impersonal observation as if they were mere natural phenomena, occurring outside ourselves. We should create a "psychological distance" between ourselves and them, keeping these images or complexes at arm's length, so to speak, and then quietly consider their origin, their nature and—their stupidity! This does not mean the suppression or repression of the energies inherent in those manifestations but their control and redirection into constructive channels.

It is well known that too much criticism and analysis are apt to paralyze and even kill our emotions and feelings. This critical faculty which we often employ indiscriminately and harmfully against our higher feelings and creative potentialities, should instead be used to free ourselves from undesirable impulses and tendencies. But such analysis and criticism are not always sufficient. There are certain strong trends, certain vital elements which, however much we may disparage and condemn them, obstinately persist. And there remains, moreover, the problem of the emotional and impulsive energies such as sexual and aggressive drives. These, when detached from the complexes or diverted from their previous channels, create in us a state of agitation and unrest and may find new but equally undesirable outlets.

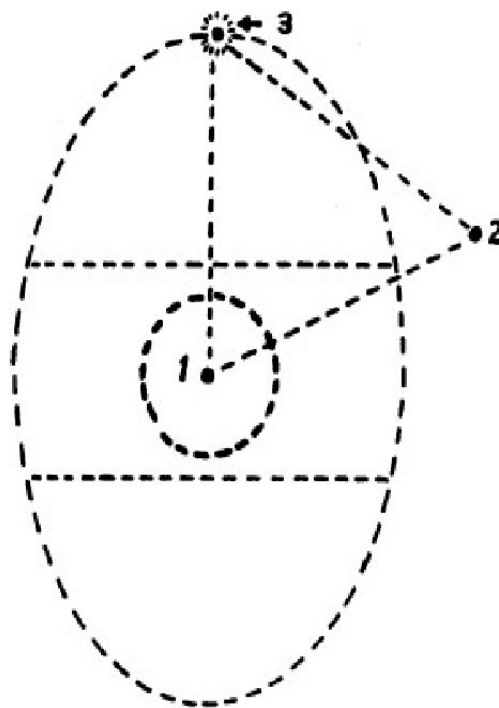
These forces, therefore, must not be left to run wild, but should be disposed of in harmless ways or, better still, used for constructive purposes: to rebuild our personality, to contribute to our psychosynthesis. But in order to be able to do this we must start from the centre; we must have established and made efficient *the unifying and controlling Principle of our life*.

### ***3. Realisation of One's True Self—The Discovery or Creation of a Unifying Centre.***

On the basis of what we have said about the nature and power of the Self, it is not difficult to point out theoretically the solution of such a problem. What has to be achieved is to expand the personal consciousness into that of the Self; to reach up, following the thread or ray (see diagram II) to the Star; to

unite the lower with the higher Self. But this, which is so easily expressed in words, is in reality a tremendous undertaking. It constitutes a magnificent endeavour, but certainly a long and arduous one, and not everybody is ready for it. But between the starting point in the lowlands of our ordinary consciousness and the shining peak of Self-realization there are many intermediate phases, many plateaus at various altitudes on which a man may rest or even make his temporary abode, if his lack of strength precludes or his will does not choose a further ascent.

**DIAGRAM II**



1. Conscious self or "I"
2. External Unifying Center
3. Higher Self.

In favourable cases the ascent takes place to some extent spontaneously through a process of natural inner growth, fostered by the manifold experiences of life; but often the process is very slow. In all cases, however,

it can be considerably accelerated by our deliberate conscious action and by the use of appropriate active techniques.

The intermediate stages imply new identifications. The men and women who cannot reach their true Self in its pure essence can create a picture and an ideal of perfected personality adequate to their calibre, their stage of development and their psychological type, and therefore can make this ideal practicable in actual life.

For some it may be the ideal of the artist who realizes and expresses himself as the creator of beautiful things, who makes art the most vital interest and the animating principle of his existence, pouring into it all his best energies. For others it may be the ideal of the seeker after Truth, the philosopher, the scientist. For yet others it is a more limited and personal ideal, that of the good father or mother.

These "ideal models" imply, as is evident, vital relationships with the outer world and other human beings, and hence a certain degree of extraversion. But there are people who are extraverted to an extreme degree and go so far as to project, as it were, the vital centre of their personality outside themselves. A typical example of such projection is the ardent patriot who gives himself entirely to his beloved country which becomes the centre of his life and interest, almost his very self. All his thoughts and feelings are directed towards this cause for which he is willing to sacrifice even his life. Another illustration (a frequent case in the past) is that of the woman who identifies herself with the man she loves, lives

for him and is absorbed in him. The ancient Hindu wife not only made her husband her human master, but worshipped him also as her spiritual teacher, her Guru—almost as her God.

This outward projection of one's own centre, this ex-centricity (in the etymological sense of the word) should not be underrated. While it does not represent the most direct way or the highest achievement, it may, despite appearances, constitute for the time being a fairly satisfactory form of indirect self-realization. In the best instances the individual does not really lose and merge himself in the external object, but frees himself in that way from selfish interests and personal limitations; he realizes himself through the external ideal or being. The latter thus becomes an indirect but true link, a point of connection between the personal man and his higher Self, which is reflected and symbolized in that object:

#### ***4. Psychosynthesis: the Formation or Reconstruction of the Personality Around the New Centre.***

When the unifying centre has been found or created, we are in a position to build around it a new personality—coherent, organized and unified.

This is the actual psychosynthesis, which also has several stages. The first essential is to decide the plan of action, to formulate the "inner program." We must visualize the purpose to be achieved—that is, the new personality to be developed—and have a clear realization of the various tasks it entails.

Some people have a distinct vision of their aim from the outset. They are capable of forming a clear picture of themselves as they can and intend to become. This picture should be realistic and "authentic", that is, in line with the natural development of the given individual and therefore capable—at least in some measure—of realization, and should not be a neurotic, unreal "idealized image" in the sense of Karen Homey (25). A genuine "ideal model" has a dynamic creative power; it facilitates the task by eliminating uncertainties and mistakes; it concentrates the energies and utilizes the great suggestive and creative power of images.

Other individuals of a more plastic psychological constitution, who live spontaneously, following indications and intuitions rather than definite plans, find it difficult to formulate such a program, to build according to a pattern; they may even positively dislike such a method. Their tendency is to let themselves be led by the Spirit within or by the will of God, leaving Him to choose what they should become. They feel that they can best reach the goal by eliminating, as much as possible, the obstacles and resistances inherent in their personality; by widening the channel of communication with the higher Self through aspiration and devotion and then letting the creative power of the Spirit act, trusting and obeying it.

Both methods are effective, and each is appropriate to the corresponding type. But it is well to know, to appreciate and to use both to some extent in order to avoid the limitations and the exaggerations of each by correcting and enriching the one with elements taken from the other.

Thus, those who follow the first method should be careful to avoid making their "ideal picture" too rigid; they should be ready to modify or to enlarge it—and even to change it altogether as later experiences, fresh outlooks or new clarifications indicate and demand this change.

On the other hand, those who follow the second method should guard against becoming too passive and negative, accepting as intuitions and higher inspirations certain promptings which are, in reality, determined by unconscious forces, wishes and desires.

Moreover, they must develop the ability to stand steady during the inevitable phases of inner aridity and darkness, when conscious communion with the spiritual Centre is interrupted and the personality feels itself abandoned.

The "ideal models" or images that one can create are many, but they can be divided into two principal groups. The first is formed of images representing harmonious development, an all-round personal or spiritual perfection. This kind of ideal is aimed at chiefly by introverts. The second group represents specialized efficiency. The purpose here is the utmost development of an ability or quality corresponding to the particular line of self-expression or service which the individual has chosen. This is the ideal of the artist, the teacher, the advocate of a good cause, etc. Such models are generally preferred by extraverts.

Once the choice of the ideal form has been made, practical psychosynthesis, *the actual construction of the new personality, begins*. This work may be divided into three principal parts:

**1. Utilization of the available energies.** These are (a) the forces released by the analysis and disintegration of the unconscious complexes; (b) the tendencies latent, and until now neglected, which exist on the various inner levels. Such utilisation demands the transmutation of many of these unconscious forces. Their inherent plasticity and mutability makes this possible. In fact, such transmutation is a process that is continually taking place within us. Just as heat is changed into motion and electric energy, and *vice versa*, our emotions and impulses are transformed into physical actions or into imaginative and intellectual activities. Conversely, ideas stir up emotions or are transformed into plans and hence into actions.

Instances of such transformations have been observed and recognized by many people. When the Latin poet says, "Facit indignatio versus" (Indignation produces my poems) he shows that he has realized how an emotional wave of indignation, if denied a natural outlet through external action, can be trans. formed into poetic activity. Again, when Heine writes, "Aus meinen grossen Schmerzen mach' ich die kleinen Lieder" (Out of my

great suffering I produce my little songs) he indicates that his pain has been sublimated into poetry, and thus transfigured into beauty.

Important teachings and examples concerning the doctrine and practice of this transformation of the inner energies can be found in the *yoga* of the Hindu, in Christian mysticism and asceticism and in works on spiritual alchemy, while some new points have been contributed by psychoanalysis. We therefore possess sufficient elements for the formation of a real science of psychological energies (psychodynamics), and of reliable and adequate techniques by which to bring about the desired changes in ourselves and in others.

**2. *Development*** of the parts of the personality which are either deficient or inadequate for the purpose we desire to attain. This development can be carried out in two ways: by means of direct evocation, autosuggestion, creative affirmation; or by the methodical training of undeveloped functions (such as memory, imagination, will)—a training analogous to that used in physical culture or in developing technical skills such as singing or playing an instrument.

**3. *Coordination and subordination*** of the various psychological energies and functions, the creation of a firm organization of the personality. This ordering presents interesting and suggestive analogies with that of a modern state, with the various groupings of the citizens into communities, social classes, professions and trades, and the different grades of town, district and state officials.

Such is, in brief outline, the process by which psychosynthesis is accomplished. But it should be made clear that all the various stages and methods mentioned above are closely interrelated and need not be followed in a strict succession of distinct periods or phases.

A living human being is not a building, for which the foundations must be laid, then the walls erected and, finally, the roof added. The carrying out of the vast inner program of psychosynthesis may be started from various points and angles at the same time, and the different methods and activities can be wisely alternated through shorter or longer cycles, according to circumstances and inner conditions.

All this may at first appear rather formidable, but there is no reason for doubt or discouragement. The help of a competent therapist or teacher obviously

makes the task much easier; on the other hand, one may gain fuller and deeper knowledge by one's own unaided efforts and through one's own mistakes. Having absorbed the preliminary instruction on the psychological principles involved, and having learned the various psychosynthetic techniques to be followed, the rest is a question of practice, experience, intelligence and intuition, which increase in proportion to the need and to the steadfastness of the endeavour. In this way the new regenerated personality is formed, and a new and higher life begins, the *true life*, for which the preceding one can be considered as a mere preparation, almost a gestation.

If we now consider psychosynthesis as a whole, with all its implications and developments, we see that it should not be looked upon as a particular psychological doctrine, nor as a single technical procedure.

It is first and foremost a dynamic, even a dramatic conception of our psychological life, which it portrays as a constant interplay and conflict between the many different and contrasting forces and a unifying centre which ever tends to control, harmonize and utilize them.

Moreover, psychosynthesis is a combination of several methods of inner action, aiming first at the development and perfection of the personality, and then at its harmonious co-ordination and increasing unification with the spiritual Self. These phases may be called respectively "personal" and "spiritual" psychosynthesis. According to the various fields of activity in which it is used, and the different purposes which it may serve, psychosynthesis is or may become:

1. A method of psychological development and Self-realization for those who refuse to remain the slaves of their own inner phantasms or of external influences, who refuse to submit passively to the play of psychological forces which is going on within them, and who are determined to become the master of their own lives.
2. A method of treatment for psychological and psychosomatic disturbances when the cause of the trouble is a violent and complicated conflict between groups of conscious and unconscious forces, or when it is due to those deep-seated and tormenting crises (not generally understood or rightly judged by the patient himself) which often precede a phase of Self-realization.



3. A method of integral education which tends not only to favour the development of the various abilities of the child or of the adolescent, but also helps him to discover and realize his true spiritual nature and to develop under its guidance an harmonious, radiant and efficient personality.

Psychosynthesis may also be considered as the individual expression of a *wider principle, of a general law of inter-individual and cosmic synthesis*. Indeed, the isolated individual does not exist; every person has intimate relationships with other individuals which make them all interdependent. Moreover, each and all are included in and part of the spiritual super-individual Reality.

Thus, inverting the analogy of man being a combination of many elements which are more or less coordinated, each man may be considered as an element or cell of a human group; this group, in its turn, forms associations with vaster and more complex groups, from the family group to town and district groups and to social classes; from workers' unions and employers' associations to the great national groups, and from these to the entire human family.

Between these individuals and groups arise problems and conflicts which are curiously similar to those we have found existing within each individual. Their solution (inter-individual psychosynthesis) should therefore be pursued along the same lines and by similar methods as for the achievement of individual psychosynthesis. A detailed study of this parallelism might prove very illuminating and help us to discover the profound significance and real value of the many efforts towards organization and synthesis, both of a practical and of a psychological nature, which are increasingly being attempted between the various national, social, economic, scientific and religious groups.

From a still wider and more comprehensive point of view, universal life itself appears to us as a struggle between multiplicity and unity—a labour and an aspiration towards union.

We seem to sense that—whether we conceive it as a divine Being or as cosmic energy—the Spirit working upon and within all creation is shaping it into order, harmony and beauty, uniting all beings (some willing but the majority as yet blind and rebellious) with each other through links of love,

achieving—slowly and silently, but powerfully and irresistibly—*the Supreme Synthesis*.

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# **Transpersonal Inspiration**

**by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.**

Part I (Part II, see Psychological Mountain-Climbing)

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## **Part One**

If we were to look about us at the "signs of the times", the present state of humanity, the direction of its interests and the nature of its behaviour, we should doubtless be struck by a growing polarization between two opposing tendencies. On the one hand there is an immoderate desire for and frantic pursuit of material possessions, sensuous enjoyment, mastery of nature and authority over other human beings, coupled with the inevitable accompaniments in every field of licence and self-assertiveness, individual and collective aggressiveness, and violence. On the other hand we find, displayed in a more or less overt form, a degree of dissatisfaction with that materialism, aggression and self-centeredness which, among many of the young, becomes open rebellion. This opposition is characterized by a conscious or unconscious search for different and higher values and gratifications and a longing for what is by and large termed spiritual or religious.

But the path of this search is strewn with uncertainty, confusion and misunderstanding. One notices a strange paradox in the fact that, while there is an abundance of evidence pointing to the existence of this higher sphere obtained by men and women of every age and place, it has been the object of little and largely unsatisfactory scientific research. A number of reasons account for this situation. In the first place, an erroneous conception of the scientific method is widely held, which would limit its use to the quantitative and statistical techniques suited to the natural sciences. Furthermore, the mind is reluctant to admit the existence of non-rational reality and values; it confuses the super-rational with the irrational or even anti-rational. There is also the fact that the descriptions of experiences in this higher sphere are generally couched in terms associated with religious doctrines, and employ

pictures, symbols and forms no longer accepted or recognized as valid by the modern mentality. As Keyserling has said in his irreverent way, "they have been exhibited in the frames constructed out of their own prejudices."

Another difficulty stems from the inadequacies inherent in language, the incapacity of verbal expression to communicate the true nature of transpersonal experience. All who have attempted description of such experiences have affirmed that they are ineffable. This is one of the characteristics attributed to mystical experience by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*.

Finally, the fear of adventuring into a different world from the common, everyday one must be reckoned with, a world that is unknown and apt to be baffling. This fear is strengthened by the frequent presentation of this "adventuring" in a negative way, usually calling for the renunciation of all that man is generally attached to, while insufficient stress is laid on its positive and joyous aspects. All this builds strong resistance and reluctance as well as what has been called the "refusal of the sublime". And yet, despite all, the dissatisfaction and search for "something other", the fascination in exploring and conquering the inner worlds, whose vivid light many have glimpsed, have had the effect of drawing large numbers to those who present themselves as "messengers" and guides in this sphere, and who collect around themselves enthusiastic and often fanatical adherents and disciples.

But wide variation in value distinguishes the messages and the competence of these guides, or "masters". Side by side with lofty and genuine teaching is proffered what is either totally spurious or contains an admixture of truth and illusion in varying proportions. Flanking the truly wise guides are to be found the false prophets who employ and teach methods that are not only worthless, but sometimes dangerous as well. Herein lie the necessity and urgency of scientific study and experimental investigation in this field: scientific in the sense of being independent of every doctrine, system and personal authority.

Studies and investigation along these lines have been initiated and are undergoing rapid development. They constitute a new branch of psychology, which has been given the name "transpersonal" and which could be termed "Height Psychology"; but this is only a beginning: a great deal remains to be done. Speaking for myself, this field has occupied my attention for many years, and I am now (June 1974) engaged on the task of coordinating and systematizing my personal contribution to the field in a book to be called

*Height Psychology and the Self*. Its proposed index will convey an idea of the vastness and complexity of this field:

#### Introduction-The Dimensions of Psychology

1. Two-dimensional (superficial) psychology;
2. Depth Psychology;
3. Height (Transpersonal) Psychology';
4. Towards a three-dimensional, synthetic psychology.

### Contents

1. Levels of the inner world;
2. The superconscious level;
3. Experience and realization;
4. Distinctive features of the "Heights"
5. The Self (summary-existential experiences and transcendental realities);
6. The seven different paths:
  - a. The religious, devotional, mystic;
  - b. The ethical, regenerative;
  - c. The aesthetic;
  - d. The path of social-humanitarian service and the heroic;
  - e. The scientific-philosophical;
  - f. The ritualistic or ceremonial;
  - g. The path of the Will.
7. Means and techniques for transpersonal realization: Descent and Ascent.

One of the principal subjects covered by this Height Psychology is the relationship between superconscious, transpersonal activities and the conscious life, or, to put it more precisely, the various modalities employed in the passage of superconscious contents and energies into the field of the ordinary waking consciousness. There are several of these modalities, and they can be indicated thus:

- I. Intuition
- II. Imagination
- III. Illumination
- IV. Revelation
- V. Inspiration



## VI. Creation

## VII. Understanding and interpretation

They do not operate separately, but tend to act more or less contemporaneously and in combinations of varying proportions. This makes it easy to confuse one with another; which is why their scientific study requires that the distinctions and differences existing between each of them be clearly established. Differentiation of this nature is essential if their relationships and interactions are to be recognized and properly understood. This study has in its turn its various aspects and stages, which also must be kept distinct:

- I. The phenomenology, i.e., the assemblage of spontaneously acquired experiences and observed facts, such as have been described and presented by a large number of witnesses of every time and place.
- II. The modality of the processes by which the passage from the super-conscious to the conscious is effected.
- III. The Techniques which have served, and still serve, to create and promote that passage. These include the various external and inner practices associated with the different religions, as well as those exercises which, though known by a variety of names, may be grouped under the generic title of Yoga .
- IV. The immediate results and the subsequent effects proceeding from them.
- V. The methods for alerting dangers and redressing potential damage caused by the "descent" or by the irruption of transpersonal energies.
- VI. The ways of making better and more fruitful use of these realizations and energies.

Let us first of all consider the various modalities referred to above, by which the superconscious elements and activities effect passage into the field of consciousness.

### **I. INTUITION**

Here a distinction must be made between the intuition as a psychic function and the results of its action, that is, the intuitions which have different characteristics. The commonly given definition of the word is etymologically derived from "in-tueri", meaning to see into. It is the sight, the immediate perception of an object apprehended in its individual reality. As a specific,

autonomous cognitive function, the intuition is widely known and has been recognized in both the East and the West.

Self-styled scientific psychology, on the contrary, has not acknowledged its validity as a medium of consciousness, owing to its restricted and unilateral conception of the field and methods of science, or has identified it with direct sensuous perception of external stimuli. But a reaction against this unjustified exclusivism has materialized and is continuing. The two major champions of the validity and value of intuition have been Bergson and Keyserling. Though regarded and classed as philosophers, they both possessed an exceptionally discriminating psychic sense based on the intuition, and in Keyserling's case, on a profound capacity for empathy and self-identification with others. They thus made invaluable contributions to the knowledge of the human mind, contributions which the new scientific psychology will have to take duly into account.

In the strictly psychological field, credit is due to Jung for affirming the existence and validity of the intuition as a specific and autonomous psychic function. He says this about it:

I regard intuition as a basic psychological function. It is the function that mediates perceptions in an unconscious way. Everything, whether outer or inner objects or their relationships, can be the focus of this perception. The peculiarity of intuition is that it is neither sense perception, nor feeling, nor intellectual inference, although it may also appear in these forms. In intuition a content presents itself whole and complete, without our being able to explain or discover how this content came into existence. Intuition is a kind of instinctive apprehension, no matter of what contents. Like sensation, it is an irrational function of perception. As with sensation, its contents have the character of being given, in contrast to the "derived" or "produced" character of thinking and feeling contents. Intuitive knowledge possesses an intrinsic certainty and conviction, which enabled Spinoza (and Bergson) to uphold the *scientia intuitiva* as the highest form of knowledge. Intuition shares this quality with sensation, whose certainty rests on its physical foundation. The certainty of intuition rests equally on a definite state of psychic "alertness" of whose origin the subject is unconscious.

*(Page 413, Psychological Types, C. C. Jung. (Bollinger Series XX, Princeton University Press, 1971.)*

He terms it irrational, a designation that lends itself to misunderstanding,

since it could be interpreted as contrary to reason, whereas in reality it is simply different, but not in opposition. It might well be called pararational, or, better, trans-rational.

The types of intuition are three in number. There are first of all the sensory intuitions associated with the conscious perception of visual, auditory, tactile, etc., impressions produced by stimuli originating in the environment. This class need not detain us, as it is limited to personal psychic levels and does not concern the superconscious.

Then we have intuitions of ideas, in the Platoistic sense, and since these come from a higher region than that in which the ordinary mind functions, they may be considered to be transpersonal. The same can be said of the third kind of higher intuition, that is to say the aesthetic, the religious, the mystical and even the scientific (for instance, those of higher mathematics). This denotes the difference between the personal psychological and the transpersonal life.

Intuitions present themselves to the consciousness, or are perceived by it, in two ways. The first, which adheres more closely, to the etymological meaning, can be described as the opening of an "inner eye", thus permitting the "sight" or perception of some reality inaccessible to normal mental vision. The other way is characterized by a brilliant, lightning-like flash of light, which, "descending" into the field of consciousness, is perceived by the "I", the centre of consciousness at its normal level or "seat". A common and specific characteristic of intuitions is their "authenticity". They convey the perception of their object in its totality, like an organic whole, and thereby differ from the mental consciousness, which is analytical. Keyserling points this out clearly in the following passage from "De la pensée aux sources":

Man, like all animals, is intimately linked to the total mass of beings and things, and if instinct is lacking in him or is so atrophied that he cannot depend upon his elementary impulses, then the human equivalent of instinct must intervene in order that man may freely orient himself in the COSMOS. In this sense only the intuitives are free: and that is why they alone provide all the great revealers, the leaders and the innovators.

As Keyserling says, the intuition displays another specific characteristic, its orientation towards becoming, towards the future:

The intuition penetrates the veils of the future and, therefore, of the possible. But reality is in perpetual transformation, and therefore only he is able to see it who grasps directly what from time to time is possible, and this in a double sense. Firstly, because above all the facts some 'possibilities' exist; and in the second place, because he perceives directly, among the possibilities, those which at times and in determined conditions, can be realized. Both can be derived only from a primordial interior experience of the all (totality).

This points to the intuition's capacity to pass beyond the acquisition of knowledge about an object's every quality to capture its very essence, i.e., what it IS. Thus the intuition qualifies as one of the fields of investigation of the new psychology of Being, in which Maslow was the pioneer.

## **II. IMAGINATION**

That the imagination has a close relationship with the intuition is evidenced by the fact that intuitions often do not present themselves to the consciousness in an abstract, simple and "pure" way, but rather in the guise of images. This entails a primary task of distinguishing the content, the essence, the idea inherent in an intuition from the form, the vestments, so to speak, which it assumes. The character of the form being symbolic, the complex and important question of symbolism arises. As I have dealt with this elsewhere I shall limit myself here to emphasizing the twofold and, in a certain sense, contrasting nature and function of the symbol. It can both veil and reveal. When mistaken for the reality that it expresses, it veils it and is thus a source of illusion. When recognized for what it is, a means of expression, it constitutes a useful and at times indispensable aid to "catching" and then illuminating a transcendental reality.

Independently of its cognitive function as a means and vehicle of the intuition, the imagination displays several other and different aspects. There is first of all simple reproductive imagination, that is, the vehicle of memory-pictures of sensations and impressions already experienced (mnemonic images). While the visual is the most frequent of these, memory images of other sense-mediated impressions abound, the most important being the aural. Latent and stored in what may be termed the "records of the unconscious", they can surface spontaneously into consciousness, or be re-evoked by the will. The capacity to store and recall images is immense, one might say practically unlimited. Under certain conditions (*hypnotic and feverish states*) detailed memories of events occurring in early childhood can rise to the surface of consciousness. There are, again, the prodigies of

memory exhibited by some great orchestral conductors (notably Toscanini) whose ability to remember entire symphonies and operas enabled them to conduct a work without reference to the score. Equally surprising is the way some advanced chess players can visualize the positions and moves of the pieces and play a number of simultaneous games without seeing the boards. Then there is creative imagination: its great importance is insufficiently recognized and its power little utilized, especially in education. As I shall be enlarging on this later when dealing with creativity, I wish at this point simply to make a passing reference to dreams, which are a mixed product of the two types of imagination: reproductive and creative.

### **III. ILLUMINATION**

One of the ways in which the superconscious manifests most frequently in the consciousness is illumination, which follows the opening of the "inner eye". Although intuition and illumination have a close affinity, each presents points of difference. In a general way an intuition can be said to be an illuminative flash concerning some particular aspect or manifestation of Reality. But illumination is something more expansive and enduring; it is a vision that reveals the essential nature and synthetic unity of the whole of Reality, or of some of its major aspects. It is the perception of a "light" which, emanating from Reality itself, is different from physical light. Much evidential testimony relating to this experience is contained in William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Winslow Hall's *Observed Illuminates*. This type of illumination may be regarded as the revelation of divine immanence, of the unity of the Universal Life as it manifests through myriads of forms. Its most pertinent description is that contained in Book X of the *Bhagavada Gita*, in which it is termed the "Revelation of the Universal Form".

A number of poets have had and tried to express this experience of illumination, the greatest of them being Dante, who fills the "Paradise" of his *Divine Comedy* with expressions of light. At the beginning of the Canto he clearly claims to have undergone the ineffable experience of the loftiest Light, the light that pervades the highest level, the "heaven" closest to the Supreme Reality which is God.

In the consciousness of its percipients, manifestation of the light assumes different aspects; or rather, different aspects of light dominate according to the individual, since they are not separate but interpenetrate and fuse in varying proportions. Sometimes, as in the case of Tagore, the cognitive

aspect is overriding. In the Christian as well as the Eastern mystics it is associated with feelings of love and adoration. In others it arouses a sense of joy, which may reach ecstatic bliss. But, I repeat, it is a matter of the prevalence of one or other of these aspects. In general all are present to a certain extent.

#### **IV REVELATION**

A type of illuminative experience different from those mentioned so far is the "flash" of consciousness, often a sudden perception, of what a human being is, in which an individual experiences a revelation of himself. This revelation can have various, sometimes opposite, features and effects. The first, of a strongly positive nature, is the vision of the wonderful potentialities latent or active on the superconscious levels. They can yield a dazzling revelatory flash of the spiritual Self. This is accompanied by a new understanding, a true comprehension, of the self and of others. The consciousness, while experiencing a sense of enlargement and expansion, is suffused by feelings of joy, goodness, love and gratitude. Even this revelation, however, if unexpected, sudden and over-intense, can produce undesirable and even unhealthy reactions. It can generate a sensation of excitation and exaltation. In cases where awareness of the difference between the spiritual Self and the personal "I" is lacking, the latter may attribute to itself the qualities and power of the former, with megalomania as the possible end product.

The other, reverse, aspect of inner illumination is the revelation of the inferior, dark features of the personality, hitherto ignored or unrecognized, or more or less negated and repressed in the subconscious. They constitute what Jung calls the "shadow". When experienced without warning, this revelation can prove emotionally unbalancing, being often exacerbated by depressive states, fear and even despair. The prevention, or at least abatement, of such effects is responsive to a prior psychological preparation. The key to this preparation is a knowledge of depth psychology, which cushions the shock of surprise and assists the acceptance of the revelation by exposing the truth that the dark features of the personality form part of the general human condition.

Other reactions, less extreme but still damaging, can be experienced at the emotional as well as the physical level, should the nervous system not tolerate the intensity, or "voltage", of the irruptive psycho-spiritual energies. I have written of this in my monograph, "Self-Realization and Psychological Disturbances", incorporated in *Psychosynthesis - A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, (N.Y., Hobbs, Dorman & Co., 1965).

Here I shall confine myself to saying that in this case, also, a preventive aware-ness of the different levels of human nature, as afforded by "three dimensional psychology", can lessen and help tolerate the reactions in question, as well as indicate the methods of eliminating them.

## **V. INSPIRATION**

## **VI. CREATION**

Inspiration and psycho-spiritual creation represent other types of relationship and interaction between the superconscious and consciousness. It is of importance to reach a realization of the differences existing between illumination, inspiration, and creation, and keep them clearly defined, as they are often confused. illumination can confer inspirations and often does so, but not always. With some mystics illumination remains subjective and may create a contemplative state. It often unleashes a rush of love and aspiration to become united with God, to fuse oneself with the Supreme Reality; but it does not necessarily inspire external expression or instigate action.

On the other hand there is the type of inspiration which takes place without illumination, elevation and expansion of consciousness. Most composers experience it at one time or another, but Mozart testified to the frequency with which it virtually "dictated" his works from early childhood on. A distinct difference is to be noted between inspiration and creation. In its deeper sense inspiration denotes the process whereby more or less elaborated contents pass or descend from transpersonal levels, from the superconscious, into the field of consciousness. Creation is, rather, a process whereby these contents are elaborated prior to their descent or appearance in consciousness. Creation is thus analogous to the conception and gestation of a new organism in the maternal uterus, inspiration being analogous to the birth or emergence of the creature.

The "birth" can occur at various stages of the elaboration. In some cases the product enters the consciousness clearly formulated and complete, equipped to pursue an autonomous existence, as occurs biologically in the case of many animals. In others, it "surfaces" in a crude, unfinished state, needing to be worked on, sometimes extensively, by the conscious "I" until it acquires an adequate form. Analogously to physical parturition, the birth is sometimes spontaneous, rapid and easy, and accompanied by a feeling of joy. Yet it can be difficult, protracted and painful.

## VII. UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION

In a certain sense this is the most important stage, for it gives significance to all that precedes it. Intuitions, illuminations and the revelations they produce must be properly understood if erroneous interpretations, faulty applications, and inappropriate and even harmful actions are to be avoided. These types of error are so frequently encountered that quotable examples of them abound. I shall, however, refer only to two extremely common classes; one consisting of misinterpretations of impulses or inner "commands" to act; the other of mental failure to grasp truths which appear in the field of consciousness. An outstanding example of the first type is a well-known episode in the life of St. Francis. Shortly after his conversion, while engaged in prayer, he heard an inner voice telling him to "go and restore my Church". Aware that there was nearby a small abandoned church, he interpreted the message as a divine command to repair it, which he proceeded to do. Only later did he understand that the words carried another and far wider meaning. the revelation concerned a mission to restore the Catholic Church, then passing through a phase of conspicuous decadence. How admirably he fulfilled this mission is common knowledge.

An example of the second type, totally dissimilar in character, has to do with a very different sort of man. It concerns the flashing revelation that Friedrich Nietzsche had of the great cycles which unfold in the eternity of the cosmic becoming. He interpreted and expressed this revelation in his theory of the "eternal return". He argued that, time being without limit, while the number of existing material atoms, however vast, is finite, and their possible combinations are necessarily finite, it follows that sooner or later these combinations must recur and reappear as they were before, repeating the process ad infinitum. This discouraging doctrine was the natural outcome of an erroneous premise which held that the number of atoms was finite and invariable. Leaving aside the inherent absurdity of this hypothesis, it has been confuted by the demonstration by modern physics that the atoms of matter are continually disintegrating, to form new ones with different properties. What Nietzsche had intuited was the cyclic nature of cosmic manifestation, of the evolutionary process. This corresponds to the Eastern conception of the great cycles governing the appearance and disappearance of the worlds-in other words, of the periodic emergence of matter, its evolution in innumerable forms (Manvantara), and finally its re-absorption into the spirit, the unmanifest (Pralaya). Recent discoveries in astronomy of the formation and dissolution of stars and galaxies fully confirm this conception. Applying it to the human scale, Eastern beliefs interpret it in



terms of the cyclic manifestation of the soul in a series of bodies (reincarnation). But none of that implies an identical return, but rather points to a reappearance in progressively finer forms, an evolution following an ascending spiral. This misconception on the part of Nietzsche affords a striking example of how an originally correct intuition can be misinterpreted.

The psychological field is the scene of a never-ending series of problems associated with symbol interpretation, and one in which confusion and error are continually cropping up. A particularly fertile ground for misunderstanding is the symbolism employed in dreams and myths, as well as that appearing in artistic and literary works. While these errors often derive from the preconceptions and private theories of those who interpret, a further difficulty stems from the proneness of symbols to carry different meanings at different levels of reality, without their coming into conflict or being mutually exclusive. This should always be borne in mind.

## Notes

1. See "Symbols of Transpersonal Experiences", *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Spring, 1969; or Reprint 11, Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, N.Y. 1969.



A Annual Convention at Sundial House, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK  
Michal Eastcott *in sports* third left. She constantly travelled between UK and Italy to help Dr; Roberto Assagioli, with his great work.

# Psychological Mountain-Climbing

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, MD

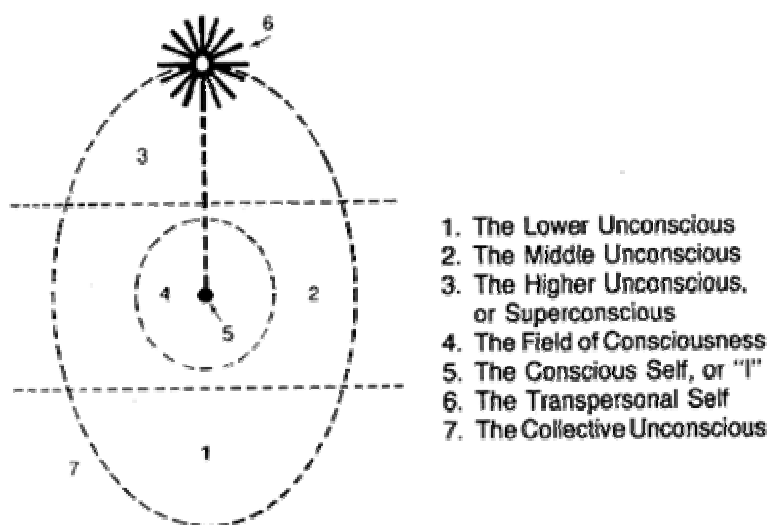
## Part Two

(Part One, see **Transpersonal Inspiration**)

Source: 1976, *Psychosynthesis Research Foundation* (reprint) Issue no. 36

Our subject, Psychological Mountain-Climbing—that is, the exploration and conquest of the superconscious—offers a vast field for research. Two different, and in a certain sense opposite, ways of exploring the superconscious offer themselves. The more usual is the one that may be described as descending. It consists in the inflow, the irruption of higher elements into the field of consciousness. It might be considered a form of vertical telepathy; telepathy, since a considerable "distance" separates the conscious "I" from the Self. These inflows manifest themselves in the form of intuitions, inspirations, creations of genius, and impulses to humanitarian and heroic action. In addition, specifically parapsychological phenomena appear, some of which oblige one to admit that influences and impulses of extra-individual origin arrive through the medium of all three levels of the unconscious. This subject was dealt with in my preceding paper, "*Transpersonal Inspiration*".

The other type of relationship and contact which we can establish with the superconscious is the ascendent. It consists in raising the conscious "I" to higher levels, and with it the area of consciousness, to the point where a zone is penetrated whose location above



the ordinary level of our consciousness normally prevents our knowledge of its existence. The diagram below indicates this clearly.

The zone in the centre represents the level and normal area of awareness with the conscious "I" in the middle. In the process of the inner ascent this shifts its position by rising to the level of the superconscious. Thus the area of consciousness comes to include the content of the superconscious and to approach more and more closely to the spiritual Self.

To this ascent I have given the name "psychological mountain-climbing", a designation which is not merely a more or less suggestive comparison; it also indicates a substantial analogy and a close symbolic relationship. In illustrating it, I shall avail myself, among other things, of some notes of Prof. Carruccio, as proficient a mountain climber as he is a mathematician. The first analogy concerns the different motives which can stimulate and prompt us to undertake ascents, be they physical or inner. "Sometimes," as Prof. Carruccio rightly says, "the passion for climbing assumes a form which, in its fierce affirmation of individual power in overcoming extreme difficulties in the face of grave danger, is associated with the conception of the Superman, in Nietzsche's sense."

Analogically, the urge to leave the habitual levels of the psychic life stems from the quest for, or assertion of, superiority—from a desire to develop faculties by means of which to dominate others. The Nietzschean "will to power", and the hankering after supernormal, magical powers are essentially egotistical motives, even if at times they are masked by pseudo-spiritual expressions.

Another motive common to both types of climbing is escape from routine life, i.e., from humdrum reality felt to be wretched, boring and burdensome, or in varying ways unsatisfying. It is a frequently encountered reaction to the limitations and prosaic nature of modern life, particularly as lived in the big cities.

A third motive is associated with the fascination exercised by the unknown, the extraordinary and the mysterious, and which has always spurred man towards the conquest, exploration and knowledge of the new, or what lies "beyond", and lured him on to undergo experiences different from the commonplace. This motive, or impulse, so imperious sometimes as to be irresistible, has been personified by Homer in the figure of Ulysses. The whole of the *Odyssey* is an elaboration of this theme, whose modern

manifestation takes the form of a search for out-of-the-way experiences, and is prepared to employ any and all means for the purpose, including drugs. Many of today's happenings become comprehensible if this motive is taken into account.

A fourth motive is the attraction and fascination of adventure, of overcoming difficulties and risks for their own sake and independently of the results and compensations inherent in an undertaking. Good examples of this motive in action are provided by the number of sailors who in recent years have embarked on long sea-voyages single-handed. It is this same spirit that pervades "academic" mountain-climbing, in which the search for and attempts to follow new and more difficult routes to the summit engage the climber's interest and skill to the exclusion of the known and less dangerous ones.

The association of this motive with the preceding one serves to explain why many young people disregard warnings and the demonstrations of the risks they expose themselves to, still more the prohibitory efforts of others and attempts to impose external restraints. This fact is important because it shows that in the prevention of drug addiction and treatment it is necessary to turn to other methods and appeal to other psychological incentives. We need delude ourselves no further that pointing out the risks they are running suffices to dissuade drug-oriented young people from what they are doing. But this issue, though urgent, is incidental to our subject and cannot be enlarged upon here.

There is a fifth, often powerful, motive which must not be confused with those preceding, even if it is frequently to be found associated with them in varying proportions. This is the attraction, or fascination, exerted by what is truly higher, in that it possesses a value of a genuinely spiritual character. From this point of view, mountain-climbing, writes Prof. Carruccio, "is understood as a branch of asceticism... of religious feeling in its various forms, from antiquity to the present day." In poetic vein, Guido Rey is thinking of a monastery of climbers when he writes in *Acrobatic Mountaineering*, "The peaks roundabout are altars where they go to perform mysterious rites far from the sight of other men...sometimes terrible." (page 53). This statement is very significant. It points to the reason for the pronounced attraction and fascination that mountains hold for so many people, and for the sacred character attributed to them by all peoples, as well as for the states of enthusiasm and inner uplift experienced by climbers.

There is an eloquent expression quoted in a fine study by Edoard Monot-Herzen on this subject, entitled *Ad Summum Per Quadratum*, published in the review, *Action et Pensée*, December 1956. "The guide, Joseph Pession, said to me as we came to the upper refuge on the Cervino, 'All earthly troubles are left behind when one enters here: we shall find ourselves in an entirely new world.' And on reaching the summit, one of the porters said that 'he heard angels' voices and now could die happy'."

For seventy years the painter Alberto Gros—his son, Carlo, reports—cherished a passionate love for the Cervino, a love transfigured by a kind of mystic feeling. "This," writes Monot-Herzen, "applies to Carlo Gros himself and to Guido Rey, who together wrote a book about the Cervino, and to me, myself, who during a span of fifty years made nineteen ascents of this mountain, each time bringing back some new revelation of its enchantment."

As is well known, the Indians believed the peaks of the Himalayas to be the home of the gods, while the Greeks regarded Mount Olympus as the habitation of their divine beings. The eminent Japanese painter, Hokusai, painted more than one hundred times the sacred Fujiyama—the mountain recognized as the temple of the divinity called "*The Princess of the Blossoming Flower*", an allusion to the rose in bloom. In one of his works Hokusai depicts the summit of Fujiyama sparkling in the sun, while halfway down a storm is breaking. As further evidence of the spiritual milieu associated with high places, we find shrines erected near the summits of mountains; we have also the revelation to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the transfiguration of the Christ on the *Mount of Tabor*, and *His Sermon on the Mount*.

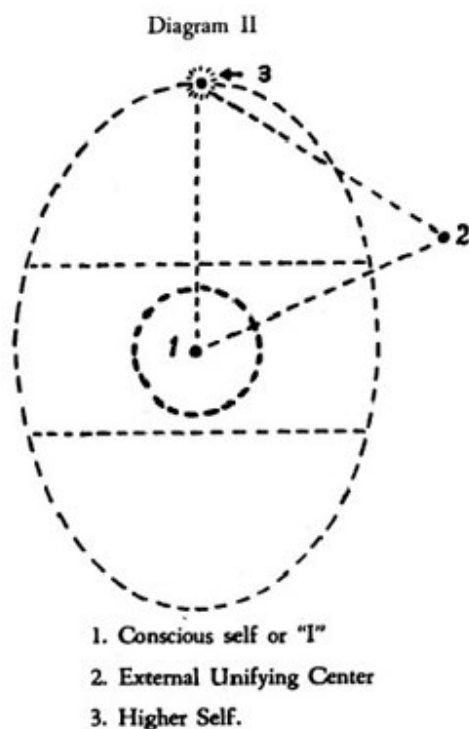
Let us take a closer look at the more exact analogies that exist between the various stages of the external and inner ascents. In both cases the ascent must be preceded by adequate preparation. For the climber, the preparation entails physical training on the flat, in order to strengthen the muscles. It would be folly to attempt an arduous climb as long as walking and physical exertions on level ground are still fatiguing. Before commencing an ascent one must have built up one's muscular stamina.

However obvious it may be in its particular field, this need for preparation is neither recognized nor catered for in psycho-spiritual climbing, an enterprise usually attempted without any previous self-training. In psychosynthesis we always insist upon an adequate personal psychosynthesis—i.e., the control and utilization of man's normal energies and functions, before the

development of higher energies is undertaken, or the attempt made to ascend and explore the superconscious. Where this is neglected, psychic imbalance, often of a serious nature, may result.

But such physical preparation in the one case and harnessing of the psychic energies in the other are not sufficient. A further pre-requisite is a knowledge, theoretical at least, of the region into which it is proposed to venture. Except in the case of peaks yet unsealed, mountains have been mapped and relevant knowledge and information assembled from the descriptions of those who have climbed them. In the psychological field, the analogous knowledge is that about the superconscious made available by the writings of those who have had experience of these higher levels. Even more valuable are personal relations with someone who has himself explored these heights. In this category are the genuine spiritual teachers: the false claims of many to be spiritual teachers necessitate the emphasis on the word genuine.

Thus doubly prepared, we can now tackle the ascent itself. Being an ascent and not a flight, it has a number of stages and halting-places. There exist two very instructive and illuminating descriptions of this gradual ascent; one is



that of Dante's ascent of the Mount of Purgatory, the subject of the second part of *The Divine Comedy*. Studied from a psychosynthetic and anagogic point of view, it is even today a source of much relevant instruction, since the obstacles and difficulties to be overcome are largely the same in both cases. The other is the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, described by St. John of the Cross.

Despite its specifically ascetic and mystical character, it contains real treasures of psychological knowledge and some direction which, expressed in modern language and abstracted from its period frame, could prove very instructive. For example: St. John gives a detailed account of the states of aridity and frigidity, including that

of "the dark night of the soul", which follows the first joyous experiences,

with their warmth and richness of feeling. These periods of suffering have their correspondence in the icy conditions and thick mist encountered by the climber at a certain stage of the ascent before he reaches the sunlit summit.

Various psychotherapeutic methods have made use of the symbolism of mountain and ascent. Carl Happich, a professor of clinical medicine at Darmstadt active in the use of psychotherapy, introduced three symbolic situations which he called *Meditation on the Meadow*, *Meditation on the Mountain* and *Meditation on the Chapel*.

This method of inner ascent by means of the imagined ascent of a mountain has been adopted by Desoille, among others, in formulating his technique of the *Réve Eveillé* (Waking Dream). It has since been developed and modified under such titles as "mental imagery" and "*Oneiro Therapy*" by Dr. Virel, who is active in psychosynthesis in Paris. The spontaneous drawing method often brings to light pictures of mountains to be climbed or those already scaled. The importance of symbols as a mirror of spiritual realities is indicated in the diagram below:

The diagram shows an external centre which can act as a mirror of the spiritual Self. Sometimes, indeed, it is easier to catch a reflection of the spiritual Self when mirrored in an external centre than by direct ascent thereto. The latter may be constituted by the therapist himself, in the role of ideal model; also by a symbol such as that of a mountain. There are various categories of symbols and a number of anagogic symbols of ascent available for use.

Psychosynthesis makes use of some exercises of this kind, one of them being that of the *Mount of Purgatory* already mentioned. *The Divine Comedy* can be regarded as the poem of psychosynthesis, whose three principal stages it describes: first, the descent into the Inferno, which represents the psychoanalytic phase of the descent into the abyss of the lower unconscious; then the ascent to Purgatory, picturing the inner ascent; and finally, the ascension to Paradise, which stands for the increasingly lofty stages of spiritual realization.

Another group of symbols is employed in the exercise of the *Legend of the Grail*. This is described in my book, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*. These symbols are not only therapeutically effective; they are no less competent, if not more so, in conquering the luminous heights of the superconscious and there discovering its marvels and

utilizing its treasures. Just as there are various routes up a mountain, so there are various "inner routes" suited to different temperaments, to different psychological types, leading to the peaks of the superconscious and coming into contact with the spiritual Self. There is the mystical way, the way of love, the aesthetic way as expressed by Plato in his famous scale of beauty, the meditative way, etc. It is the last, the meditative way, that is more directly associated with the field of psychosynthesis, and for this reason, the remainder of this discussion will be limited to it.

The first phase, which in a sense corresponds to the preparation mentioned above, is one of recollection, of concentration from the periphery to the centre; that is to say, the liberation of the field of consciousness from its ordinary contents by means of disidentification. Our consciousness is generally dispersed at various points in the field of consciousness, meanwhile continually receiving messages, or "information" as the language of cybernetics customarily has it, from different levels of the unconscious and from the external world. Thus the first thing to be done is to "re-enter into oneself", i.e., to withdraw the consciousness into the conscious "I" in the centre of the field of consciousness (see Diagram I).

Silence must be observed; not only external, but also inner silence. In this connection, here is a penetrating reply given by a Teacher to one of his disciples who said: "I close my eyes and am blind to the external world, I close my ears to every word and noise, and yet I achieve no realisation." Said the Teacher, "Try also to keep your mouth closed and maintain silence, inner as well as external." In fact, if we are observant, we become aware that something within us is constantly speaking: our sub-personalities with their incessant chatter, or our unconscious with its ceaseless inner clamour. Thus external silence is not sufficient in itself, whereas recollection can be acquired even in the midst of external noise.

The second phase is that of true meditation—meditation, that is, upon an idea formulated from a phrase or elaborated from a single word. Its first stage is *intellectual reflection*, but this is followed by something deeper and more vital, which is a state of perceiving, of consciously realising, the quality, the meaning, the function, the value of what is being meditated upon, so that it is felt to be almost living and acting within. In place of words one can use images and symbols, adopted from the external world or inwardly visualised. Higher still is the stage of contemplation, the nature of which it is well nigh impossible to describe in words. One can but hint at so intimate a state of identification with what is contemplated that all sense of duality disappears.



It is a state wherein subject and object become fused in a living unity. In the absence of any formulated idea, therefore, contemplation ensues as a state of perfect calm and inner silence, a "subsisting" in the pure consciousness of being.

It is then that the normally superconscious region, or sphere, is reached in full consciousness. At this stage one may experience the various psychospiritual qualities and activities which have play in the superconscious. They are not something abstract, vague and evanescent, as those unfamiliar with them might claim. They are rather something *living*, intense, varied and dynamic, which are perceived as more real than ordinary experiences, both inner and external. The principal characteristics of this stage are as follows:

1. A perception of light, an *illumination*, both in a general sense and as light on problems and situations which are thereby rendered comprehensible and whose significance is revealed.

2. A feeling of peace, a peace independent of any external circumstance or inner state.

3. A feeling of joy, of happiness, the state of happiness so well expressed by Dante in the words:

"O Joy, ineffable gladness, O Inner life of love and peace, Full of richness untainted by avidity."

4. A feeling of harmony and beauty.

5. A feeling of power, of the power of the spirit.

6. A sense of magnitude, of boundlessness, of universality, of the eternal.

All these qualities interpenetrate one another. Their inseparability Dante also pictures in his admirable tierce:

"Intellectual light full of love,

Love of truth overflowing with joy,

Joy which transcends every sweetness."

Naturally, there can be no permanence in such a lofty contemplative experience; but even in departure it leaves behind effects and changes, often profound, in the ordinary personality. Among other things, it fosters a gradual stabilization of the centre of personal consciousness and little by little raises the area of normal consciousness to higher levels.

It can succeed in almost reaching the line of demarcation (not of division but of distinction) between the middle unconscious and the superconscious in such a way that the waking consciousness stays always illuminated in some degree.

This, then, facilitates the other method, i.e., the descent of intuitions and inspirations, and makes their occurrence more frequent. The culmination, the symbolic arrival at the summit of the mountain, is the union of the centre of personal consciousness with the spiritual Self. It is to be noted that the "star" in Diagram I representing the spiritual Self is traced partly within and partly outside the oval. This indicates that the Self, partaking of both individuality and universality, is in contact with the transcendent Reality.

Another result of this experience takes the form of inspired action. A powerful impulse is felt to give liberal expression to the treasures discovered and won, to radiate them and make others participants in them; then to collaborate with all men of goodwill, with all who have enjoyed similar experiences, in dispersing the darkness of ignorance which envelops humanity, in eliminating the conflicts which harass it, in preparing the advent of a new civilisation in which men, happy and like-minded, actualise the wonderful latent potentialities with which they are gifted.

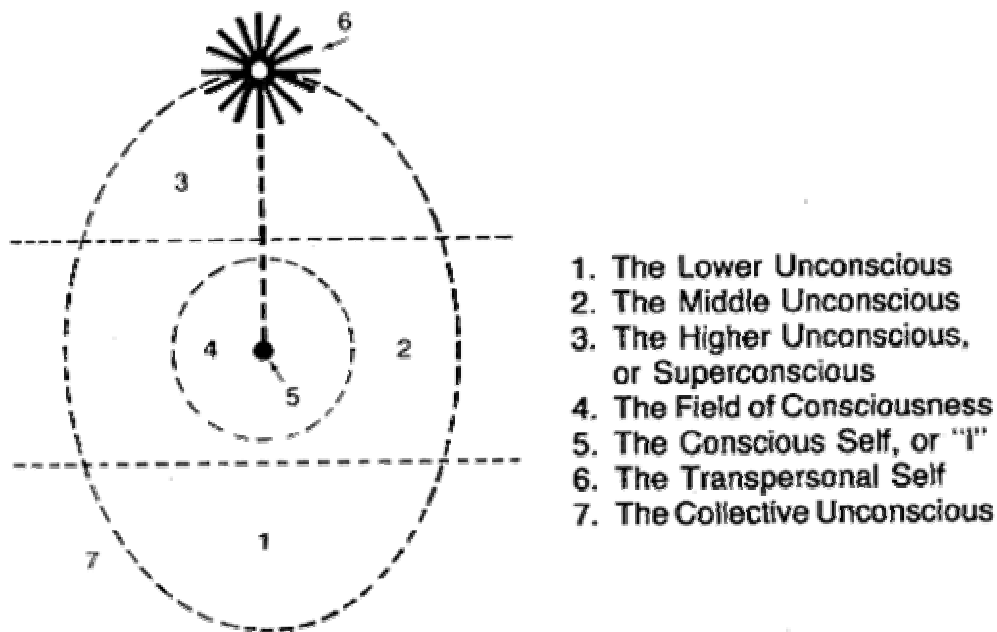


Open-air “Festival” meetings in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK

# The Superconscious and the Self

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

Source: unknown, Handed out by The Psychosynthesis and Education Trust, London



Perhaps the greatest confusion in dealing with the higher realms of human nature is the lack of a clear understanding of the distinction between the superconscious and the Self.

Such a distinction can be made. It will be of much practical help to those who want to understand their own experiences, and who seek a clear direction, with stable and recognizable landmarks, along the transpersonal dimension.

Let us begin with the superconscious. Strictly speaking, "superconscious" is just a term to designate the higher, spiritual, or transpersonal region of the psyche. *(See diagram above)* In it various psychological functions, processes, and energies are to be found, just as in the personality, although in the superconscious they can display much greater activity and diversity. So

*the difference between the superconscious and the personality is one of level, not of nature.* And superconscious experiences consist fundamentally in becoming aware of the activity which is going on in the higher levels of the human consciousness. For example states of ecstasy, of joy, of love for all living creatures, reported by many mystics, impulses to self-sacrifice of the herd, creative flashes of the artist, all belong to the higher levels of the superconscious.

Instead the Transpersonal Self is basically "ontological". Onthos means *being* - which *is not process*, which is something standing in itself.

To make a very simple analogy, the Self is like the pivot point, or hinge of a door; the door swings, but the hinge remains steady. Yet, the Self is not only the focal point around which the many superconscious processes occur; it is also the *cause* of those processes, and the source of the energy that makes them possible. So the Self is the unchanging, enduring reality; a stable centre of life on its own level, which has functions but *is not a function*.

The key thought is in the Gita: "Having pervaded with one part of myself the whole universe, I remain". What "remains" is *the Self on its own level*. Yet while it remains there, it can pervade and is pervading the whole universe of the personality, and this it does *through* the superconscious.

We can get a feeling for this apparent paradox if we consider the analogy of the electric power system in our large cities. At the source - the generator, situated in a remote location - there is electricity of a certain *intensity*, or voltage. This electricity *pervades* the whole amazingly complex and intricate power network of the city, and is suitably stepped down in voltage along the way by means of transformers, but the intensity (voltage) at the source *remains* stable and unchanging. And an unchanging -voltage is found also at all power outlets in every home. Yet the current, the *stream* of electric energy, which flows along the wires to energize a multitude of machines, appliances, light sources, etc. constitutes *a vast and continually changing process* which pervades and animates the city.

In this same way the Self is unchanging in essence, yet it sends out its energies, which are stepped down in intensity and transmitted through the Superconscious, and received, absorbed and utilized by the personality. It is interesting to note that the German philosopher Herman Keyserling talks about intensity as the specific characteristic of the Self. And Jung says that

archetypes and symbols (which are important elements of the superconscious) are transmitters and transformers of energies. (1)

From another point of view, it is as if the Self were the sun. The sun does not move relative to the earth. It is at the centre of the solar system, and remains there. But it pervades the whole solar system with its radiance, and at the same time sustains it and holds it together through its attractive force.

So the pure experience of the Self - of contact and eventually of identification with the Self - is very different from superconscious experiences or expanded states of awareness. We can begin to grasp this difference through a basic and most important analogy: *The Self is to the superconscious as the "I", or personal self, is to the elements and functions of the personality*, with the difference that the "I" is often identified with the personality elements, while the Self is not identified with the superconscious.

The experience of the Self might be reached in the measure in which the "I" - which is a projection or emanation of the Self - ascends toward the Self, identifies with it, and is temporarily absorbed into it.

So the first step toward the experience of the Self is to achieve the experience of the "I". The "I" is the personal centre of awareness and will. It is the *observer* and the *director*, and is distinct from the *contents* of consciousness. To reach it, one must first disidentify from feelings, thoughts, desires, drives, sensations, impulses - from the myriad contents of the personal consciousness. In other words one must relinquish the mistaken sense of *being* any of them. This of course does not mean in any way to abandon or suppress any of the personality functions. On the contrary, rather than being identified with, and therefore following, one or a few of them at a time, according to their whim, one can now direct and regulate them *at will*, and utilize any or all of them, at any moment, as means of expression in the world.

Achieving this condition of identification with the "I" and of inner mastery and harmony is a major aim of personal psychosynthesis. (2)

In the measure in which the "I" succeeds in releasing itself from those mistaken identifications at the personal level, it becomes able to ascent, through the superconscious or transpersonal realm, toward the Self. (See diagram, fig. A.) During this process there can be an increased intensity of the sense of identity; of self-awareness, due to the closer proximity of the

Self, *as well* as the awareness and experience of the superconscious processes.

One of these two experiences will be prevalent, depending on the psychological type. For example, using the septenary classification mentioned in *The Act of Will* (3), the experience of the superconscious will be generally prevalent in the "love/illuminative" type and the "aesthetic/creative" type, while the increased sense of identity is likely to be the most salient in the "Will/power" type, the "scientific/rational" type, and to some extent, in the "active/practical" type.

This is a basic; one could say "constitutional" difference. But the relative prominence of the two experiences can also change in the same individual at different times depending on a number of factors, for example the particular stage of development, or as a result of deliberate activity undertaken for that purpose, such as specific meditation exercises.

If the experience of the superconscious is stronger than the sense of self-identity there can be identification of the "I" with the contents of the superconscious, just as on a previous turn of the spiral there was identification with the contents of the personal consciousness.

This identification with higher and higher aspects of the superconscious is useful, as it can constitute a ladder toward the Self, and thus it represents; for many people, the path of least resistance and the most appropriate path.

But to have a true experience, even a beginning one, of the Self, it is necessary to disidentify *also from the superconscious*. And that is very difficult, for transpersonal states of awareness are so joyous, so alluring that one may become attached to them and enmeshed in them. Maslow has called this "higher sidetracking". These peak experiences are beautiful and often "ecstatic", and if properly understood and assimilated can be of real value, but they are not the pure experience of the Self.

It is interesting to observe that the danger of over-attachment to the superconscious has been recognized more or less explicitly by many spiritual teachers of the past. In order to avoid the danger of "higher sidetracking", a number of approaches to spiritual development has been adopted on the strategy of completely and deliberately turning away from the superconscious. In the language of the Christian mystics where the "soul" is the emotional aspect of the personality, "God" is the Transpersonal Self and

the "Visions" relate to the superconscious, the emphasis against visions is well known. Similar attitudes exist in the East, for example in many forms of Zen Buddhism.

This attitude may well have been the most appropriate one in the past, where little psychological knowledge was available and much confusion existed concerning the higher realms of man. But it does not utilize the convenient bridge to the Self which the superconscious offers, and thus results in an unnecessarily difficult, "austere" path, which only few are able to follow to the end. And as we have seen, the Self needs the superconscious as its vehicle of expression, just as the "I" needs the personality as its instrument in the world. So if the superconscious is consistently neglected in the ascent toward the Self, later on time and effort will have to be spent in exploring and developing it. And when the superconscious is not sufficiently developed, an intense experience of the Self can produce ego inflation and disorientation. On the other hand if the opposite extreme is followed, of drifting into the superconscious without having developed an adequate sense of self-identity, one runs the risk of getting lost in it, and eventually regressing to the level of undifferentiated "mass consciousness".

These two extreme conditions will be considered again later on. Here I would like to stress the validity of a basic principle of psychosynthesis, that *"we can benefit from, and utilize every function and element of our psyche, provided we understand its nature and purpose, and place it in its right relation with the greater whole."*

So provided we have an adequate- roadmap and are aware of the pitfalls we can find along the way, then a balanced emphasis on the development of self-identity and on the awareness of superconscious processes will lead to our most harmonious, joyful, and effective development in the transpersonal realm. As we have said earlier, one or the other will normally be prevalent, depending on a number of factors; the point is to avoid a condition of excessive one-sidedness. This is often produced unwittingly by keeping our interest focussed on the side that is most developed - and therefore richer and most interesting - thus developing it even further. But we can also "feed" the least developed aspect, by deliberately focusing on it the energy of our interest and our attention.

In practice this is often easier to do for the superconscious than for the Self. Because of the transcendent nature of the Self; which is quite beyond our normal range of experience - and therefore beyond the power of our



imagination - we often form our concept of what the Self is like on the basis of superconscious experiences. Such a concept is necessarily erroneous and distorted. And later on it often happens that we will believe to be in touch with the Self while we are actually still experiencing some of the higher aspects of the superconscious.

Some indications can be given to avoid this confusion, but we must keep in mind that it is quite impossible to describe the experience of the Self in more than the most peripheral fashion. In the attempt to indicate what is ineffable, beyond words, various terms have been used: Atman, Tao (in its transcendent sense), The Void, Suchness, the Immovable Mover, The Omega Point.

The experience of the Self has a quality of perfect peace, serenity, calm stillness, purity, and in it there is the paradoxical blending of individuality and universality.

The Self experiences universality but without "losing" itself within the vast Universal Self. It remains at the centre, immovable. One way we can begin to realize this is by opening ourselves to the experience of *infinity*. For we can have the awareness of infinity, the perception of infinite space, without losing our sense of individuality. That is, it is the conscious "I" who has the perception and the experience of infinity. Infinity IS ... and man gropes to a feeble but increasingly profound realization of its existence. The same can be said concerning *eternity*. And the experiences of eternity and of infinity - of transcending the limitations of time and space - combined, lead to their synthesis, the experience of *universality*.

So the Self gradually extends its awareness and identification "upward", into the vast realm of the Universal Self, yet remains fixed, aware of itself. The fundamental point is *that identification with the universal does not mean loss of identity, rather its enhancement and intensification*. This has been clearly stated by Radhakrishnan:

"The peculiar privilege of the human self is that he can consciously join and work for the whole and embody in his own life the purpose of the whole ... The two elements of selfhood: uniqueness (each-ness), and universality (all-ness), grow together until at last the most unique becomes the most universal". (4)

In the East this is represented by the symbol of a lotus with a radiant jewel at the centre. The petals of the lotus represent whirlpools, or vortexes of energies of various quality, and as these vortexes develop, interact, and become highly organized, they symbolize the opening of the lotus. They correspond to the transpersonal, superconscious functions and processes. Instead the radiant jewel at the centre represents the hub, the hinge, the Self ... a spark of universality, the unmoved mover. Here we find again all processes sustained, and in a sense included, in an immutable reality. This is expressed in the Eastern formula "Om Mane Padme Hum!", "Hail, the jewel in the lotus!"

The fact that all processes can be contained in an immutable, central core is another aspect of the paradoxical nature of the Self. Yet this has been realized experientially by many people. Here is one such account, reported with unusual clarity and detail at the culminating point of an inner exploration using a guided mental imagery technique:

" .... It's like a loop of white light .... It's very bright without glaring ... you can look directly at it. .. It's beautiful. (Guide: Let it slowly come nearer ... let it become one with you). Yes. Yes, I have. That's what I am! I can see it very much clearer now. It's spinning very, very fast ... that's a very important thing to me ... it revolves around a point of white in the centre ... absolutely white ... and I can go into the white dot, and if I do, it goes out, and its like free faring through the universe. I can go anywhere, the stars are all inside the white dot, everything is inside the white dot.

It's hard to keep myself from going through it. (Guide: O. K. Go ahead...). I'm through. There I am, just shooting around and seeing, just space. The earth is there ... I'm conscious of it, all of it. All of this is inside me, as well as outside me. it's the same thing ... (long pause) ... I'm very at home ... there's nothing to say". (5)

It is important to point out that although this subject was quite advanced, at the time of this experience he was quite naive concerning the superconscious and had not yet been exposed in any way to the concept of the Self. Yet we can easily recognize the fast spinning loop of light as a symbol of the superconscious, and the central point as a symbol of the Self. As the experience progresses, first there is identification with the superconscious (note that it had already occurred spontaneously when the guide suggested it) and this in turn leads to the awareness of the Self, then contact with it, and the consequent simultaneous experience of individuality and universality.

I intentionally said *contact* rather than *identification* with the Self. Throughout this experience, the emphasis was on processes, movements, and forms. The "point of white in the centre", although having no specific form or colour, was still an image. And the experience was of *going through* it. So this is not to be considered as a pure experience of the Self, rather as a superconscious experience which culminated in a momentary contact with the Self, and a glimpse - not in any way the full experience - of the synthesis of individuality and universality.

As I have said, many who have had even intense transpersonal experiences - experiences full of beautiful and ecstatic feelings, of light, of insight - believe that they have made contact with the Self, while in fact they only experienced the superconscious levels of awareness. In reaching toward the Self it is important to know how to recognize this difference. Anything that has movement, change, activity, direction, boundaries, dimensions, restrictions, limits, or specific qualities of any kind, in other words anything that is less than eternal and infinite that seen from our normal point of view, *contains or implies any kind of differentiation*, is not the Self!

The reader may object at this point that I have not yet said what the Self is truly like. But the transcendent nature of the Self places it beyond the power of understanding of the concrete mind, and consequently beyond the possibility of describing it with words. The only recourse is to describe what the Self is not. This approach has been very popular in the East, where it is called "the way of negation". Its purpose is not so much to convey information about the Self as to gradually elevate the thinking processes beyond the level of dualities and of concrete thought. In the West this has been habitually misunderstood. Often, when we hear that the Self is changeless, we imagine it to be static; if it has no activity, we conclude that it must be passive; if it has no boundaries, it must be shapeless; if it has no qualities, it must be boring. So if it truly were to contain the whole universe, that universe could only be trivial and repugnant.

Again, we have attempted to understand the Self in terms of our normal experiences, and arrived at a concept which has no relation whatsoever with the true nature of the Self. The "way of negation" needs to be reinterpreted in its true sense. When we say that anything that has quality is not the Self, we mean anything that has specific quality. The Self has no quality yet at the same time it is the synthesis of all qualities, in the sense that all qualities are contained in it and harmoniously integrated. Both darkness and white light can be said to have no colour, yet white light contains all colours, and the

right proportions. And the radiation of the Self can be experienced as blackness or as pure intense white light at different times. This has been reported by many mystics, the most famous of all being St. John of the Cross who used the term "Dark Night of the Soul" to describe the state that *precedes*, and leads to the experience of the Self. Other mystics have talked about the cosmic "voice of the silence" or "music of the spheres" which can be heard when all normal sounds cease, yet contains all sounds. And the experience of

The Void - the transcendence of bounded space and of all that is contained in space - has been described as terrifying or blissful in different circumstances. (6) This paradoxical nature of the Self is perhaps best stated by the Buddhist formula: "Neither being, nor not-being, nor both being and not-being, nor neither being nor not-being"!

So we need to remember that any concept or picture of the experience of the Self that we may have before the actual experience, is likely to lead us astray if we take it as face value. What is important is not to try to understand beforehand what the experience will be like, but to actually *have* that experience, by first identifying with the "I", and then as the "I", by ascending toward the Self and becoming unified with it. To do so we need on one hand to recognize those aspects which are not the Self, thus becoming able to disidentify from them once they hold us back. On the other hand we can increasingly cultivate and develop the sense of self-identity - as the path which leads to the Self - at the same time while opening ourselves to, and realizing as much as possible, the sense of eternity, infinity, and universality, as the aspects which help us proceed along that path.

I said before that the experience of the Self has a quality of perfect peace, calm, serenity, etc., but these are not qualities in the normal sense, they are rather states that indicate synthesis, wholeness, unity.

So the Self is in reality both the perfect, immutable, inexhaustible source, and the universal, all-encompassing point of convergence, of ultimate fulfillment. It is only in the identification with the Self that we can permanently overcome the innate sense of separateness and aloneness that we have almost come to accept as an inescapable aspect of being human.

To use Maslow's words:

"... this is a special phenomenological state in which the person somehow perceives the whole cosmos or at least the unity and integration of it and of everything in it, including his Self. He then feels as if he belongs by right in the cosmos. He becomes one of the family rather than an orphan. He comes inside rather than being outside looking in. He feels simultaneously small because of the vastness of the universe, but also an important being because he is there in it by absolute right. He is part of the universe rather than a stranger to it or an intruder in it". (7)

Identification with the Self gives freedom from all limitations and restrictions of the personal life, and - provided the superconscious is adequately developed - freedom to act in the world at will and as a free agent, according to the perceived need, to transpersonal purpose, and for the greatest good of all.

But this very high state is not in any way an ultimate one. It is the culmination of a cycle which leads to the beginning of a new one, just like the seed which germinates in the dark, pushes its way through the soil with great struggle, and emerges in the freedom of a new existence in the light and open space. Similarly by achieving identification with the Self, and the consciousness of universality, we find our rightful place in the greater whole, and in so doing enter a new cycle, that which Eastern sages have called "The Way of Higher Evolution".

We said that in order to have the pure experience of the Transpersonal Self one has to disidentify from that which is not the Self; and that to be able to do so, one has first to have the experience of the personal self - the "I".

For this the will has to be used: *first* to acquire the awareness of the personal "I", to identify with it, and *second* to reach up from it toward the Self. At the same time the Self, by means of the Transpersonal Will, attracts and reabsorbs the personal "I" which it emanated. This indicates the coordinated action of the personal will and the Transpersonal Will. (8)

As we can see in the diagram, fig. A, the "I" is intimately related to the Transpersonal Self. More precisely, the "I" is a projection or reflection of the Self an *outpost* of the Self in the world of the personality. It is important to realize this, because the attempt to reach the Self by skipping the "I" is an error, due to a misunderstanding. Many, with the best intentions, and at the cost of great pain, try to "destroy" the personal "I", the ego. Here we find an important difference between psychosynthesis and various other methods.

In psychosynthesis we maintain *that nothing has to be condemned, or destroyed, or eliminated*. As I said before, "we can benefit from and utilize every function and element of our psyche, provided we understand its nature and purpose, and place in it its right relation with the greater whole"

So the "I" is not to be destroyed. Personal self-identity is precious, It is the result of a long period of evolution, and can not be thrown away. What we have to eliminate is our attachment to it, because the personal self has to be brought back to its source! And, as we have said, this is done through the coordination and alignment of the personal will with the Transpersonal Will, which leads to the reunification of the personal self with the Transpersonal Self.

A clear understanding of this process will show that attempts to "kill the ego" not only will not help achieve this reunification, but actually lead in the opposite direction. This is clearly stated by Lama Angarika Govinda:

"Individuality is not only the necessary and complementary opposite of universality, but the focal point through which alone universality can be experienced. The suppression of individuality, the philosophical or religious denial of its value or importance, can only lead to a state of complete indifference and dissolution, which may be a liberation from suffering but a purely negative one, as it deprives us of the highest experience towards which the process of individuation seems to aim: the experience of perfect enlightenment, of Buddhahood in which the universality of our true being is realized. Merely to 'merge into the whole' like the 'drop into the sea', without having realized that wholeness, is only a poetical way of accepting annihilation and evading the problem that the fact of our individuality poses. Why should the universe evolve individualized forms of life and consciousness if this were not consistent with or inherent in the very spirit or nature of the universe" (9)

For the "I" to freely align its will with the Will of the Transpersonal Self is a most difficult task and a culminating act, *which only a strong "I" with a fully developed will is capable of achieving*, and for which all previous acts of will in the world of the personality can be considered, in a sense, as preparation and training.

So the unification of the "I" with the Self becomes possible only once the sense of the "I", of personal identity, has reached a sufficient intensity - and the personal will a corresponding strength - that it can freely and deliberately

disidentify from the personality functions and elevate itself sufficiently to elicit a corresponding attractive action by the Self.

The reader may rightly object at this point that some people have reported undoubtedly genuine experiences of the Self which occurred more or less unexpectedly, without any conscious effort of the individual. In this case it is the Transpersonal Self that initiates the process. The issue of who initiates and who responds can be misleading. Here I talk from the point of view of experience at the level of the personality, which is necessarily limited and partial. From the view point of the Self - a viewpoint which is not limited by time and space, and is therefore much more true to reality - the reaching of the "I" for the Self, and the attraction of the "I" by the Self, are two aspects of one and the same rhythmic process, and therefore can not be considered separately, rather they can be said to occur simultaneously.

Such true spontaneous experiences of the Self are extremely rare, and by their very nature, quite unpredictable. So the fact that they do occur is of profound psychological interest, but of little practical help for the person who is searching for an approach and a path he can follow for his own development in the transpersonal realm.

Furthermore such spontaneous experiences are usually of short duration, although their effects can be quite dramatic and beneficial. They typically leave the person with a most intense yearning to "go back", to return to that state of consciousness. One is then likely to begin an active search for the "way back".

This phase is a crucial - and often a very painful one. It is perhaps during this period that one is most likely to get sidetracked, and to find himself repeatedly at a dead end. Spontaneous experiences are likely to occur with little or no effort, while the person is engaged in totally unrelated activities. But often one will assume unconsciously that it is this unrelated behaviour that caused the experience, and later in the attempt to replicate such experience, one may try to "figure out what he did" that made it happen, and as a result waste much time and go to dangerous extremes, attempting to reproduce the conditions in which the experience occurred. Or remembering the state of peace, of serenity, of being, which he may have realized at the high point of the experience, he may decide to reduce to a minimum, or suspend, all personality activities, considering them a disturbing element, and antithetical to the state he is trying to reach. Such attempts are increasingly

common today, and are the distortion of an attitude which is valid and appropriate *at its own level*.

This right attitude can perhaps be best illustrated by Wagner's symbolic epic of the Grail. (10) Titurel, the knight, ascends the mountain, with much labour and courage. Then, after having reached the top, spends the night in prayer, asking for inspiration, and waits in silence. In response to this prayer, a host of angels (symbol of the superconscious) appear, and bring him the Cup (the Grail, symbol of transpersonal Love) and the Sword (symbol of Spiritual Power and Will). We see here first the *active* phase, and then the *receptive* phase. This sequence is essential. The knight who leaves the world behind him and ascends the mountain with much labour is the symbol of the "I" as it first disidentifies from all personality functions and aspects, and then, with an act of will, ascends as close as it can toward the Self. At the summit a receptive, contemplative attitude is taken, through the techniques of *meditation, contemplation, and silence*. (11) And this, if executed correctly, can lead to the inflow of the superconscious (which transmits to the personality the needed transpersonal qualities) (12) and later to contact with the Self. So we must *first* "reach the top", *then* assume the proper inner attitude, becoming silent at all levels of the personality, but from a focussed point of tension oriented upward.

A common error is to try to suspend all activity before having reached the top, or even before having started to climb. This can make us open to undesirable or dangerous influences, and in any case is a state of passivity that leads to stagnation. The opposite error is to keep trying to climb, or to forget to turn the attention upward, after having reached the mountain top. Then the "noise" of our physical, emotional, and mental activity prevents us from hearing, and tuning ourselves to, the more subtle "sounds" of the transpersonal realms.

Again, neither *activity* nor *receptivity* is to be rejected. Both are useful, even necessary, provided we understand their function and use each at the appropriate time and place.

I said that the "I" is a projection, an outpost of the Self. And there is a permanent connection between the two, through which energy can flow. When a good measure of genuine personal self-awareness is reached, then there are streams of energy which flow from the Transpersonal Self to the "I". This, again, is different from the energy which comes from the superconscious levels, for they bring no specific contents or intuitions.



They are intimations from the Transpersonal Self and *are experienced as intensification of self-awareness*. So this experience gives an acute sense of self-awareness accompanied by a sense of bliss. *Sat Chit Ananda*. "Thou are that".

For the Transpersonal Self *is* reality; it is of the same nature as the Universal Reality. Therefore its energy is charged with power and bliss, without any definite content. For this reason the ultimate reality to which it belongs has been described in terms of *purity*. This is the absence of specific quality, which is arrived at through the harmonious synthesis of *all* qualities (just as white light, the absence of colour, is the combination in right proportions of all colours). It is the void in a positive sense, the "Suchness of the Void", a void which contains all life, to which everything belongs, and in which all is combined.

This is the true contact with the Self. All the rest is contact with the superconscious.

The Self is without dimensions; it is both a geometric point that occupies no space; it is both zero and infinity, the "Laya Point", Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover". And it radiates beams of energy, emanates an energy field. An aspect of this energy reaches the superconscious. Another reaches the "I". The relationship between the Self and the "I" is a direct one, in which the Superconscious is not involved. One must learn to pass through the realm of the superconscious without looking right or left, so to speak, and that is very difficult, because it is so enticing, and understandably so. But one must remember that its charm can constitute the "Higher Sidetrackings" of which Maslow talks about. .

On the other hand the superconscious is of utmost importance in our development, and its vital place needs to be appreciated and understood, because parallel to the increasing intensity of the realization of self-consciousness - which can be considered an ascent, or progress along a vertical dimension - there needs to be *experience*, *expansion*, and *expression* at all levels, along the horizontal dimension.

Even at the personality level we don't, nor should we, live in the pure self-consciousness of the "I". The "I" creates its personality. Personal psychosynthesis is just that - the creation of a fully harmonized and integrated personality by the "I", the personal self. The "I" must be able to express itself at all personality levels, must use all the energies and functions

without forced identification with any of them, being free to be either *fully disidentified* or *partially identified* with anyone function or group of function, at any moment and *at will*, according to its own purpose. The personal self along the way of unfoldment and growth has to make use of its qualities, to express its power, its will, and to pervade the little universe of the personality while remaining at the centre.

In a similar way the Transpersonal Self on its own level must use the superconscious as its vehicle of experience and expression, as a means through which its energy is "transformed" or "stepped down" into a form that can be utilized by the personality. Such stepping down or transformations of energy are quite common, in nature and in man-made devices alike. Electric transformers and the gear shift of automobiles and bicycles fulfil just such a function. In nature, when the powerful and lethal high energy radiation (gamma rays and x-rays) emitted by the Sun reaches the upper atmosphere of the Earth; it interacts with free electrons a process called Compton Effect - and is stepped down into the visible light and heat which is vital to the biological world.

This is the normal course of evolution, a course that leads to increasing health and wholeness. Just as highly developed superconscious process without commensurate development of the sense of self can be overpowering, and lead one to be "swept away", and in extreme cases to regression into the mass consciousness, so a premature, inrush of energy directly from the Self, without the capacity to channel the energy into and through the superconscious can produce imbalance and disorientation, and in extreme cases even psychosis. The intensity is too high, and the means to understand and assimilate the experience in relation to everyday awareness, and act accordingly; are not available. The experience of the Self remains unconnected. This can cause a most painful sense of split, and of lack of understanding, or of lack of means of expression in the world - almost as being handicapped. In extreme cases there can be rejection of the everyday world as non-real. This is a basic experiential confusion: the world is real. What is non- real is our perception of it, as physicists have proved at the beginning of the century. They have shown that what we perceive as solid matter is really almost completely empty space, in which atoms - themselves whirlpools of energy - interact at distances proportional to the stars in our galaxy.

At the opposite pole, there can be a *confusion of levels* where after the experience one believes that he is still identified with the Self when he has

actually "descended" once again to the level of the "I". This can cause "ego inflation", feelings of omnipotence, and in extreme cases the individual who, speaking from the personal self says "I am God", thus ascribing to the "I" a spiritual nature that properly belongs to the Self.

But when parallel to the reaching upward toward the Self, the superconscious functions and processes are also developed, and there is a safe; healthy, and immensely fruitful path through which the energy can flow. Then one can use compassion and wisdom, as well as strength, power and will: the strength and the power to express compassion according to wisdom; the wisdom and compassion to use power for the greatest good!

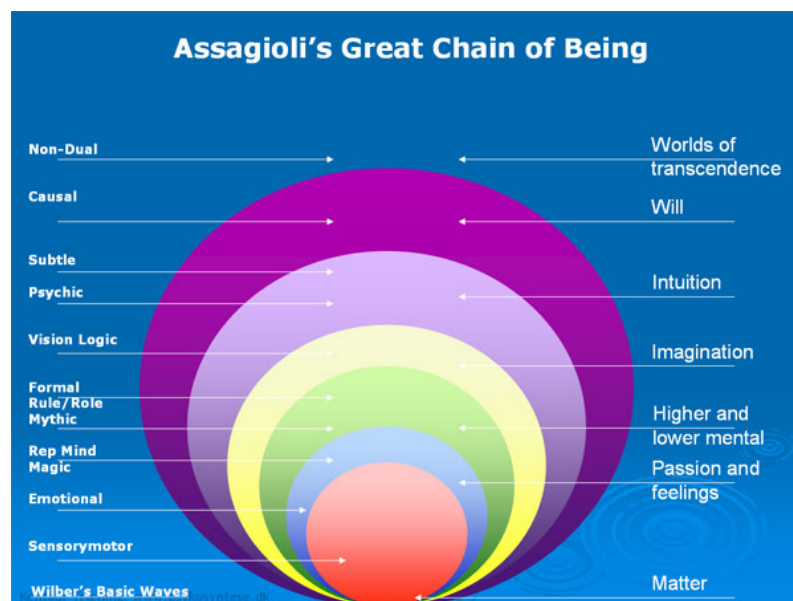
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# **Transmutation and Sublimation of Sexual Energies**

**by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, MD**

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The problem of sex, the problem of how to deal in a sane and constructive way with the sexual drive, has confronted humanity ever since the beginning of civilization. But, for various reasons, this problem has now become more compelling, and public awareness of it is more acute to use a current phrase, humanity has become definitely sex-conscious.

The crisis in the relations between the sexes is not isolated but forms part and perhaps can be said to be the outstanding aspect of the general crisis which is deeply affecting the very foundations of existing civilization.

The authority of the religious and moral principles on which our civilization was based, the rules and customs which were formerly taken for granted and accepted (even if not always consistently applied) have lost or are rapidly losing their prestige, their binding and regulating power; even more, the younger generation is actively, and at times violently, revolting against them. The main cause of this crisis has been the fact that, while the religious fervor and the unquestioned acceptance of the theological and moral conceptions of the past have been rapidly losing their grip, the older and rigidly orthodox groups have attempted by sheer authority to enforce the strict rules, condemnations and prohibitions based on those theological and moralistic foundations.

Thus, in the past, in the sexual domain an attitude prevailed which led public opinion to regard the biological instincts and the human passions as bad and impure. Therefore, the method enjoined for dealing with them was that of suppression, except when the sex urge could find a justified satisfaction in lawful marriage. The whole subject of sex was considered improper, and adults tried to keep young people ignorant about it as long as possible.

The weakening of the religious influence on which that attitude was based, and the realization of the injurious effects of that suppression on health and character evoked various movements of revolt. First we had the "return to

nature" advocated by Rousseau and his followers; then the glorification of feeling by the romantic movement; later, revival of the hedonistic and aesthetic ideas of ancient Greece and the Renaissance, followed- by the wave of philosophical and practical materialism, and the individualistic revolt against society and its norms as portrayed by Ibsen. Perhaps more important in modern society has been the influence of Freud and his followers of the psychoanalytic movement, which emphasized the psychopathological effects of sexual repression. All these concurred to foster and justify the uncontrolled gratification of all drives and impulses, the letting loose of every passion, the following of every whim.

But the result of this "liberation" did not produce the expected satisfaction and happiness. While it eliminated some of the drawbacks of the earlier rigid attitude and the consequent suffering, it produced other complications, conflicts and misery. The followers of uncontrolled sexual expression found, and are still finding, that excesses are necessarily followed by exhaustion or disgust; that the sexual drive and passion, even when not checked by moral considerations, cannot always find gratification owing to lack of suitable partners. Moreover, various drives often come into conflict with each other, so that indulgence in one requires the inhibition of another. For instance, a reckless yielding to sexual urge is apt to clash with self-preservation, creating a conflict between, for instance, lust and fear of disease. Further, an exaggerated sense of self-assertion may be in conflict with social mores and the consequent fear of the risks involved.

The lack of any stable guiding principle, of any clear scale of values, makes the individual insecure, robs him of self-reliance, and subjects him to the influence of other people and external circumstances. Moreover, ethical and spiritual principles or aspirations cannot be eliminated as easily as many seem to believe; they persist in the unconscious owing to hereditary and environmental influences, and also exist latent in the true spiritual nature of man. When violated, they arouse conscious or unconscious protest and consequently intense inner conflicts.

For clarity's sake, the picture of the situation has been oversimplified. In reality we are at present in a period of transition, of confusion and of cross-currents. In some places and groups the old conditions persist; old concepts and methods are still being enforced. In many cases a state of violent reaction and of conflict between the generations prevails. In the more advanced and enlightened circles the exaggerated nature of the reaction has been

recognized and attempts are being made to find and adopt balanced views and sound methods.

It is apparent that neither of the two extreme attitudes can give satisfactory results. One might think that some compromise between the two could be the way out of the impasse, but while such a common-sense procedure might avert the worst results of those extremes, experience indicates that it cannot be considered a satisfactory solution.

However, there is another alternative, a more dynamic and constructive way of handling the problem. This is based on, and takes advantage of, a fundamental property of biological and psychological energies, namely, the possibility of their transmutation - a possibility existing in all energies.

The real nature of the process is not well known, but such is the case with all "ultimates." For instance, it cannot be claimed that we have grasped the essential nature of electricity, but we know enough about its manifestations and the laws regulating them to enable us to utilize electricity in many diverse and often complicated ways, as in electronics. It is the same in the psychological field; we need not ascertain the ultimate nature of the psychological energies and their transmutations in order to utilize them increasingly through a growing knowledge of the laws that govern them and by means of appropriate and efficient methods based on those laws. We can therefore proceed confidently in our examination of the methods to be followed in the utilization for constructive ends of surplus or excessive sexual drives. This is particularly valuable, for instance, in balancing the sexual appetites of man and wife in marriage, or adjusting to situations where normal sexual relations are not available.

The first rule is to adopt an objective attitude towards sex, free from the traditional reactions of fear, prudishness and condemnation, as well as from the lure and glamour - often artificially fostered - by which it is generally surrounded at present.

The sexual drive, like any other, is in *itself* neither "bad" nor "good." It is a biological function and, as such, it is not "immoral" but *pre-moral*. It has a great importance because it ensures the continuity of the animal species and of the human race. In animals it is subject to natural cyclic self-regulation. In civilized humanity it has become complicated through its close association with psychological functions, such as emotion and imagination, and with social and ethical factors, which have partly over-stimulated, partly inhibited

it. Therefore, the objective scientific attitude towards the sexual drive should be twofold: we should, on the one hand, eliminate the fears and condemnations, which have the effect of repressing it into the unconscious, as psychoanalysis has demonstrated; and, on the other hand we should exercise a calm but firm control, followed by an active process of transmutation whenever its natural expression is unwarranted.

The processes of psychological transmutation and sublimation are symbolically indicated-although in obscure and abstruse ways-in the writings of alchemists (Tung} 9b). Other hints can be found in the works of writers on asceticism and mysticism such as Evelyn Underhill. In the modern approach to the subject we find the following significant statement by Freud: "The elements of the sexual instinct are characterized by a capacity for sublimation; for changing their sexual aim into another of a different kind and socially more worthy. To the sum of energies thus gained for our psychological productions we probably owe the highest results of our culture." (Freud: *Ueber Psychoanalyse*, Leipzigund Wien, Deutike 910, pp. 61-62) \*.

This statement is important, for in it Freud himself shows the fallacy of considering the physical and instinctive aspects of sexuality separately and independently from its emotional and other psychological aspects. Yet this fallacy is committed by some investigators having a materialistic bias. Such a purely zoological consideration is altogether one-sided, and while those investigators have piled up a huge mass of facts the neglect of their vital connection with the psychological aspect of sex which is the truly human one vitiates the conclusions drawn from them. James Hinton wittily remarked over half a century ago that to deal with the great fact of sexual love merely from the physical side would be like thinking, during a concert by Sarasate, of the cat's bowels and the horses tail used in making the violin strings and bow (Ellis, 6).

In seeking to define the nature of sexuality we find in it three principal aspects:

1. A sensual aspect: physical pleasure;
2. An emotional aspect: union with another person;
3. A creative aspect: the birth of a new creature.



This classification does not claim to be scientifically accurate but constitutes a practical aid in the process of transmutation. Each of the aspects mentioned can be transmuted or sublimated in accordance with its own specific nature.

Moreover, transmutations can take place in two directions.

The first is the "vertical" or inward direction. Many instances of this kind of sublimation are offered by the lives and writings of the mystics of all times, places and religions. Their autobiographies furnish most interesting evidence of the nature of this process, its crises and vicissitudes, the suffering it entails as well as the joys which reward its stress and strain. All of them speak of the "bliss" they experience - which, however, they regard as a possible hindrance if one becomes attached to it. One can also observe the different steps leading from human love to love for a higher Being, such as the Christ, or for God Himself; this is the sublimation of the emotional aspect. They aspire to union with the Christ within, and some of them speak of it as the "mystical marriage." In psychological terms, one would say that the goal of spiritual synthesis is the union of the personality with the spiritual Self, the first representing the negative feminine pole, the other the positive masculine pole. This polarity is a reality and not just a simple symbolical transposition of a biological fact. It is one of the fundamental aspects of the spirit-matter polarity and is, so to speak, its reflection on the psycho-spiritual level, as sexual polarity is its expression on the physical level.

Let us pause here for a moment in order to dissipate certain confusions and misunderstandings that might arise. While the process of transmutation and sublimation can frequently be observed, one must not infer therefrom that all spiritual love is "merely" the outcome of sublimated sex, that it is possible to "explain away" a higher psychological or spiritual manifestation by attributing its origin to biological sources or drives. The true nature of mysticism cannot be considered, as some investigators have maintained, to be merely a product or by-product of sex. On the one hand, one finds many people whose normal sexual life is inhibited yet who show no trace of mysticism; on the other hand, there are instances of people leading a normal sexual life, raising a family, etc., and having at the same time genuine mystical experiences.

The spiritual life and consciousness belongs to a definite psychological level and has a quality which is specific and not derived. The transmuted energies reach up to it from below, as it were, and give it added vitality and "heat," but they neither create nor explain that higher life. The creative aspect can be

sublimated in this "vertical" direction in the formation of a new regenerated personality. The growth of the "inner man" calls for these creative energies, and in accordance with the degree to which the individual employs them, new spheres of action of increasing vastness will open up before him.

The second direction of the transmutation process is "horizontal" or external. Here also we find three kinds of transmutation, corresponding to the three aspects. The first, rather than being actual transmutation, consists of the substitution of other pleasures of the senses for sexual pleasure, from simple enjoyment of food to the enjoyment of contact with nature and to aesthetic pleasures by the cultivation of the appreciation of beauty through sight and hearing. The second consists of an enlargement or extension of love so as to include a growing number of individuals; the third produces or fosters artistic and intellectual activities.

When the physical sexual expression of human love is blocked for some reason, its emotional or feeling manifestations can be enhanced and reach a high level of ideal, "platonic" love. Further, independently of any obstacle to the free and complete expression of love, a gradual process of transmutation takes place normally and spontaneously in harmoniously married couples. At the beginning, the sexual and intensely emotional manifestations of love generally predominate, but in the course of years and decades this passionate aspect cools off and is transmuted into tender feeling, increasing mutual understanding, appreciation and inner communion.

The love-energy derived from sexual sublimation can and does expand beyond love of one individual. It extends in concentric circles or spheres, encompassing ever larger groups of human beings. In the form of compassion it is poured upon those who suffer; then it undergoes a further transmutation and becomes a motive power for social and philanthropic action. Sublimated love-energy can also be expressed as comradeship and friendship for those with whom we have a common basis of understanding, aims and activity. Finally, it can reach out further until it radiates as brotherly love upon all human beings and upon all living creatures.

The third kind of transmutation of the sexual energies is into creative activities of an artistic or intellectual nature. The following statement by a great philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer,

strongly bears out this point:

"In the days and in the hours in which the tendency to voluptuousness is stronger .. just then also the higher spiritual energies .. are apt to be aroused most strongly. They are inactive when mans consciousness has yielded to lust, but through effective effort their direction can be changed and then man's consciousness is occupied, instead of with those lower and tormenting desires, by the highest activities of the mind."

There appears to be a deep similarity between sexual energy and the creative energies operating at other levels of the human being. Artistic creation offers a particularly suitable channel for sublimation, and many instances can be found in the lives of great artists, writers and composers. One of them, which has a special significance, is that of Richard Wagner. As is well known, he was at one time passionately in love with a married woman, Mathilde Wesendonck, to whom he gave music lessons and in whom he found an understanding of and a devotion to his genius which he missed in his first wife, Minna. After a short time they resolved to renounce the consummation of their love, and Wagner left Zurich and went, or rather fled, to Venice. At first his desperate mood induced ideas of suicide, but soon he set himself to write both the libretto and music of *Tristan and Isolde*, and in a kind of creative frenzy, completed the opera within a few months. During this period he wrote many letters to Mathilde and kept a diary intended for her. These were published after his death and in them one can clearly trace the gradual cooling off of his passion as he gave expression to it in the poetry and music of his opera. The completion of the work found him so detached that he wrote to Mathilde in a rather tepid and much lighter vein, and even paid her a short visit on purely friendly terms. That Wagner was aware of this process of sublimation and consciously fostered it is evident from a letter to Liszt: "As in my life I have never enjoyed the true happiness of love, I want to raise a monument to this most beautiful of all dreams, in which this love shall be fully satisfied, from beginning to end. I am planning a 'Tristan and Isolde'."

Transmutation and sublimation is a process that can be either spontaneous or consciously and deliberately fostered and brought about. In the latter case, there is ample scope for the effective application of the facts and laws ascertained or rediscovered by modern dynamic psychology, and for the use of active techniques based on them. Here are some practical methods for such applications:

1. A firm conscious control of the drive to be transmuted, in which, however, care should be taken to avoid any condemnation or fear of it, as this could result in its repression in the unconscious. Non-condemnation of the drive, as

such, does not imply a lack of realization of one's serious responsibility for the consequences, both individual and social, of its unregulated expression. Control can be helped by simple physical means, such as brisk muscular activity and rhythmic breathing, but the most effective, and at the same time the higher, way of controlling both the sexual and the power drives is the acceptance and recognition of every human being as a "Thou" to be respected, and not as an "object" for the gratification of our pleasure, an "it" to be dominated and exploited. The reality of such a basic "right relation" to our fellowmen and our duty to recognize it have been convincingly expounded and emphasized by Martin Buber (2).

2. The active release, development and expression of the various aspects of personal and spiritual love - love for one's mate; love for others, beginning with those close to one and expanding to include increasing numbers of human beings in ever-widening circles and "upwards" towards God or the Supreme. The emphasis should be put on the expression of love - in understanding and cooperation in altruistic and humanitarian activities.

3. The deliberate projection of one's interest, aspiration and enthusiasm towards some creative work into which all one's energies can be poured. Various techniques for creative expression can be used for this purpose, such as drawing, writing, movement (Assagioli, 1).

4. The use of symbols. These exercise a strong attractive power on all our energies, conscious and unconscious, and specifically foster the process of transmutation. Jung in his *Contributions to Analytical Psychology* (9) went so far as to state: "The psychological machinery which transmutes energy is the symbol." There is a great variety of symbols having an anagogic (uplifting) influence that can be made to serve this process, of which ideal human figures or "models" constitute an important class. Two types of these ideal figures, different and in a sense opposite, are respectively suited to men and women. A man may visualize some hero or a human-divine Being, such as the Christ, or he can use the image of an ideal woman like Dante's Beatrice or the Madonna. Inversely a woman can take as a model the highest type of womanhood her imagination can conceive or an image of the ideal Man. The influence of such "images" is beautifully expressed in the Indian saying: "Ganga (the sacred river) purifies when seen and touched, but the Holy Ones purify when merely remembered."

A simple and effective symbol is the lotus plant which transmutes the mud and water of the pond into the delicate substance and beautiful form and hue

of its flower. This it does through its own inherent vitality and through the life-giving energy of the sun's rays. Desoille in his therapeutic method of the guided day-dream (4a) has made use of symbolic movement upward for the purpose of sublimation and transformation. Kretschmer (10) has summarized various techniques of imagery which can be used to foster this process of sublimation. Other anagogic symbols may be produced spontaneously in dreams and in free drawing; Jung and his followers (E. Harding (8), F. Wickes (13) and others) have made an extensive study and application of them.

5. Close psychological communion with individuals or groups who have realized, or are striving to realize, the same aim. As there are chemical catalysts, so there are "human catalysts," whose influence, radiation, and the "atmosphere" they create, greatly facilitate psychological transformations.

The importance and value of transmutation and sublimation-not only of the sexual energies but of all other drives - should be more widely known and appreciated, and the methods for putting them in operation should be more extensively applied in psychotherapy, education, and self-actualization. The process of transmutation and sublimation may be compared to the regulation of the waters of a great river, which prevents recurring disastrous inundations or the formation of unhealthy marshes along its banks. While a portion of the water is permitted to flow freely to its natural destination, the remainder is diverted through proper channelling to appropriate mechanisms that transform its energy into electricity to be employed as motive power for industrial and other purposes. In a parallel way, the conscious or unconscious drives, which produce so much individual suffering and social disturbance, can become, if rightly controlled and channelled, the springs of activities having great human and spiritual value.

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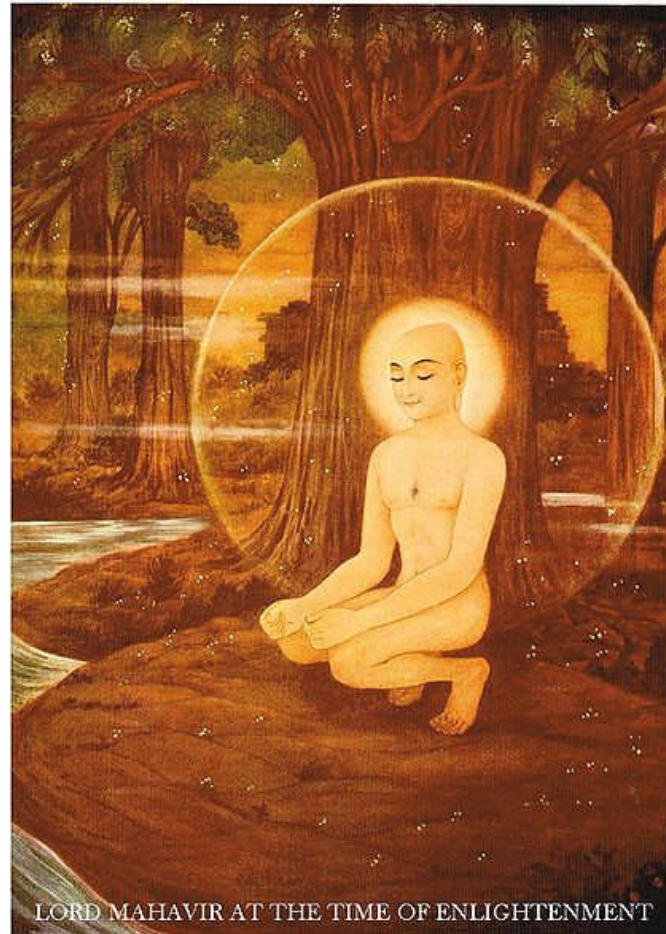
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\* Many other psychologists have recognized the process of sublimation and dealt with it more or less extensively. Among them are Havelock Ellis (5), McDougall (11), and Hadfield 17). An accurate survey of the subject with

many quotations and bibliographical references, has been made by J. Trevor Davies in his book *Sublimation* (1947) (3). The theoretical problems and the differences of opinion aroused by the subject do not prevent - in this as in other cases - effective use of the process of psychological transmutation.



"Great Hero", traditionally 599 – 527 BCE. Born in an era of social disparity, killing and violence inflicted in the name of rituals and sacrifice and for vengeance and hatred, Lord Mahavira emerged as a reformist, thinker, law-giver and guide. He sought to achieve a multi-fold mission aiming especially at a change in the prevailing system of thought, economic structure, social set-up, and ethical values seeking to equalize all living beings respecting alike the life contained in a grass-leaf, insect, or human being, and re-defined sanctity and potentialities of individual self - 'jiva', as Mahavira has called it, in attaining salvation - 'nirvana', by its own doing.

# **The Education of Gifted and Super-Gifted Children**

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It might seem superfluous to emphasize the importance of recognising gifted children, of educating them with special care, and of working on the ways and means of such education. But the fact is that, in spite the great interest aroused by these problems - resulting recently in interesting experimentation and a number of studies, particularly in America (in many countries there has been practically no activity in this direction) very much more can and should be done. Some of the principles involved and the methods used call for careful examination and frank discussion.

The gifted and particularly those among them who are super-gifted differ widely from each other and require correspondingly diverse handling. As a first broad approximation they can be divided into two groups:

1. Those who are gifted in a general or multiple way, and demonstrate a marked superiority over the average in all or several fields. They are usually healthy, strong and sure themselves. Their education should not present *specific* difficulties; the problem is, rather, to offer them the most favourable conditions for self-development and the utilisation of their gifts (These conditions will be considered later.) There is perhaps some particular direction in which they do need help and guidance - the choice of which of their various talents should receive specific training, so that they may avoid indecision, delays and a wasteful scattering of energies.
2. The second group is different and presents difficult educational problems. It comprises those possessing a specific gift so exceptional as to border upon or enter the field of genius, but having side by side with it serious deficiencies or lack of balance in other aspects of their personalities.



In this group we find young people who have artistic, literary, musical and in some cases mathematical abilities, but are hyper-sensitive, over-emotional and over-imaginative. They often are physically weak or clumsy, impractical and absentminded. They are thus generally neither understood nor appreciated by parents and teachers, and are apt to be the target of the ridicule or antagonism of their fellow students. Such lack of understanding and appreciation, and the consequent ineptitude in dealing with these young people, are the cause of much suffering, despondency and despair; or of revolt in many cases, and in others even of deviations or perversions. Among the many well-known instances of this kind we may mention Baudelaire, Verlaine, Strindberg and Kafka.

In other cases adults, recognising and appreciating the special gift, often endeavour to force its cultivation. Their aim is to produce an infant prodigy as a musician, a precocious mathematician or scientist, without taking into consideration the injurious consequences of such lopsided development. This sometimes means an actual exploitation, either by the family - due to vanity, ambition or financial greed - or by the community. At present - owing to the rude awakening, by the Sputnik, of the Western powers from a false sense of security and technical superiority - we are witnessing a frantic spotting and high-pressure training of young people whose gifts are particularly applicable to physics, chemistry, mathematics and applied technology. But even outside this field there has been and there is an excessive tendency in modern life towards specialisation and over-valuing of practical efficiency. In order to counteract this trend a well-rounded, harmonious and integrated education is necessary, as the best educators have recognised. Such education is doubly required in the case of gifted young people.

There is another and even more important reason which should induce us to do our utmost on behalf of these gifted children: the realisation of how precious they are to humanity! In our present period of transition and planetary crisis we are urgently in need of individuals who are superior to the average, intellectually as well as morally. They are the ones on whose shoulders, in the future, will lie the responsibility of guiding the disoriented and distressed peoples of the world, and this they will have to do not only on behalf of the blind and restless masses, but also for the intelligentsia, many of whom today lack vision, are supercritical, negative, desperate and bitter. Our one great hope is our superior children, who will lead humanity to a brighter future, who will be the inaugurators of a new civilisation and a new culture more in accord with the needs and requirements of the new era. Our gifted children of today will tomorrow be our scientists, authors, artists,

politicians, economists and teachers. The more intelligent and the more effective the help we now give them, the sooner and the better will they be able to develop their precious talents and make full use of them for the benefit of humanity.

What has been done about all this so far? A good start has been made, particularly in the U.S.A., with special classes, accelerated and enriched courses, and a few schools for "gifted children" (A clear exposition and comprehensive survey is contained in *Educating Gifted Children*, by Robert F. De Haan and Robert J. Havighurst. The University of Chicago Press. 1957.) The American Association for Gifted Children (15 Gramercy Park, New York City) is active in publicising the importance and urgency of giving such children the most suitable education and, particularly, in drawing the attention of teachers and parents to these problems.

These efforts are valuable and praiseworthy, and they should be extended to include every part of the world, adapting the methods used to the psychology of the respective countries; that is, to the various characteristics which distinguish one nation from another, and also to the conditions under which they live. However, what is being done is not adequate either in extent or in scope. "Not more than 5% of our country's high schools now employ systematic programs to encourage superior students to develop their academic potential." (p. 4, Conference Report on the Identification and Education of the Academic Talented Student in the American Secondary School, N.E.A., 1958.)

Moreover, the great need for a special type of education shows itself in pupils who are from eleven to eighteen years old. It is during these years that a child's evolutionary level manifests itself with clarity. These are not only years when exceptional gifts become apparent, but when under inner stress and strain, the "personality" is being formed in all the young. This difficulty is considerably enhanced in superior children; because the richness of their natures and endowments complicates the process of their psychosynthesis.

### **The Super-Gifted Child**

The existing special schools, classes and courses seek *within the existing framework of education* to meet the needs of gifted children (estimated at 10% of the school population), but the system is not adapted to the smaller number of the really super-gifted children (described by Drs. De Haan and Havighurst in *Educating Gifted Children* as "the extremely gifted ... the

1/10th of 1 % of public school children"). Their superiority lies not only in some specific talent but often in their outstanding moral and spiritual qualities. Such young people need a very special type of education, extremely "individual," and their teachers must be of a correspondingly high personal calibre and educational competence. Such a difficult task can best be accomplished in Educational Centres or Institutes dedicated to this specific purpose.

These are the reasons which impel us to present the need for the creation of *Centres for the Education of Super-Gifted Children*, the outline of which follows. Such a Centre will not officially bear this name, and nothing in it should indicate to the pupils that they are considered "superior." It will be for them simply a college in which modern and "active" methods of education will be used and an international spirit fostered. They will also be offered varied opportunities to meet children and youths outside the Centre and to cooperate in activities for the benefit of the community.

It is impossible to outline a complete educational program here, but we can enumerate the main points which we consider particularly appropriate for the exceptionally gifted.

### *1. Integrating Education*

This has two goals in view:

- a. An harmonious and well-balanced development of all aspects of the human being: physical, emotional, imaginative, mental, intuitive, spiritual.
- b. The integration of these characteristics into an organic synthesis, into a "personality" that is Self-conscious and "well constructed" (spiritual psychosynthesis).

The danger to avoid is that of over-specialisation, of exploiting the specific talent with which the child may be gifted. The more a child has a specialised talent, the more he needs to develop also other functions. Often there is unbalance and one must apply the principle of psychosynthesis, of harmonious integration, and help him to become a fully-functioning, whole being. μ

## *2. Employment of Active Methods and Expressive Techniques*

The pupils should take an active part in the processes of education. They should be encouraged and guided to learn by doing. This activity on their part is twofold:

- a. Action that aims at learning, as much as possible, through personal application and experimentation, that which humanity has already achieved, both in the field of knowledge and in regard to the mastery of the forces of nature.
- b. Creative manifestation of the pupil's own personality, of his own capacities and inner life, through the use of various expressive techniques, such as speech and drama, writing, drawing and painting, modelling and sculpture, dance, and the composition and performance of music: or the carrying out of research, problem solving and experimenting by scientifically inclined students.

## *3. Differentiated Education*

In consideration of the great diversities of human beings (independent of the differences of I.Q.), it is obvious that education should take this diversify into full account and should be "individualised" as far as possible. This means that, to really educate, one must apply different methods according to the special character, needs and problems of each pupil. The most marked diversities are those deriving from the different psychological types (such as extrovert and introvert; sensorial, emotional, mental, intuitive, and their several combinations); and those which derive from the special compound of physical, psychological and spiritual elements which make a unique being out of each person.

Differentiated education is based upon two fundamentals which at first seem to be opposites, but which can and should complement each other. A balanced application of each requires great ability on the part of the teacher. He must, after due recognition, adapt his methods to the psychological type to which each pupil belongs, while at the same time he must try to correct and even eliminate, as far as possible, the one-sidedness and shortcomings of each type, with the objective of attaining an harmonious synthesis of the personality.

Added to the typological diversities that are due to the pupil's make-up, there are the diversities of a dynamic nature which express the different individual "rhythms": rhythms in the development of the various capacities, and rhythms of learning and of action. These rhythms must be observed and taken into consideration. This is true in relation to the education of all young people, but particularly so in regard to the gifted and the exceptional ones.

#### *4. Physical Education*

Gifted children are especially in need of physical education in order to balance their mental and imaginative activities which are often excessive, and to help them to "keep their feet on the ground." What is generally done in this respect is inadequate or ill suited. A few hours per week of gymnastics or participation in strenuous competitive sports will not solve the problem. What proves really helpful is direct and prolonged contact with nature. For this reason, the "Educational Centre" should be located in the country, and be in some respects similar to an agricultural college or colony. The life at the Centre should be characterised, to a certain degree, by "natural living." The pupils should work in the garden and the orchard and raise small animals. These activities would also offer many good opportunities of "learning by doing."

A more specific kind of physical education consists of methods of rhythmical movements, both regulated and free, which enable one to acquire a proper awareness, control and command of one's body (bio-psychosynthesis). There are several good methods of this kind, for instance that of Dalcroze. Also, appropriate games in the open are useful for the same purpose.

#### *5. Intellectual Education*

This will not be based on memorization - as unfortunately is still too often the case-but on the active training and use of the mind. The pupils will not be asked to study and repeat, almost verbatim, the Contents of textbooks; instead, they will be taught to find out for themselves what they need to learn by the intelligent consultation of textbook treatises, grammars, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, etc.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the science which is most important to man: psychology. Many of the most significant facts and laws of the psychological life, if presented in a living, humanistic way, that is referred to their own experience and problems, can be easily grasped by boys and girls

of high school age. They can also be trained to develop use and control their minds through well graduated exercises of concentration, reflection and meditation .

#### *6. Education of the Imagination and the Feeling Nature*

Imagination is of great importance in human life and has more influence than is generally recognised; therefore it should receive particular attention. The training could include exercises of visualisation, creative imagination, etc., so that the young people will gradually learn how to control and rightly use this precious function which, if not constructively applied, often has harmful and even dangerous effects.

The control and utilisation of the emotional energies and the development of a finer sensitivity will be adequately taught. All the best methods will be used, both those transmitted by the wisdom of the centuries and those based on the latest developments of psychology. Here we can only briefly mention that every repression and unnecessary restriction should be avoided, but the pupils should be taught how to keep their exuberant emotions and drives within proper bounds and how to transmute and sublimate them.

#### *7. Education of the Will*

The will is the central and most precious power inherent in man and yet it is the one that has been neglected most, both in family and in school education. One can say that a widespread-even if unconscious tendency exists to prevent or discourage the development of the will, despite the crying need for greater self-discipline. The oppressive and authoritative methods used in the past have proved ineffective and have, rather, been causes (though not the only ones) of the rebellion against discipline so widespread among modern youths.

It is, therefore, a matter of urgency to encourage and help young people to train and develop their will as a means of self-discipline as well as of success in life. The methods for this purpose are available. In reality all the previously mentioned aspects of education-physical, mental, emotional, creative, etc.- are indirectly exercises for the development of the will; but they could become more effective if they were consciously used for that purpose also. In addition, there are other specific methods for the development of the different aspects or phases of the will: deliberation decision, planning and action.

## 8. *Spiritual Education*

.Super-gifted children show at a very early age an interest in philosophical, moral and spiritual subjects. Leta S. Hollingworth has observed that children, even at the early age of six or seven, are interested in the problem of the origin and destiny of man, and ask for rational explanations of life and death. See: *Children Above 180 I.Q.* (World Book, 1942, pp. 61-62)

They often possess real intuition and spiritual illumination . Typical, among others, is the case of the English poet, Wordsworth, who added to the title of his famous poem, *Intimations of Immortality*, the subtitle, *Remembrances of Early Childhood*.

These children-as well as all others who at any age put similar questions - have a right to receive adequate answers. Their questions must be taken seriously; one can use such opportunities to instil into them a spiritual conception of life, make them feel the greatness and beauty of the universe and the admirable order that characterises it - a sign that there IS a Superior Mind that created it, rules it with wisdom and guides it toward a .glorious goal. From this general picture one may gradually proceed to giving them more detailed information, according to one's own faith, but seeing to it that the feeling of wonder and mystery remains With the child. At the same time one must observe and encourage all spontaneous manifestations of a spiritual nature, such as higher aspirations, intuitions and illuminations that might arise in them. Also, any parapsychological sensitivity they might have and demonstrate should never be denied or ridiculed, but should be explained to the pupil as far as possible and be wisely watched and regulated.

But the chief aim of spiritual education is to help the pupil to realise that he-as well as all human beings-is in truth and essentially a Self, a spiritual being, and to make him understand and "feel" the dignity and value of this great inner reality, showing to him all the opportunities it offers.

## 9. *Education in Right Human Relations – Inter-individual psychosynthesis.*

This important aspect of education is, in reality, part of the spiritual education, because to be spiritual does not mean only to be able to transcend the little self in a "vertical" direction through realisation of the Self and communion with the Supreme Reality. It includes also a "horizontal" attitude, that is, communion of thought and love and harmonious collaboration with all fellow-creatures. This expansion is achieved through

"concentric circles," which gradually include ever larger groups, from the family to humanity as a whole. Therefore, education should aim at creating, producing and bringing about:

a. *Right family relations.* The family can be regarded as a "human cell," almost as a small "collective entity." Here the parents have a difficult and noble task, for which, unfortunately, they are often not prepared. While in some respects their problem may be easier when dealing with highly gifted children, it is in other ways more exacting and difficult.

When parents are not able to cope with such a task they need the help of competent educators. In any case, parents should have the wisdom demonstrated by birds which make their young ones leave the nest when they become able to "fly with their own wings." Such a moment obviously arrives earlier than usual in the case of gifted children. This does not mean a sudden detachment from the family but, rather, a gradually widening scope of the youth's human contacts and independent experiences. In certain cases, due to conditions in the family or the particular needs of the child, a more or less prolonged stay in an Educational Institute is advisable or even necessary.

b. *Right relations with others of the same age.*

These are necessary in order that the development of the personality may take place in a normal and satisfactory manner. It is no less - rather, even more - unnatural for a child to live all, or most, of the time with adults than it would be for adults of the age of thirty or so to live only with nonagenarians.

Here we find one of the most difficult problems in the education of the gifted, and particularly of the highly gifted child, The company of "normal" children or youths of their own age does not satisfy them, and reciprocally the "normal" ones do not understand or appreciate the gifted, and are often hostile to them. Nor does the company of older children constitute a satisfactory solution because in this case also tensions and conflicts of various kinds easily occur. This has been observed and emphasised by various American educators such as Terman, Hollingworth, etc. See: *The Gifted Child*, edited by P. Witty. (D. C. Heath, Boston, pp, 101-103.) Therefore, the best solution for such children is to have the company of their equals in a psycho-



spiritual sense. This can be achieved to some extent in classes or schools for the gifted, but much better in a special Educational Institute.

*c. Right social and collective relations.*

These concern the many groups and communities with which an individual is or becomes connected, and cannot be considered in detail here. The general task of the educator in this respect is that of helping, wisely and appropriately, to distribute the pupil's sense of "belonging" to each of the various groups. At the present time particular attention should be given to balancing the rightful feeling of national belonging and the natural love for one's country with the respect and appreciation due all the other peoples, and with the wider and higher realisation of human brotherhood and world citizenship. To these wider identifications highly gifted young people are particularly inclined.

The best way to foster such "planetary consciousness" is personal acquaintance between individuals and groups of various countries, particularly when it develops into the deeper and more intimate mutual knowledge and appreciation made possible by living and working together. For this reason, as well as for others, an Educational Centre such as we have mentioned would gather pupils from various countries, and all of them would be taught the principal modern languages. The natural method should chiefly be used, that is, the way in which a small child learns, speak and understand its native tongue. This has been explained at length in my paper *A Psychological Method for Learning Languages*.

*10. The Environment and the Educators*

Since the time of Plato the educative value of a beautiful and harmonious environment has been recognised. Such helpful influence exercised by natural scenery, by attractive living quarters and, by the arts, chiefly music. But most of all it resides in the human and spiritual qualities of the educator. An interesting inquiry concerning the qualities that children consider most desirable and helpful in the personality and behaviour of teachers showed, on analysis of 14,000 replies the following traits, mentioned in the order of their frequency:

1. Cooperative, democratic attitude
2. Kindliness and consideration for the individual
3. Patience
4. Wide interests
5. Pleasing personal appearance and manner
6. Fairness and impartiality
7. Sense of humour
8. Good disposition and consistent behaviour
9. Interest in pupils' problems
10. Flexibility
11. Use of recognition and praise
12. Unusual proficiency in teaching a particular subject. (*The Gifted Child*, pp, 106 ff. American Association for Gifted Children, New York)

While one cannot, of course, expect an educator to be an ideal person, the aim in the choice and training of the teaching staff for such a Centre would be to ascertain the existence, and promote the development and use, of as many as possible of the qualities listed. In a certain sense the essential problem with gifted children consists in finding and training gifted educators!

Through such "integral education" highly gifted children would be helped to assume their proper place and to function within the vanguard group of the builders of a new and better civilisation, the creators of a higher culture, the first representatives of a humanity led and pervaded by the Spirit.

# Creative Expression in Education

(Its Purpose, Process, Techniques and Results)

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

Source: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1963

A subject of this magnitude would demand a whole book if it were to be dealt with adequately. The limitations of an article permit me merely to indicate in a concise manner, almost in the form of a summary, some points that I consider basic and are perhaps not always sufficiently emphasized and applied. Therefore I am counting not only on the intelligent understanding to be expected of the readers of this periodical owing to their cultural level, but also on their active cooperation in developing the suggestions that follow and putting them to practical use in their capacity as educators.

The methods of creative expression can be applied in every kind of school and with pupils of every age, and also by parents in the education of their children. Their application is made easier by the fortunate fact that their effectiveness does not depend on the prior solution of the many theoretical problems involved. On the contrary, those interested in these problems may confidently expect the practical applications to yield material that will contribute considerably to their solution.

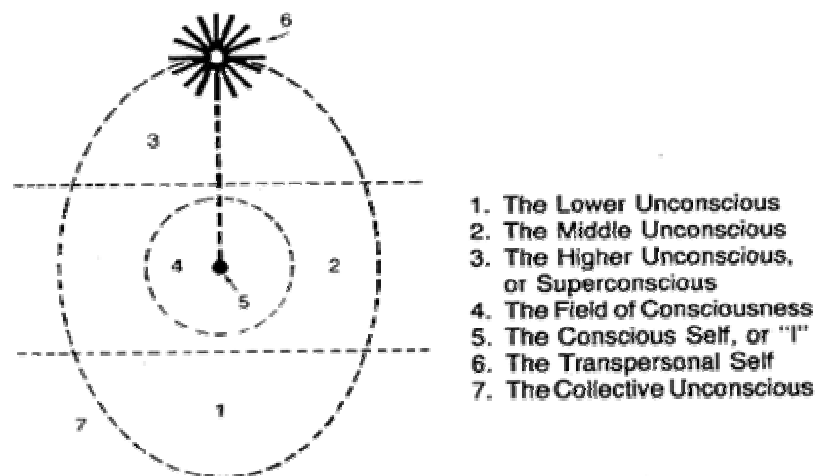
A preliminary point of importance, and one that needs to be clearly realized, is the difference between creativity in general, particularly in connection with education, and artistic creativity, i.e., the production of works that have aesthetic value. The absence of this distinction is apt to create confusion- and complicate the subject unnecessarily. Its adoption, on the other hand, obviates the necessity of our discussing aesthetic theories, which are diverse and conflicting, the difficult question of the criteria of aesthetic valuation, and also all problems related to skill in expression.

Two contrasted examples will clearly demonstrate this point. In one direction, there can be great expertise in expression, proficiency in formal techniques, without any meaningful or valuable content. As a French critic sharply remarked about a writer: "He has nothing to say, but how well he says it!" In the other, there are writers and creative workers with valuable ideas but little ability to clothe them in clear and adequate terms. In this

connection, one may perhaps mention Thomas Carlyle, a great thinker, even if some of his ideas may be debatable, whose sometimes clumsy style did much to obscure their presentation. Probably no present-day editor would publish an essay of his without a good deal of revision and streamlining. (*whether this would really result in an improvement is a question that may be left open in the present discussion.*) Skill in presentation, therefore, and perfection of form play little or no part in the educational usefulness of creative expression.

Before proceeding it would be well to establish a clear frame of reference in view of the different and conflicting psychological doctrines that exist at present. By this I mean a definite conception of the psychological constitution of the human being, of that which may be called the "psychological space" or field .within which the creative process takes place. The following diagram with its brief description illustrates this frame of reference in a simple manner. It has been found useful in other Contexts (Assagioli, 1959 1961).

### **The Creative Process**



There is general agreement, and ample proof in support of it, that the creative process often starts, and is almost wholly carried through, in the unconscious part of our psychological being. But not enough attention has been called to the existence of the different levels of the unconscious- levels different in origin, nature and quality, and. therefore yielding very different results of their activity. This point will be discussed later on; at present I shall give a brief description of the process of creativity itself in its various stages.

The analogy with physical creativity is very close and illuminating. The first stage is that of conception - the result of fecundation. In the case of psychological creativity, the fecundating, stimulating factors can be many and may be divided into two main classes: external stimuli and internal drives.

The first group will be dealt with in the section on the means for inducing and fostering creative expression. Let us consider now the inner, spontaneous urges. Every strong drive tends to express itself outwardly, in action, and when this is defiled, inhibited or repressed, it seeks and may find indirectly manifestation and a measure of satisfaction through some kind of creative expression.

Even without recourse to any subtle psychoanalytic investigation, it is evident that many literary products represent such an indirect expression of the strong drives, desires and emotions of the writer. Many of the countless love poems and love stories of every age can be regarded as instances of this. In some cases a writer has made conscious and deliberate use of this process, as did Wagner who, while he was preparing *Tristan and Isolde* states in a letter to Liszt: "As in my life I have never enjoyed the true happiness of love, I want to raise a monument to this most beautiful among all dreams, in which this love shall be fully satisfied, from beginning to end. I am planning a 'Tristan and Isolde.'"

The second stage of the creative process is that of gestation or elaboration, of growth and development from the initial "ovum," so to speak; it generally takes place in the unconscious. Sometimes it may be partly conscious as well, with alternating stages of conscious and unconscious activity. It may require much time or it may be very short, and in cases of simple direct expression practically non-existent. This often happens in children.

The third stage represents the "birth" of the product. Subjectively it is the moment of "inspiration" and it can be objectively described as the passing of the "psychological child" from the unconscious to the conscious area of the personality. The individual becomes aware of, and is often amazed by, the inrush of the creature of his unconscious creativity, which takes some form of objective expression, verbal or nonverbal. The birth can occur at very different stages of development, just as happens with the physical offspring of various animal species. Sometimes the creature is complete and vital; in other cases it is still an immature foetus which needs further growth. This, in

the case of psychological creations, entails the work of developing, polishing and "putting into shape" the more or less inchoate product that has emerged.

### **Means and Techniques of Expression**

These can be divided into two primary classes: verbal and non-verbal expression. The latter includes not only drawing, painting, modelling and musical expression, but also expressive movement - dance, pantomime, psycho-drama, etc. Recently a growing emphasis has rightly been put on encouraging the use of non-verbal means of expression, which for many is the most direct and easy way. Moreover, the unconscious generally prefers non-verbal ways of presentation, since they are better suited to the expression of symbolic meanings. In a wide sense one might say that *every* expression is symbolical; in verbal expression abstract terms are etymologically symbols of external realities: for instance, *spirit* from the Latin *spirare*, to breathe; *anima* (soul) from *anemos* (Greek for wind).

Symbols can be regarded as images or pictures expressing, or hiding, either some general or abstract idea, or some meaningful condition and situation. The psychological function that gives expression to a meaning through images and symbolic picture is the imagination; and this important function is active in us almost continuously, not only when we are awake but also during sleep through dreaming. Because this relating and expressive function is thus creative, it is accurate to speak of "creative imagination." Such creative imagination precedes all *creative expression*.

This preliminary and general survey has cleared the way for a more detailed consideration of the use of creative expression in education. The first point that arises concerns the spontaneous results of such expression. We shall then deal with the methods by which it can be fostered, regulated and directed for educational purposes.

### **Results of Creative Expression**

Previous reference has been made to the fact that the effects of expression are very different according to the level from which they originate. Their most common and frequent sources are the drives, urges, desires and emotions that spring from the lower and middle levels of the unconscious. Two of these basic drives, the *sexual* and the *combative* or aggressive, demand special attention, since they give rise to serious and urgent educational problems.

An examination of the present world situation from the psychological angle clearly reveals that most of its evils and dangers are due to the lack of proper control and constructive utilization of these compelling energies, which motivate and often actually obsess both individuals and groups. Therefore the exploration of appropriate methods of bringing them under control, providing them with harmless outlets, and exploiting them to the utmost for useful and constructive purposes is an urgent educational sociological and even political task. This entails the transformation, and whenever possible, the sublimation of these energies.

Such transformations should be recognized as not being something artificial, something to be achieved by imposition. The process is a natural psychological one and, to some measure, often comes about spontaneously. The sublimation of sexuality has been described and dealt with by psychoanalysis and literature, especially biography, abounds in instances of the transformation of sexual into emotional, romantic and idealistic love. Equally obvious is the satisfaction of combative drives vicariously derived from watching others in aggressive situations, such as bull-fights, boxing and competitive sports, and in fights in films, such as Westerns. On a higher level many evidence instances of the use of combative energies for fighting injustice and social ills and in the service of humanitarian causes could be pointed out.

But such transformations are not easy or exempt from undesirable consequences; and, apart from this, the need to extend the process, to promote and guide it by every possible means, is indeed a pressing one. Such means exist and are available. What is required is to spread the knowledge of them and teach and encourage their application in all departments of human life (*See Transmutation and Sublimation of Sexual Energies, by Roberto Assagioli*).

Among these means, a very effective one, extensively applicable in education, is creative expression. Its first direct result is release or catharsis. Aristotle has described the catharsis produced by the participation of the spectator in the emotions expressed in drama or tragedy in the theatre. But the catharsis that results from creative techniques is achieved in a more direct and satisfactory manner.

Creative expression can manifest itself in crude and primitive forms or be the outcome of the process of elaboration previously mentioned. The fact that it sometimes adopts a symbolical form does not diminish its liberating effect,

for both unconscious and conscious urges can often find adequate outlet via an indirect, symbolical satisfaction. This presents opportunities for extensive application in psychotherapy, education and mass leadership.

The creative expression that originates in the higher, super-conscious level of the unconscious is of a different kind. It proceeds from the activation or awakening of potentialities that, while they exist in the average human being, are often dormant. They at times are aroused under the powerful stimulation of some unusual stress or emergency, or in response to some strong appeal. Among these higher urges, desires and aspirations, which have lately been recognized by a number of psychologists, are: the urge to self-expression; the need to know or understand the meaning of life; love in its higher aspects of compassion and altruism; the aspiration to commune with a larger whole and with higher realities and beings; the realization and expression of higher values of an ethical, aesthetic and religious nature.

These higher urges find in modern life a climate that usually not only fails to encourage and stimulate them but is often unfavourable or hostile. Regarded as having no apparent practical or economic value, the functions of feeling and imagination and the various forms of spiritual realization are neglected and repressed in the anxious drive for efficiency and success. They are not understood or appreciated, and may be looked on as queer and somehow disturbing. So when children spontaneously give expression to them; and this they are more apt to do than adults, having fewer inhibitions - not seldom they are ridiculed or hushed by their "sensible" elders. This produces repressions, analogous in one sense and contrary in another to those of the lower drives, and has serious consequences, such as rebellion, depression, a sense of psychological isolation, confusion and bewilderment.

The creative expression of the higher urges yields most positive effects. It bestows joy and increases zest in life, it widens the field of consciousness, it fosters the "peak experiences" so well described by Maslow (1962). Thus it helps to integrate the various aspects and functions of the personality into a larger and richer whole, to bring about its psychosynthesis. It starts a process of *inner* creativity, which may culminate in a real creation or re-creation of the personality.

Besides these general effects, the awakening of superconscious contents and their penetration into the conscious area of the personality have specific and very beneficial results. One is an early manifestation of vocational aptitudes, which sometimes are clearly revealed by the type and quality of what is



expressed. Mechanical skills, literary or artistic gifts, organizing power-all may emerge and be a source of joyous self-revelation to the child or adolescent. He experiences within him a lively, sometimes enthusiastic, interest in cultivating and developing his discovered potentialities. In some cases these are of such a high order that the child or youth is recognized to be a *super-gifted* individual. There should be little need to emphasize the importance of such a discovery, both for the individual himself and humanity as a whole. But, although the discovery and appropriate education of this precious human material, this "psychological uranium," is beginning to be recognized as one of the most important and rewarding of educative endeavours, it is as yet far from receiving adequate attention and application. (*See References*)

### **Techniques of Creative Expression**

Adequate information is available about the principles and general techniques of creative expression and since children and adolescents take to them readily and like them, they can easily be utilized in education. Indeed there is more need of regulation than of stimulation.

The simplest procedure is to put suitable material at the free disposal of the pupils. At first this may consist merely of sheets of paper and variously coloured pencils. Later, some plastic materials, easy to mould, can be provided. There are two ways in which the teacher can induce creative expression. One is to encourage the pupil to draw or model with complete freedom anything he wishes or that comes into his head. Also spoken and written expression should be encouraged. The other is to provide him with a starting-point, an idea or suggestion that will spur his imagination into creative activity. For instance, children can be given a word or short phrase indicating some simple object such as a mountain, the sea, a flower, a fruit or an animal, and then asked to build a story around it. It has been found that sounds and music also can easily kindle the imagination, particularly in pupils of the auditory type.

"Meaningful" pictures also provide effective incentives. This forms the basis of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) technique, but, whereas this test aims at the expression of repressed emotions and complexes, our purpose demands the display of pictures with aesthetic value and selected with a view to activating the superconscious trends. Pictures of this kind exist in great variety. One class includes pictures of great men and women and mythical figures who represent "ideal models." Natural objects form another category

and at first one can show simple, familiar ones with pleasant associations such as a flower or fruit; later, scenery expressing altitude, bigness and great expanses as high mountains, the sea, the heavens with their stars and galaxies.

*Movement* provides a type of direct expression which is enjoyed by children and adolescents alike. At first the teacher should direct simple, rhythmic motions, but later encourage the free, direct expression in movement of inner states, preferably the higher feelings of joy, wonder, admiration, etc.

The period between the cessation of the stimulus and the start of outer expression can be used for quiet "brooding" in silence. Even small children like and accept this, as the "exercise of silence" in the Montessori schools has shown. In the case of older children, this interlude can develop into actual *meditation*, in the form of either reflection or quiet contemplation of the object, idea or picture presented.

### **The Role of the educator**

The emphasis on free creative expression does not mean that the task of the educator is reduced to an almost passive role; on the contrary, it demands active cooperation and much skill. He should endeavour to create a favourable psychological atmosphere, a positive rapport with the pupils and a good group feeling in the classroom. Then he has to give encouragement and appreciation of what is being accomplished.

Another important and more difficult function of the educator is to interpret accurately the symbolic meaning, often hidden, of what has been expressed. This is owing to the curious and interesting fact that frequently even adults have no idea, no conscious understanding of the real meaning of the content of what they have expressed. It happens currently with dreams and one of the aims of psychoanalysis is their interpretation; but the controversies this provokes indicate that the correct understanding of symbols is not arrived at easily. It requires a sound knowledge of psychology, plus a thorough study of the symbolic function and the individual and collective symbols it produces. It asks for a mind free from preconceived theories, an intuitive insight and finally much caution in formulating interpretations.

Sometimes the symbol contains a real message. It gives a clear picture of the existential situation or the central problem of the individual and indicates

how it can be solved. In such cases the correct "deciphering" of the message has a vital educational importance.

## **Applications**

A number of progressive educators have experimented with creative expression and used it more or less extensively in their work. There is no need to point out those in the U.S.A., as they are known to the readers of this Journal. The limitations of this article allow me to mention only a few instances in Europe, and one in South America.

Creative expression is encouraged in the Montessori schools; personality expression through movement is basic in the Dalcroze Institute (Geneva) and the eurhythmics adopted in the Steiner schools. Prof. Sofia Vignoli (Arezzo, Italy) uses expressive dancing and psychodrama. The "Ecole d'Art Martinot" of Paris employs most of the expressive techniques, but with artistic aims. Madame Berge, of Paris, has developed a method of physical culture deliberately designed to foster, in combination with other psychosynthetic techniques, the psychosynthesis of the pupils.

The work done in this field by a gifted Argentine educator, Mana Zazo Bonomo, merits a brief report. Her experiments in the use of creative imagination and expression have been carried on for several years with groups of pupils ranging from 4 to 14 years of age, mostly uncultured and picked from the streets. Here is one of the techniques she uses. In the classroom, after some moments of silence, she gives the beginning of a story and asks each pupil in turn to add a bit to it, visualizing the scene he or she contributes. For instance she says: "Let us imagine ourselves, say, at the bottom of the ocean. What do we see?" Or: "A ray of sunshine is advancing. What does it illumine?" Each pupil then adds his own contribution. This group creativity greatly interests the children and gives them a sense of co-authorship, of collective action. Sometimes Signora Zazo uses as initial stimulus some bars of a simple musical piece, such as those written by Schumann for children, or a berceuse, etc. She also helps them to appreciate the beauty of lines, colours and their combinations, and of the shapes of simple objects. The results have been very gratifying: release of pent-up energies (catharsis), joy, improved behaviour, self-discipline, cooperation (*with the older children sometimes spontaneously helping the younger*), and the discovery of artistic gifts. Some of the pupils have later become designers, decorators or architects.

## Conclusion

In concluding may I state my conviction that the value and uses of creative expression can be regarded as well ascertained. Therefore I would emphasize that what is greatly needed, and should be the concern of all educators, is not so much theoretical discussion or analytical research, but to give to creative expression the attention and important place it demands in the curriculum of all schools, as well as in family education. Thus one of the most important aims of education will be achieved-that of e-ducing, of drawing out, the great human potentialities that exist, unrecognized and unused, in the unexplored higher levels of every human being.

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# Psychosynthesis in Education

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

**Source:** Undated, *Psychosynthesis in Education*, Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, Reprint No. 2

It is axiomatic that prevention of any disorder is better than its cure. If the techniques of Psychosynthesis constitute effective therapy, as they do, how much better to prevent the need for later therapy by using psychosynthetic techniques in early education? What, we wonder, are the implications of this statement?

Examining the type of education prevalent in the United States today from the viewpoint of —first, producing a human being who functions harmoniously, radiantly and productively in relation to his own capacity, and — second, establishing the conditions in which such an ideal could be realized, we would first have to face such questions as the following, and to collect evidence to support the answers:

1. Is it certain that current educational procedures are effective?

For negative evidence, we have only to observe the state of society, statistics on crime, delinquency, suicide, and mental illness.

2. If we agree that something is wrong with the *quality* of our product—the presumably educated human being — what aspects of education today are evidently working to dis-integrate rather than synthesize the several components of personality as well as the several sectors of society?

The answer to this would involve a study of the constitution of the human being and then, if we accept the premises upon which psychosynthesis rests, a study of the processes of integration of the several conscious and unconscious elements of the human being.

3. Is it certain that more book-learning or more and better science courses would result in the development of a more stable and productive citizenry, capable of distinguishing between the *hows* and the *whys* of action? By what token have we assumed that the development of the rational "mind" was of more value to the process of maturation than the education of the feelings

and emotions, and of the senses (direct perception)? How and where in the curriculum do we learn discrimination in the feeling-sensitivity area? Where is the evidence? Is it true that "too much criticism and analysis are apt to paralyze and even kill our emotions and feelings?"

Wherein does a presently standard curriculum reach up to the Self and its integration with the other aspects of the personality?

These questions imply the challenge of a wider vision, and while it is impossible to outline a complete educational program here we can enumerate the main points which we consider necessary and appropriate:

### **I. Integrating Education.**

This has two goals in view:

- a. An harmonious and well-balanced development of all aspects of the human being: physical, emotional, imaginative, intellectual, ethical, social and intuitive.
- b. The integration of these characteristics into an organic synthesis, into a "personality" which is Self-conscious.

### **II. Employment of Active Methods and Expressive Techniques.**

Modern education aims at letting pupils have an active part in the processes of education. The pupil must be encouraged and guided to learn by doing. This activity on his part is twofold:

- a. Action that aims at learning, as much as possible, through personal application of and experimentation with that which humanity has already achieved, both in the field of knowledge and in regard to the mastery of the forces of nature.
- b. Creative manifestation of the pupil's own personality, of his own capacities and inner life, through the use of various expressive techniques such as dance, speech and drama, drawing and painting, modelling and sculpture, writing and the composition and performance of music.

### **III. Differentiated Education.**

In consideration of the great diversities of human beings (independent of the differences of I.Q.), it is obvious that a good method of education should take this diversity into full account and should be individualized as far as possible. This means that, to really educate, one must apply different methods according to the special character, needs and problems of each pupil. The most marked and most easily traceable diversities are those deriving from the different psychological types, but also to be considered are those diversities which derive from the special compound of physical and psychological elements which make a unique being out of each person.

The differential education is based upon two fundamentals which at first seem to be opposites, but which, in reality, can and should complement each other. The teacher should, after due recognition, adapt his methods to the psychological type to which each pupil belongs, while at the same time he must try to correct and even eliminate, as far as possible, the one-sidedness and shortcomings of each type, with the objective of attaining an harmonious synthesis of the personality.

Added to the typological diversities that are mostly due to the pupil's make-up, there are the diversities of a dynamic nature which express the different individual rhythms: rhythms in the development of the various capacities, and rhythms of learning and of action. These must be observed and taken into consideration.

### **IV. Physical Education.**

The need of physical education to balance mental and imaginative activities is obvious, but a few hours per week of gymnastics or participation in strenuous competitive sports does not meet the true need of the child for rhythm and grace in physical action. The ideal, of schools in country surroundings (involving contact with Nature and its rhythms), is impossible for millions of city dwellers, but much can be done through integrating into every day life rhythmic gymnastics, dancing, and well-regulated games.

### **V. Education of the Intellect.**

This should not be based on memorization — as unfortunately is still too often the case — but on the active training and the use of the mind. The pupils should not be asked to study and repeat, almost verbatim, the contents



of text-books; instead, they should be taught to find out for themselves what they need to learn by the intelligent consultation of text-books, treatises, grammars, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.

Particular emphasis needs to be placed on the science which is most important to man: psychology. The pupils should be trained to develop, use, and control their minds through well graduated exercises of concentration, reflection, and meditation.

## **VI. Education of the Imagination and Feeling Nature.**

Imagination is of great importance to human life, more than is generally recognized. It should receive particular attention. The training could include exercises of visualization, creative imagination, etc., so that the young people will gradually learn how to control and rightly use this function as a precious one but which, if not constructively applied, may become harmful and even dangerous.

The control and utilization of the emotional energies, and the development of a finer sensitivity, need to be adequately taught, realizing the important part they play in the formation of the personality. All the best methods should be used, both those transmitted by the wisdom of the centuries and those based on the latest developments of psychology. Here we can only briefly mention that every repression and unnecessary restriction will need to be carefully avoided, and the pupils taught how to transmute and sublimate their exuberant emotions and drives.

## **VII. Education of the Will.**

This is the central and most precious function inherent in man, and yet it is the one that has been neglected most, both in family and school education. One can say that a widespread—even if unconscious—tendency exists to prevent or discourage the development of the will, despite the crying need for greater self-discipline. Oppressive and authoritative methods have proved utterly useless and have rather been one of the causes (though not the only one) of the rebellion against any discipline, so widespread among modern youth.

It is, therefore, a matter of urgency to encourage and help the young people to train and develop their will as a means of self-discipline, as well as a means of success in life. The methods for this purpose are available.



In reality, all the previously mentioned aspects of education—physical, mental, emotional, creative, etc—are indirectly exercises for the development of the will; but they could become more effective if they were consciously used for that purpose also. In addition, there are other specific methods for the development of the different aspects or phases of the will: deliberation, decision, planning and action.

### **VIII. Spiritual Education.**

Many children, especially gifted ones, show at a very early age an interest in philosophical, moral, and spiritual subjects.\* They often possess real intuition and spiritual illumination . Typical, among others, is the case of the English poet Wordsworth, who added to the title of his famous poem "*Intimations of Immortality*" the subtitle "*Remembrances of Early Childhood*".

Children who at any age put such questions have a right to receive adequate answers. Their questions must be taken seriously; one can use such opportunities to instill into them a spiritual conception of life, make them feel the greatness and beauty of the universe and the admirable order that characterizes it — unmistakable sign that there is a Superior Being, the source of its meaning and purpose. From this general picture one may gradually proceed to giving them more detailed information, according to each one's own faith, but seeing to it that the feeling of wonder and mystery remains with the child. At the same time one must observe and encourage all spontaneous manifestations of a spiritual nature, such as higher aspirations, intuitions and illuminations, that might arise in the child.

Also, any parapsychological sensitivity they might demonstrate should never be denied or ridiculed, but should be explained to the pupil, so far as is possible, and be wisely watched and regulated.

But the chief aim of spiritual education is to help the pupil to realize that he, as well as every other human being, is in truth and essentially a Self, an inner Reality, and to make him understand and feel its dignity and value, showing to him all the consequences that derive from it.

## **IX. Education in Right Human Relations (inter-individual psychosynthesis).**

This important aspect of education is, in reality, part of the spiritual education, because to be spiritual does not mean only to be able to transcend the little self in a vertical direction through communion with God. It includes an horizontal attitude; that is, communion of thought and love, and harmonious collaboration with all fellow-creatures. This extension must be obtained by means of concentric circles, which gradually include ever larger groups, from the family to humanity as a whole. Therefore, education should aim at producing and establishing:

a. *Right family relations.* The family can be regarded as a human cell, almost as a small collective entity. Here the parents have a difficult and noble task, for which they are often unfortunately not prepared, and for which they need the help of competent educators. In any case, parents should have the wisdom demonstrated by birds, which make their young ones leave the nest when they have become able "to fly with their own wings".

b. *Right relations with others of the same age.* These are necessary in order that the development of the personality may take place in a normal and satisfactory manner. It is no less - rather even more - unnatural for a child to live all, or most, of the time with adults as it would be for adults of the age of thirty or so to live only with nonagenarians. Here we find one of the most difficult problems in the education of the gifted, and particularly of the highly gifted child (which will be dealt with in a separate brochure, *Psychosynthesis and the Gifted Child*.)

c. *Right social and collective relations.* These concern the many groups and communities with which an individual is or becomes connected, and cannot be considered in detail here. The general task of the educator in this respect is that of helping wisely and appropriately and of distributing the pupil's sense of "belonging" to each of the various groups. At the present time particular attention should be given to balancing the rightful feeling of national belonging and the natural love for one's country with the respect and the appreciation for all other peoples, and with the wider and higher realization of human brotherhood and world citizenship.

Where—and to what extent—are we preparing teachers to fulfill the demands of such a reoriented educational program as the foregoing suggests? If these goals be considered vital, then where are the teachers who understand the need, possess the skill in the techniques and thus stand ready to lead the way? Can we locate even a few of them? For surely they have always existed—a few of them here and there - these rare artist-teachers who reach, by some mysterious half-understood process, beyond the confines of subject-matter to the very core of personality to stimulate real growth in depth. Having found them, could we not, by a study of their procedures, discover cues to deliberate, conscious action that would more effectively help to achieve the aim of all true education—integrated and full functioning human beings?

\*Leta S. Hollingworth has observed that children, even at the age of six or seven, are interested in the problem of the origin and destiny of man, and ask for rational explanations of life and death. (*Children Above 180 I.Q.*, World Book, 1942, pp. 61-62)

# Discrimination in Service

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

*Source: The Institute of Psychosynthesis, London*

This is a subject with many facets and these comments can only constitute a general survey, touching briefly on certain points of practical interest. The subject can be divided into three parts:

*Discrimination on the part of the server* *Discrimination concerning service*  
*Discrimination towards those to be served*

Of course, these divisions overlap and blend in practice, but considering them separately can help clear thinking about the issues involved and thus lead to wiser action in service.

## **I. Discrimination on the part of the server**

This is largely a question of motive. It is almost superfluous to emphasise the importance of motive and the need for a careful examination of and constant watchfulness over the motives that impel us to serve. We may often discover behind motives that are pure and right - and mixed with them in varying proportions - others faulty or wrong because they are the outcome of some kind of glamour or illusion. The most frequent of these are:

**a. *Ambition.*** When there are seeds of ambition dormant in a server they may find fruitful ground in which to thrive in his activity. Service may become a means of reaching some position of command or authority, thus satisfying a desire for power and eminence, the urge to personal self-assertion. People on the First and allied Rays are more susceptible to this kind of wrong motive.

**b. *Sentiment.*** The discovery of this kind of glamour often requires subtle discrimination. We must discern between true spiritual compassion and the personal distress aroused in us by contact with the suffering of others and the consequent urge to eliminate it so as to get rid of our own discomfort.

There is a sure touchstone by which to discriminate between these two motives. When service is motivated by sentiment, we rush to alleviate the pain, to soothe the suffering personalities, without realizing that we are thus dealing only with *effects*, and perhaps are producing no real and enduring

benefit. Often we may, in fact, even delay the progress of those we "help" by indulging their attachments and preventing them from becoming aware of the lessons which their souls are trying to impart to them.

True spiritual compassion, on the contrary, while not excluding some measure of immediate relief when the suffering is acute, is concerned primarily to ascertain, point out and help to eliminate the causes of the suffering. This is done by interpreting the lesson with what wisdom we can and helping the person to understand it.

Another wrong motive, based on sentiment, is the desire to be loved and appreciated, and to have the praise and gratitude of those we so "generously" help. Fortunately, people are often ungrateful and thus help us to get rid of that tendency! Indeed, we should really be grateful to them for their ingratitude! To this glamour of sentiment servers on the Second Ray are particularly susceptible, and they should be constantly on their guard against it.

*c. Evasion.* This is a form of glamour that appears frequently in the field of service and manifests itself in subtle ways, masquerading under the best and noblest guises. Too often we consciously or unconsciously shirk our responsibilities, either from physical or moral laziness (it is far more agreeable to follow the line of least resistance!), or through fear, or simply because the task confronting us is distasteful to our personality. In such cases some useful activity, some kind of service we are accustomed to render that is easy and pleasant, may offer us a plausible excuse for evading the irksome or forbidding venture which, being our true duty, is a greater spiritual opportunity and would prepare us for higher types of service.

*d. Attachment.* This kind of glamour may delude us in 'two ways:

1. By attachment to a favoured habitual form of service
2. By attachment to the fruits of our service. In its crudest form this consists of expecting some kind of personal reward for service rendered, such as praise, recognition or gratitude.

A more refined type of attachment is the apparently justifiable desire to know that our service has been useful, that it has brought the fruits that are right. Of course, there is nothing wrong in noticing that good has resulted from one's selfless efforts; it is most encouraging. But there are some kinds of

long-range work or subjective service the "fruits" of which cannot be seen and can only be surmised. In such cases we must work with utter detachment, renouncing the evidence of results and relying only on an unswerving faith in the great law of cause and effect. We can be sure that, if good seeds are sown in the proper soil, good fruit, in due time, *will* appear.

## **II. Discrimination concerning service**

There are many kinds of service and there are times when the choice between the claims of the various fields is not at all easy. The following general rules can be a help in finding our true place in this:

- a. Do not persist in a lower or more limited and less effective kind of service if your capacities fit you to work in broader and more potent ways.
- b. Do not presume to serve in a higher and more difficult sphere until you have trained and tested your ability to meet its requirements with wisdom and harmlessness.
- c. At the same time, no matter what our abilities or equipment, we should be ready to serve in any way, however humble and disagreeable, when an urgent need confronts us.

We also have to bear in mind two important tendencies that are gathering momentum and therefore increasingly influencing our forms of service. These are:

The rapidly emerging tendency towards group life and group activity. Service rendered by one individual to another will increasingly give place to service given by a group to another group or groups. This will necessitate training in the new and difficult technique of harmonious co-operation and of creating a "group entity." The new, or rather renewed, recognition of the reality of the unseen Universe which surrounds and permeates us, and of the tremendous potency of its subtle energies. This recognition helps us to discover more and more the immense scope and value of *subjective service*. Spiritual aspirants should make every effort to fit themselves as quickly as possible to work in subjective as well as objective fields, and this for three important reasons which, generally speaking, have not so far been sufficiently appreciated.

First, subjective action is *incomparably* more efficacious and, therefore, more valuable than objective, because it deals with *causes* and not with effects; because it uses forces that are much subtler, more potent and far-reaching, much less limited by space, time and other physical plane barriers; because it uses the true method of all creative processes, "the method of God". This operates along the path which travels from the subtle to the dense, from the Centre to the circumference, from Spirit to matter, from Life and Consciousness to form, or, more technically, from the *idea* (mental) to the ideal (emotional), and from this to the *idol* or material form, the visible expression (physical).

Second, there are comparatively few true spiritual workers competent to render safe and effective subjective service, because of its difficult and severe requirements, even in its more elementary aspects.

Third, we are seeing a rapid - almost alarming - increase in the number of people developing psychic sensitivity either spontaneously (owing to the general spiritual stimulation) or deliberately (and often prematurely and unwisely). The result has been a corresponding increase in the "diseases of the mystics".

But the problem that confronts spiritual servers, at this time, is made more difficult and complicated by the fact that we are in a transition period of unique importance and opportunity, in which both ways of service, objective and subjective, are urgently needed.

This complex situation, these diverse and at times apparently conflicting demands call for careful and subtle discrimination. We are constantly confronted by problems of choice, and these can be settled only by each individual for himself. Each case and situation presents a unique combination of elements, personal and spiritual, which makes it unprecedented and each choice and solution "original". Nevertheless, a few pointers and considerations having a general application may be helpful.

First, we have to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. It is far easier to see the truth and importance of this than to put it consistently into practice. So many non-essentials cling to us tenaciously, like barnacles to a ship, deposited and nourished by habit, by conscious and unconscious attachments on our part, and by the clamorous demands or the insidious and subtle influence of people attached to us. Unremitting watchfulness is called for, and clear-cut discrimination.

Secondly, we should be prepared to delegate our outer service to others whenever they can be found ready and willing to undertake it. But here we must also use discrimination to make sure that those who make the offer are adequately equipped for the task.

A third point - an extension of the second - is that we often have a responsibility to train others and to help the seeker to find deeper and more subjective ways of service. This, too, calls for discrimination; it is easy both to overestimate or, on the other hand, fail to appreciate a person's true potentiality.

### **III. Discrimination towards those to be served**

Harmful and sometimes even serious consequences can result from well-intentioned but misdirected efforts; these are usually due to a lack of discrimination concerning the true need of those with whom we are concerned. The following five rules can be helpful here:

*1. Let us not be in a hurry to bestow upon everybody the form of aid that we ourselves have happened to find helpful*

This enthusiastic belief is a common fallacy - all know the well-intentioned person who has been helped by a patent medicine (or, rather, as is more often the case, by faith in it) and unreservedly recommends it to everyone for all kinds of ailments. Sixth ray people are particularly susceptible to this error because they are likely to be self-centred and, therefore, poor psychologists. They fail to recognize the application to service of the simple adage, "One man's meat is another man's poison". We can avoid this mistake by observing the following second rule:

*2. Before helping someone, study him thoroughly*

The better our understanding of our fellowmen the more clearly we realize how much they differ from each other. Modern scientific psychology, with its discovery and description of the various types, such as extraverts, introverts, etc., has done useful work in this direction, but it is as yet only in the pioneer stage, and very incomplete. Fortunately, valuable teachings in the field of esoteric psychology enable us now to begin to consider and study each human in terms of:



- a. *The stage of evolution* attained and, consequently, of his prevalent polarization (physical, emotional, mental).
- b. The *Rays* which qualify his soul, his personality, and his mental, emotional and physical bodies.
- c. The *Zodiacal* signs which condition the individual.
- d. *The points of cleavage* or *lack of integration in his personality existing* at various levels.
- e. Methods of *co-ordination and synthesis (integration and fusion)* suited to each individual case.
- f. *His life tasks* (vocation, avocation, service).

This is a fascinating and fruitful line of research, not only for spiritual workers, but for every doctor, teacher, parent - in fact, everyone who realizes the responsibility and the opportunity inherent in the influence we have on our fellowmen.

3. *Let us not always give what is asked or expected of us, but what will meet the real need*

We should realize and always bear in mind that the help which people *believe* they need and clamour for is often quite different from and, at times, just the opposite of what they really need for their welfare and spiritual progress. Again, we need to discriminate carefully in this respect, often refusing what is asked for, while trying to point out what, instead, the true need is and offering help appropriate to this need. Second Ray servers, particularly, should be on their guard against allowing sentiment, weakness, desire to please, or unenlightened compassion to induce them to cater to personality demands, instead of to what is in accordance with the will and purpose of the souls of those they are trying to help.

4. *Let us avoid personal attachment on both sides*

He who seeks to serve *harmlessly* should avoid becoming attached, not only to a certain type of service (as mentioned earlier), but also to the people concerned. This can be achieved by clearly discriminating between true spiritual, and therefore impersonal, love and emotional attachment. Frequently the unused affective tendencies of a server seek, and find, an

outlet or objective in helping others. This may be legitimate within certain limits, such as purely philanthropic forms of work, but it becomes a hindrance and a danger in strictly spiritual work. In order to qualify for this type of work the server should put the affective forces of his emotional nature through a drastic purification and transmutation, so that they may become sublimated in impersonal, detached and radiant spiritual love.

But even when the server is himself free from such attachment, it is only too easy for those being helped to attach themselves, at times in a passionate degree, to their helper. Such attachments are of two kinds, which should be carefully distinguished, because they have to be dealt with and offset in different ways:

a. Affective attachments, having a *possessive*, exacting, often jealous character, with a tendency to "absorb", sometimes reaching the point of actual astral vampirism.

Such attachments are due to an overdeveloped and unsatisfied emotional nature. In some cases unused and unrequited emotions stored up in the subconscious are "projected" upon the server through the process called by psychologists "affective transference". This tendency manifests in varying degrees, from an over-emotional, self-centered and dramatising temperament to the grave physical and psychological symptoms of a hysterical type.

b. Attachments due to weakness, fear, indecision, and inability or unwillingness to accept responsibilities.

Such people are clingers and beg to be helped, often exhibiting infantile traits. They want to be reassured, directed, even commanded. Typical and extreme cases of such behaviour are represented by people affected by psychoneuroses or by forms of melancholic depression. They are notably introverted, inhibited by complexes, and suffer from marked inner cleavages. It is well to bear in mind that some people show both kinds of attachments in varying proportions.

The first type of attachments can be dealt with and offset by directing the exuberant energies to other objectives and constructive outlets, by fostering their transmutation and sublimation, and by transferring them to higher levels. The second, or clinging, type can be eliminated by helping the individuals to "grow up" emotionally, to develop self-reliance, to train their

will, to appeal to and obey their own souls, to extravert in the right way, establishing an active and fruitful interplay with the outer world and their fellowmen - in a word, to achieve their own psychosynthesis.

From this brief survey of the threefold series of problems confronting those who attempt to serve, it emerges clearly how essential it is to use constant, watchful and increasingly subtle discrimination. Only through this will our service be adequate, fruitful - and harmless.

## **A Psychological Method for Learning Languages**

**by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.**

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Owing to the rapidly increasing facilities for travel, and to the growing cultural and economic interrelations between individuals and nations, the need of knowing foreign languages is becoming increasingly widespread and urgent.

Yet to many, the learning of a foreign language proves to be a long and laborious ordeal, the results of which are often by no means satisfactory. This fact is particularly obvious in public schools. Countless young people go through years of study of foreign languages and duly pass their examinations only to find that they have no real command of those languages when put to the test of speaking them during a visit to the corresponding foreign country. Consequently most of the time and energy devoted to that study have been sheer waste.

This state of affairs appears still more surprising and shocking when contrasted with the easy, spontaneous learning of one's mother tongue, which is the accomplishment of every normal child. It is such a universal happening that we do not stop to realize how wonderful it really is. A small boy with a rudimentary mind, just beginning to have command of his senses and organs of expression, accomplishes, without the help of any objective means of interpretation or explanation, the miracle of understanding a rapidly increasing number of words and phrases. And this he does without any apparent effort, as if in play and with evident delight.

This contrast indicates that there must be something basically wrong with the current methods of teaching languages, and that the elimination of the

present incalculable waste of time and effort in this field demands, not mere improvements, but a radical, even, one might say, a revolutionary change. It is to modern psychology with its recent developments that we must look for an explanation of the failure of routine methods and, moreover, for a formulation of the definite principles on which to base more efficient and fruitful techniques. The key thus provided will reveal the fundamental importance of the existence of the subconscious, its nature and its laws. This will be obvious if we realize that memory, on which the knowledge of any language is founded, is a function of the subconscious.

Without entering into a technical discussion of the theories of memory, it is evident that all the impressions we receive from the outer world via the senses remain for a very short time in the lighted field of our consciousness; and then apparently vanish into nothingness, superseded by other sense impressions or by the spontaneous activity of mind and emotions. Yet these impressions have not vanished, like passing shadows on a wall. Somehow, somewhere, certain traces have remained in us, and these have the power to recall or evoke, under suitable conditions, the original impression or sensation in our consciousness. It is irrelevant to our purpose to discuss here whether these "mnemonic traces" are of a physiological or psychological nature; what is of practical moment is the consideration of the conditions and of the laws which determine the production, the preservation and the evocation of the original impressions.

Two great lines of psychological investigation and application, namely psychoanalysis and suggestion, have established the following facts:

1. Disagreeable and tiresome impressions tend to be forgotten or removed from the consciousness into the unconscious by a definite act of repression (Freud's *Verdrängung*)
2. Every effort is inherently more or less disagreeable and is very apt to arouse resistance, wandering of attention, lack of receptivity or fatigue. The greater the exertion, often, the stronger is the inner opposition and the scantier the result. This is a psychological law which has been formulated by Baudoin as the "Law of Reversed Effort."
3. External stimuli which are not intensified by an active interest or by an emotion of a pleasant and positive nature, can make only superficial and dull impressions which are easily obliterated by others of a more vivid character.

The constant violation of these three fundamental principles by the current methods of teaching languages patently constitutes a condemnation of the latter. What could be more dull, tiresome or uninteresting for boys and girls with their active, restless minds, and their even more active, restless bodies; what more discouraging for the minds of adults occupied with the serious problems of life, than to have to plod laboriously through the dry rules of grammar with their countless exceptions, or to conjugate quantities of wickedly irregular verbs? Is it not inevitable that the subconscious of the victims should violently or slyly resent such maltreatment and oppose it with all its powers of resistance?

And even when we succeed by means of violence or insistence in making an impression upon the subconscious, compelling it to register and reproduce the words hammered into it, they are apt to remain a kind of dead weight or a series of static impressions, like phonograph records, instead of something vitally incorporated and assimilated. The result is that while we can perform the feat of reciting a series of grammar rules and the correct conjugation of verbs, we cannot understand what the waiter says to us in the restaurant, or express intelligibly to a foreigner our practical needs or our ideas.

What, then, is the alternative? It can be stated in a very simple way, yet one which has far-reaching implications: *We must learn foreign languages as we learned our mother tongue by becoming again "as little children."*

Let us see what this means and implies. The child learns almost exclusively through the capacity of the subconscious to "absorb" without deliberate effort, without "studying" and without worry or haste. Therefore, we should try to recapture, so far as we can, that childlike state of pure receptivity, of relaxation, of eager assimilation of those strange and amusing sounds we hear, welcoming everything new with a happy smile. Our inner attitude should be one of joyous discovery of a wonderful land full of surprises. This phase of mere receptivity should be allowed to continue undisturbed until there arises spontaneously the urge to reproduce the sounds one has heard. Every premature attempt at reproduction involves strain, and the consequent reaction of the subconscious occasions a serious waste of energy, and delays, rather than promotes, the desired progress. The length of this receptive period varies considerably according to individual psychological types. Some people of an active motor type feel the urge to repeat at once what they hear, and it is good to give this impulse free play. Others of a more passive, introverted type, emotionally timid and uncertain, need a longer period

before the subconscious becomes so saturated, so "soaked," as to be ready to give out the knowledge acquired.

I can quote an extreme example. A little Italian girl, very shy and nervous, had had an English governess for years but could not be induced to speak English. She was considered hopeless until one day she started of her own accord and has spoken English ever since without hesitancy!

There is an interesting and significant analogy between this method and that of the Montessori system in which, as is well known, small children are allowed to observe at leisure the material at their disposal and the use made of it by other children until they feel a spontaneous urge to use it actively themselves.

These inner psychological rhythms must be acknowledged and respected. Their discovery in each of us and our adjustment to them constitute one of the most important aspects of the fine art of living. Similarly, the process of learning to read and write a foreign language can be greatly assisted by the application of knowledge of the subconscious and its laws. Here are some of the most important rules to be followed:

### **1. Vividness and Charm of Visual Impressions**

The importance of these is well recognized by advertisers who make a point of printing advertisements in ways which strike the eye, and use attractive and cheerful illustrations designed to make a pleasant and lasting impression on the reader. Why should teachers of languages be poorer psychologists than businessmen? Should they not take advantage, as they easily could, of these inducements in order to make the task of their pupils easier and more pleasant?

### **2. Association of Various Types of Impressions**

Sense perceptions of different kinds, when closely associated, create deeper and more easily reawakened mnemonic traces. The teacher should avail himself of this circumstance by aptly associating visual, auditory and motor impressions. The simplest method of achieving this is to pronounce a phrase which is being exhibited in large letters on a poster or blackboard, asking the pupils to focus their attention alternately on listening and looking, while the phrase is repeated several times. This they should always do in a leisurely way, without being concerned about remembering what they have seen or

heard. Immediately afterwards they might copy the phrases several times, repeating them aloud, thereby adding the motor to the visual and auditory sensations.

### **3. Repetition and Persistence of Impressions**

Repetition is needed in order to build lasting impressions capable of withstanding the rapid stream of stimuli constantly pouring in upon us in modern life. Aggressive salesmen, amongst others, are well aware of its effectiveness and use it systematically.

The same objective necessitates the impressions being made slowly. The phrases must be pronounced distinctly and the written text left for a while before the eyes of the pupils, who should be allowed to copy it at leisure. The visual and auditory techniques can be exploited by means of a device which is being increasingly used of late, in the shape of phonograph records or tape recording. These can be employed to associate hearing and reading, and the impressions can be renewed ad libitum. To this extent they are good and constitute a helpful subsidiary means, but they cannot be claimed to embody a complete and satisfactory method, lacking as they do some of the other essential requisites, as indicated by what follows.

### **4. Imitation**

The importance of imitation is a well known and indisputable fact, but it is not adequately utilized in the study of languages. It forms the basis and with amazing results—of the teaching of the deaf and dumb, who learn to pronounce correctly through close observation of the mouth of the teacher while he or she talks. By a process of unconscious imitation such observation produces the ability to repeat the teacher's movements, and the pupils thereby become able to enunciate clearly and correctly. Adopting this simple and easy means, one can soon acquire a good pronunciation of a foreign language—an accomplishment ordinarily considered to be difficult and to require much practice.

On the basis of the principles we have mentioned it is advisable to attend lectures and theatrical performances, and to be present at conversations in the tongue we wish to learn, even if we understand practically nothing. We can rely upon our subconscious to absorb and then imitate, particularly when we assist it by adopting a conscious attitude and mood of easy relaxation, devoid

of any strenuous effort to understand and any impatience or sense of inferiority.

## **5. Synthetic Grasping**

Contrary to what one might expect and at variance with the current procedure used in teaching, recent psychological research has proved that the spontaneous and natural way of grasping and retaining is by taking in the whole and not the part. A word or a short phrase are both auditorily and visually perceived as a “whole,” as a unit. The subconscious is synthetic and not analytical; just as it is irrational and not rational. Our frequent mistakes in many fields, including that of language, are due to the neglect of these and other fundamental differences between our conscious and our subconscious mind. Thus this principle of synthetic grasping endorses the use of short phrases or even longer sentences without stopping to analyze their component parts and their grammatical peculiarities—a dry and tiresome labour which tends to sidetrack the attention and confuse the impressions.

## **6. Emotional and Aesthetic Factors**

Some philosophers and ethnologists have maintained that poetry is the natural and original expression of human language. Certainly the first verbal manifestations of our remote ancestors, prompted by vital needs and emotional outbursts, could not be called prose in our cold, matter-of-fact sense. In any case it is certain that poetry, through its combination of charm and rhythm and rhyme, and song with its beauty of melody, carry a special appeal and, therefore make an incomparably deeper and stronger impression than does a mere succession of prosaic phrases.

I sometimes make an amusing and convincing experiment along these lines. When foreign friends express to me their desire to learn Italian, while at the same time confessing their lack of confidence based on previous unhappy attempts with this or other languages, I reply that languages are not difficult to learn and that the fault lies not with them but with the current methods. I claim that I can prove it then and there by demonstrating to them that in about half an hour or even less they will be able to understand a sonnet of Dante's. This assertion gives them a pleasant and greatly arouses their interest, which serves as a good preparation. Then I proceed to recite to them the wonderful sonnet inspired by Beatrice:

"Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare



la donna mia, quand'ella altrui salute" etc.

(*Vita Nuova Sonetto XV*)

If we compare such poems with the phrases which make up the exercises in the current grammars—such as "the cat of my aunt is smaller than the dog of my uncle," or "My grandmother's umbrella is old," etc.—it is easy to see how superior poetry is in every respect. Yet today in thousands of public and private schools all over the world, tens of thousands of bored pupils reluctantly or obstinately try to hammer into their heads 'Where is my uncle's penknife;" "I like celery but I do not like cabbage;" and many other such stimulating and inspiring phrases.

In all this I am not to be taken as asserting that the study of languages should be based on famous poems only, disdaining all subjects of common and practical interest. My point is that, contrary to current opinion, poetry is easier to remember and more agreeable to the subconscious than dull phrases, and that it is, therefore, both preferable and practical to start with it in order to lay a good foundation. After coaxing the subconscious into a good humour, one can undertake the less attractive parts of the study. In this first phase of learning it is profitable to induce the willing cooperation of the subconscious by using not only famous poems, but also simple nursery rhymes and little verses for children. This is altogether in accordance with the fundamental principle we have stated, namely that in this work we must become again as little children.

Another valuable means of facilitating the study of a language is a bond of sympathy between teacher and pupil.

Modern psychology has rightly emphasized the great importance of emotional and irrational factors in all aspects of human life. But these have as yet received no adequate recognition and utilization in education and little attention is paid to them in the teaching of languages. This does not imply that a special personal bond or affective relationship is needed between teacher and pupil, although, when it exists, as in the case between mother and child in learning the mother tongue, it is very helpful. What should be established is a happy, friendly relationship, vivacious and informal, quite different from the stiff, reserved, or professorial attitude which is the rule.

Much can be done towards establishing this atmosphere by enlivening the teaching with the frequent interspersion of humorous and witty phrases,

puns, verbal tricks and absurdities. The funny makes a very special appeal to the subconscious, creates a very clear-cut impression on it, and is correspondingly remembered with great ease.

Surely the time has come to abandon the stupid idea that study must always be accompanied by solemn and laborious drudgery. Let us turn it into a lively, attractive, happy activity. Let us, for example, turn our attention to the possibility of introducing another influential factor: the general and vivid interest aroused by play and sport. It should be easy for the teacher, who is not a mere automaton harping on grammar, to propose puzzles, little games, and competitions in order to stimulate his pupils to eager learning, especially of the less attractive parts of a language or other subjects. It would be well if textbooks incorporating these methods were made available for the use of the teaching profession. In this way study and sport, instead of remaining two separate and often antagonistic activities, would be drawn into partnership; the more so because games and sports could easily be utilized for the teaching of many scientific facts, laws, and methods, from a practical standpoint.

At this juncture I should like to anticipate a possible doubt that may have arisen in some minds. Are grammars then really obsolete? Should we just consign them to the dustbin or make a fine bonfire of them? My views are not as revolutionary as that! I have a great respect for grammars and sincerely believe that they have their proper place and perform a distinctive function within the body of human knowledge. Only, in my opinion, that place and function are exactly the opposite of those ordinarily assigned to them. Grammars should not be used, as is the custom, at the start of the study of a language; their usefulness begins after one has acquired a sufficient practical command of the language. When this has been attained by the method of direct absorption, there arises spontaneously the desire to know the reason for the many peculiarities and for the origin and development of the language one is learning to appreciate. This is right and good, expressing, as it does, the desire for a scientific understanding.

The study of grammar and syntax now acquires an entirely different quality, becoming a medium for the satisfaction of a spontaneous and natural desire and for the expression of an inherent interest. Thus it yields a mental gratification which compensates for the exertion it requires. This attitude is not as revolutionary and singular as it might appear. A philosopher as sober and rational as Herbert Spencer wrote: "A language is spoken and many poems are written before grammar and prosody are thought of."

One has not awaited the appearance of an Aristotle in order to reason well. As grammar has been compiled after the existence of language, it has to be taught after one knows it." In this respect the current popular grammar falls sadly short of its proper purpose which is to reveal the special structure of a language, its origin, and development.

Grammar should help us to look upon a language as a living organism, and, with syntax, to discover its psychological characteristics and its expressive value.

This second phase of learning completes and crowns the first, and is its natural outcome. Such sequence in the study of languages corresponds to a general principle of evolution and growth which rules, or should rule, all aspects of human life. *First* direct experience, living contact and assimilation, *then* deliberate reflection and a clear mental grasp of the materials previously assimilated; *first*, subconscious receptivity, *then* self-conscious possession; *first* practice, *then*, theory. All teaching should aim *first* at facilitating and diversifying the pupil's experience and contacts with actual life, his "field of knowledge," and *afterwards* at helping him to harvest all the fruits of experience, knowledge, and wisdom which those living contacts are capable of yielding.

The teacher should be a bridge to experience and life, and their interpreter; not, as is generally the case, a screen preventing vital intercourse with reality. In the present school system (excepting a minority of schools which have adopted modern "active" methods) the teacher, with the best of intentions, tends to deprive young people of their right to undergo the natural processes we have described, by feeding them with pre-digested and artificially condensed tabloids of knowledge.

The harmonious, sympathetic relationship between teacher and pupil, which as we have seen, is a great help in mastering a language, should be extended to the people and to the whole nation whose language we are learning. This has not only the advantage of facilitating our learning, but has a wider and higher value of a spiritual nature. A language is the direct and distinctive expression of the soul of a people. It reveals the special inner quality of the latter, and by means of it is manifested the unique contribution which that nation has made and is making to the corporate life of humanity. It is the interpreter of the notes and chords, the melodies and harmonies which represent its participation in the great human symphony.

Therefore, if we adopt an attitude of sympathetic understanding and keen appreciation towards that people, putting our soul in contact with its soul, the study of its language will acquire for us a new and deeper meaning. It will create an inner and vital relationship which will enable us to absorb that language with surprising ease.

We shall be able to rely upon the cooperation not only of our subconscious but of our superconscious, with its higher intuitive and telepathic powers, with its strong tendency to bring about a blending and identification.

The results of this appreciative and sympathetic attitude will be far-reaching. The knowledge of a language will be acquired with the least expenditure of time and effort, "sans larmes," as Reinak amusingly puts it.

Moreover, such an approach confers an even more important benefit, of a spiritual—a great broadening of our mind and feelings. Many mental limitations, prejudices, and unjustified emotional reactions are thereby overcome, and we acquire a new angle of vision, new ways of approaching reality; become more plastic and refined. Thus we gradually arrive at a vital and not merely an intellectual realization of the fact that there are many points of view, all partially justified; and that, only by accepting and appreciating the contribution of each country and race, may we hope to arrive at a more complete and truer picture of reality.

This inner broadening, this growth of our power to sympathize and to understand, this overcoming of self-centeredness, have not only a liberating effect on us individually, but constitute one of the most effective and practical means of eliminating national and racial misunderstandings, antipathies, and the consequent antagonisms. Recent history has demonstrated with dramatic evidence the failure of efforts to establish international cooperation, disarmament, and peace primarily by outward means, such as pacts, legal measures, coercion, and fear. In this, as in all similar instances, the only effective solution must be worked out by the natural, and at the same time, spiritual method which operates from within outwards, from soul to body, from spirit to form.

When the real spirit of peace and general international goodwill has permeated the minds and hearts of the more influential section of humanity, the elaborate, formal leagues and pacts will become unnecessary, and in that spiritual atmosphere the needed regulations and agreements will be easily established and effectually carried out.

In order to add our individual contribution to this great task, on which may depend the future of our civilization, it becomes almost a necessity for us to avail ourselves of the assistance offered by the knowledge of the principal foreign languages. As we have seen, it can be acquired far more easily and painlessly if we abandon the current unsatisfactory and artificial methods, and cultivate the wisdom to become again as little children. Let us open our minds and hearts to the many voices in which humanity expresses its sorrows and joys, and offers us the fruits of knowledge and beauty it has gathered through the endeavours of its sons. Let us daily participate in the effort to create a new civilization, a new expression of man's inherent divine qualities.



# Liberation

**by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D. (Written In 1965)**

Let us enter the Temple of Silence with joy; we are free to do so.

Freedom is a great cosmic Law. It is called the Sirian Law of Freedom, and the process of liberation is implemented by this great Principle.

To begin, as always, with the universal aspect, this is the great Law of which the Laws of Economy, Attraction, and Synthesis are the expression. In a sense, it constitutes a still higher synthesis, but I only mention this as a cosmic "perspective" because we cannot know anything about it at our present stage.

We have been told that certain great cosmic Entities have been active in connection with our little Planet and have produced important results. They are called "the Lords of Liberation." At the beginning of the Second World War, in 1940, the Second Stanza of the Great Invocation was given, which begins with an invocation to the Lords of Liberation.

Let the Lords of Liberation issue forth. Let Them bring succour to the sons of men.

As you know, the Great Invocation comprises three Stanzas. The first was given in 1936, and the second in 1940. The present situation bears analogies with the situation then, and it is possible that the Lords of Liberation might be Instruments of Divine Intervention. Therefore, it is of immediate interest to know something of the teaching we have been given about Them.

Who are the Lords of Liberation, and from whence do They come? All the ideas and concepts which control human life and have given rise to our civilisation have started as emanations from certain great Lives, Who are Themselves an expression of a divine Idea. The note They strike and the quality They emanate reaches out and makes an impact upon the most developed of the sons of men found at any particular time upon the Earth. These then proceed to make the sensed idea their own and to familiarise the thinkers of their time with the formulated concept. In this way great motivating, divine purposes become controlling factors in human progress. It is in this way that the basic

urge to liberation and to freedom has slowly and consistently dominated human endeavour, leading first of all to the struggle for individual freedom and liberation (with the incidental ideal of heaven, of initiation and of spiritual attainment), and gradually moulding human thought to such an extent that the greater ideal takes shape. The freedom of humanity and the liberation of its power to be self-determining (which is an aspect of freedom) has become the dearest ideal and the best thought of the thinkers in all nations. (*The Externalisation of the Hierarchy, by Alice A. Bailey, page 266*)

All principles, laws, and qualities manifest in different ways at different levels; thus the liberation of humanity occurs at various levels. There is the collective urge towards liberation, the group urge, which has been voiced through the "Four Freedoms" which you all know. But there is a very difficult problem concerning freedom. It involves responsibility and the ability to use it wisely, and these two things are not at all easy. The realization of the responsibility which freedom entails has produced, and is producing, a curious, paradoxical phenomenon which has been expressed in a thought-provoking book by Erik Fromm entitled, *Escape From Freedom*. Others have also called attention to this fact.

When men are free they do not know what to do with their freedom! What to do with one's freedom is one of the sources of anxiety, because freedom is not only freedom from—which is the obvious meaning of the yearning when one is limited—but freedom for, and here is the point: freedom for what? It means having a goal, a purpose, and this implies that life has meaning. In other words, it necessitates some understanding, some acceptance and understanding of the evolutionary Plan, of the fact that the evolutionary wave of life is directed towards a goal. Therefore, freedom is not license. It is not absence of all ties; it is freedom from ordinary human limitations, but also freedom for cooperation with the evolutionary Plan.

This explains much that is going on now. But, as usual, humanity has to learn through experience, which means through trial and error. Millions, and especially the young people, are making the experiment and experience of license and they will find that it does not give them the happiness they had the illusion it would. Through this experience and through their disillusionment they can reach understanding and realization of true freedom, but freedom can only be acquired by degrees.

### **Individual Freedom**

The process of liberation has various stages. First, liberation from the attachment produced by desire, liberation from the enslavement to the emotional body. Here lies the major emphasis of the Buddha's Doctrine, liberation from desire. The Buddha taught that all suffering is due to desire and that the way to liberation is freedom from desire, from personal, selfish desire. He also said:

As the water of the ocean everywhere has the taste of salt so my whole Doctrine has the taste of liberation.

This entails the elimination of glamour. Desire and glamour are connected; and the elimination of glamour is one of the most important and necessary steps in the process of liberation. It can be expressed in simple exoteric terms as the control of the emotions by the mind, and this is the elementary stage which humanity in general needs to understand and to which all education and enlightenment should lead. Even an enlightened self interest requires a control of the emotional drives and urges.

The second major stage is liberation from the "Wheel of Rebirth," in other words, liberation from re-incarnation. We can begin this process now, in daily life, but the complete process takes place on the Path of Initiation. This is described by the Tibetan Master in this way:

I would like to have you study initiation from the angle of liberation, looking upon it as a process of strenuously attained freedoms. This basic aspect of initiation-when realised by the initiate-ties his experience into a firm relation with that of the whole of humanity, whose fundamental struggle is the attainment of that freedom "whereby the soul and its powers can unfold and all men be free because of an individually attained freedom".

If you will study the nine initiations and look upon them from this angle, you will see how each does most definitely mark a point of attainment, and therefore the entire subject of initiation takes on a new beauty and appears more worthy of the pain and struggle of attainment. Let me give you an indication (no more than that) of what I mean.

This goal of freedom is in reality the main incentive to tread the Path of Return. One of the most spiritually exciting things taking place in the world today is the use, in every country, of the word FREEDOM; it was that great



disciple, F. D. Roosevelt, who "anchored" the word in a new and more universal sense. It now has a fuller and deeper meaning to humanity.

***The Rays and the Initiations, by Alice A. Bailey, pages 685-687:***

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|------------------------|--|
| <i>Initiation I.</i>   | <i>Birth.</i> Freedom from the control of the physical body and its appetites.   |
| <i>Initiation II.</i>  | <i>Baptism.</i> Freedom from the control of the emotional nature and the selfish sensitivity of the lower self.  |
| <i>Initiation III.</i> | <i>Initiation III.</i> Transfiguration. Freedom from the ancient authority of the threefold personality, marking a climaxing moment in the history of all initiates.   |
| <i>Initiation IV.</i>  | <i>Renunciation.</i> Freedom from all self interest, and the renouncing of the personal life in the interest of a larger whole. Even soul-consciousness ceases to be of importance and a more universal awareness, and one closer to the divine Mind, takes its place. |
| <i>Initiation V.</i>   | <i>Revelation.</i> Freedom from blindness—a liberation which enables the initiate to see a new vision. This vision concerns the Reality lying beyond any hitherto sensed or known.   |

This gives the opportunity to emphasize an important point; that now, in our personal lives—and not only as disciples but even as aspirants—we are laying the foundations of and taking the elementary steps towards these Initiations. Einstein, who can be considered as a great mathematical Initiate, had to begin as a boy with sums, subtraction, multiplication, and division; later he took ever greater steps into higher mathematics. In the same way, here and now, in our personal lives we make the small beginnings for all the Initiations. Again here is the great law—"as above so below." The microcosm reflects the macrocosm.

So there is a correspondence between the gradual control of the physical urges and the First Initiation; the gradual control of the desire or astral body and the Second Initiation; and so on.

Let us take, for example, the Fourth Initiation: Every act of sacrifice or "giving up" of something lower for something higher is an elementary

preparation for the Fourth Initiation. This is very encouraging; we are not asked to achieve immediately the complete freedom which is only achieved at the Fourth Initiation, but we can, humbly and hopefully, begin to work towards it right here and now. It is good to have that perspective and it is encouraging to know that we are preparing for future initiation.

A point about renunciation, on which we should be clear, is that its real meaning is substitution. In renouncing we have to substitute for one thing something better. This is what really happens and it has a positive connotation instead of the negative one of renunciation. Whenever we take a decision to employ a day or an hour in some particular way we are "renouncing"-automatically-all the other alternatives. We are doing this continually; therefore, to renounce is not so terrible! It is for us to choose; and here, as with other "psychological techniques," simple, practical people often do it better than others. They know for example, that in order to make money they must renounce other alternatives and eliminate all that counteracts that achievement. And vice versa, those who aim at more spiritual attainment have to give up material ambitions, and renounce their "lower" actions. This is the framework of the process of liberation.

The dispelling of world glamour, which is the sum total of individual glamour, is a necessary condition for liberation. It is therefore a central task. Wisdom is the great dispeller of glamour, and in a sense the most effective means of gaining liberation is the cultivation of the wisdom to "see through," because, until we see through a glamour we cannot possibly get rid of it-be freed from it. But "seeing through" is not the whole story, because, while it is possible to see through a glamour, nevertheless, it often recurs again and again from the unconscious, through habit and through the force of energy acquired in previous lives and in this life. Therefore, recognizing a glamour-seeing in previous lives and in this life. Therefore, recognizing a glamour-seeing through it-is half the work. The other half is to disintegrate it, to eliminate all the energy accumulated in it. The second part cannot be done if we have not done the first, so we have to begin with that.

We should remember that all freedom is freedom within the Plan. Of course, we are free to go against the Plan and many of us do; but that brings punishment, and punishment is only a human word for the inevitable working of the Law of Cause and Effect.

We are often faced with the problem of how to free ourselves for inner spiritual work when overwhelmed by outer work and responsibilities. The

answer is, we can fulfil our personal duties and accept karmic limitations and responsibilities while remaining inwardly free, without resentment and without attachment. If we realize that paying off karmic debts is a step towards liberation, we do it willingly, and can even assume the attitude of blessing our obstacles! The point is that outer bondage does not prevent inner freedom if we take the right attitude towards it.

It has been said that freedom of choice is the most terrible thing we have to face-the choice between a lesser and a greater good. But we cannot escape from this freedom of choice, and should not try to. It is one of the highest gifts given to humanity and we should be grateful for it and certainly not try to escape from it. When there is a choice to be made between good and good, it is a question of skill in action. Sometimes the choice is between a greater and lesser evil and here lies an important lesson for rigid idealists who fail to accept that sometimes the part of wisdom is to accept a necessary evil to prevent a greater evil.

When on the other hand it is a choice between a greater and a lesser good it is more difficult. But after all, as they are both "good" it is not so terrible if we make a mistake-we make them all the time and still survive, and we shall certainly go on making them, although ever "nobler" ones. Even very High Beings have made mistakes through excessive or premature compassion, but one could call them "super-human" mistakes, and those great Beings have recognized them and then proceeded onwards. So let us proceed in a true sense of humility, not the "miserable sinner" type of humility, but honestly realizing that all of us make mistakes.

We are in a sea of glamour and all glamour is a mistake. So let us reconcile ourselves to this human condition and while not exactly "blessing" our mistakes, let us extract and distil the teaching and wisdom they give us. It is all part of the great Process of Liberation.

### **EXCERPTS ON LIBERATION**

Liberation cannot be achieved except by the perception of the identity of the individual spirit with the universal Spirit. It cannot be achieved- neither by Yoga (physical training), nor by Sankhya (speculative philosophy), nor by the practice of religious ceremonies, nor by mere learning...

Liberation never comes, even at the end of a hundred aeons, without the realisation of the Oneness of Self - Shankara.

## **Liberation of Energy**

Christ is the embodiment of freedom,  
and the Messenger of Liberation.

I would call your attention to the words, "the liberation of energy." It is liberation which is the keynote of the new era, just as it has ever been the keynote of the spiritually oriented aspirant.

The term "liberation" really means the ability of any conscious atom to pass out of one sphere of energised influence into another of a higher vibration, of larger and wider expanse of conscious realisation.

The liberation from karma about which would-be occult students so glibly talk is after all but the freeing of the atom from its own personal problem (the problem of response to unitary sensation), and its conscious acquiescence in group response and work. It marks the disassociation of the human atom from the rhythm imposed upon him by the lower "influences" which find their channel of approach through his vehicles, or lunar bodies, and his consequent willing recognition of the will-impulse of his greater whole, or the life of the egoic group-a centre in the planetary body. It involves atomic control, but involves also conscious subjection to the karma of the Heavenly Man. Man is no longer the slave of the rhythm of matter per se, but controls it in the three worlds of his endeavour; he is still nevertheless controlled by the group karma of the planetary centre, by its influence, life and vibratory impulse. The same can be predicted of a Heavenly Man, and of a solar Logos.

## **The Concept of Liberation**

There has been much talk among esotericists (particularly in the Eastern presentation of the Path of Reality) about liberation. The goal held before the neophyte is liberation, freedom, emancipation: this, by and large, is the keynote of life itself. The concept is a transiting out of the realm of the purely selfish and of personal liberation into something much wider and more important. This concept of liberation lies behind the modern use of the word "liberty" but is far wiser, better and deeper in its connotation. Liberty, in the minds of many, is freedom from the imposition of any man's rule, freedom to do as one wishes, to think as one determines and to live as one chooses. This is as it should be provided that one's wishes, choices, thoughts

and desires are free from selfishness and are dedicated to the good of the whole. This is, as yet, very seldom so.

Liberation is much more than all this; it is freedom from the past, freedom to move forward along certain predetermined lines (predetermined by the soul), freedom to express all the divinity of which one is capable as an individual, or which a nation can present to the world.

### **Liberation of the Soul**

I would like here to call your attention to the phrase... "the Hierarchy of souls who have achieved freedom." I am not using that phrase in the ordinary sense. The aspirants and the disciples of the world employ it to signify the achieving of that liberty and that freedom which will release them from the three worlds of human endeavour and make them free citizens of the Kingdom of God. With that point of view you are quite familiar, and you will recognize that in it there lies a large measure of selfish purpose-inevitable and some day to be eliminated, but at this stage definitely present and perhaps desirable because it provides the adequate incentive towards the needed effort. The freedom, however, to which I refer, is the achieved success of the soul to move and act and manifest with freedom in the three worlds, as well as on its own high plane. This is a point seldom if ever emphasized. The soul itself, the Ego, has its own task to do, which might be expressed as being the reverse of that with which the personality is familiar. It has to learn to be at home and to function effectively in the world of human living and there to carry forward the plan.

*(Esoteric Psychology, Volume II, by Alice A. Bailey, pages 702-703)*

### **MEDITATION**

- Silence:*** Unifying as souls.
- Receptivity:*** As "lighted, loving, willing souls."
- Unification:*** Let the Lords of Liberation issue forth.  
Let Them bring succour to the sons of men.  
Let the souls of men awaken to the Light,  
And may they stand with massed intent.  
The WILL to save is here.  
The LOVE to carry forth the work is widely spread abroad.

The ACTIVE AID of all who know the truth is also here.  
Come forth, O Mighty One and blend these three.

***Radiation:*** Freedom of the SOUL to express divinity through humanity.

## **THE GREAT INVOCATION**

From the point of Light within the mind of God  
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.  
Let Light descend on Earth.  
(*pause*)

From the Point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.  
May Christ return to Earth.  
(*pause*)

From the centre where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men—  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.  
(*pause*)

From the centre which we call the race of men  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out.  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.  
(*pause*)

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan

OM OM OM



## **The Resolution of Conflicts and Spiritual Conflicts and Crises**

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli , M.D

Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, Issue No. 34 (1975)

### **PART ONE**

#### **THE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS**

For purposes of this writing, I shall restrict myself to a discussion of the ways of resolving, or still better preventing, the conflicts produced by the combative and aggressive energies. It is a subject that is always current, but never more so than now.

The understanding and use of means appropriate for this purpose call for awareness of the fact that we live in a psychological world, in which energies of various types are at work. Various kinds of relationships exist between the

external and the inner worlds. Primitive man does not distinguish himself from the external world; he believes natural forces to be beings, to whom he attributes psychological qualities and passions. He feels himself in the grip of forces and seeks to propitiate them. A number of mythologies, the Indian and the Greek, for instance, reveal the origin of the gods as personifications of natural forces: air, fire, wind, water, etc.

Then followed the development of the mind and self-consciousness, paralleling the differentiation of the self from the external world. It is only in relatively modern times that there developed a really objective study of nature, conducted in a scientific spirit. Concomitantly, the increasing control of nature emerged through the discovery of natural laws, and the technical inventions for controlling and utilizing natural forces.

Yet another important step leading to other great cognitive and practical achievements can and should be taken. It consists in becoming aware of the fact, and in drawing all the consequences from it, that we live in a psychological world as real as, if not more real than, the external world. In this psychological world, a variety of energies exist and operate in accordance with laws as precise as those governing external natural forces. Then we must realize that, although we live in this psychological world, we are not at the mercy of its energies; that we can know them, discover the laws which they obey, and employ techniques for making use of them. The 'I', our real being, the centre of self-consciousness, is different from all the psychological forces in which it is immersed.

These forces are "not-I", as is demonstrated by the fact that we can observe and study them, note their dynamics, and transformations, and most importantly, influence them with the will. Our ability to modify these forces means that they do not form an integral part of the "I" or self.

However, we are so accustomed to identify ourselves with those psychological forces that if we are to free ourselves from their control—to use instead of being used by them—we must cultivate a continual vigilance and maintain what has been called the "consciousness of the observer," or, in modern theatrical terms, the director. Symbolically, the theatre, or the stage itself, can be said to be the body, while the actors are the psychological forces that appear therein, to be given direction by the director. An effective help in recognizing this fundamental distinction between the 'I' or self, and the various elements, or contents, of the psychological world is provided by the Exercise in Dis-identification and Self-identification described in my



book Psychosynthesis (Assagioli , *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, N.Y.: Hobbs Dorman, 1985. Paperback-Viking Press, 1971, P. 116-125,).

As I wrote many years ago in an article, *The Psychology of Idea-forces and Psychology* (Review of Applied Psychology, Sept.-Oct. 1909), suggestive analogies can be presented between the objects and forces of the natural world and those of the psychological world. Passion is similar to a rushing torrent that carries away everything in its course and inundates the surrounding territory. A fantasy of daydreaming can be considered analogous to clouds that pass across the sky continually changing shape. An idea is a seed, a germ, which, finding suitable soil can grow into a majestic tree, or create a whole current of thought and action; and so on.

These analogies between the world of nature and the world of the psychological can be usefully developed by regarding them as something objective and not solely subjective. An entire science of psycho-dynamics is thus being created; a science, that is, of consciousness, of the laws and techniques for influencing psychological dynamism.

These preliminary remarks open the way to a consideration of the application of this conception to our subject, psychological conflicts. The fundamental principle is that the resolution of external conflicts with other people necessitates the prior resolution of one's own inner conflicts. To put it in a more general way, to regulate psychological forces in others, individually and collectively, the corresponding psychological forces in ourselves must first be brought under regulation. This does not demand specific demonstration. It stands to reason that if a conflict exists within us, we cannot be in harmony with others, since if one part of us is in harmony with another person, another part of us in conflict with the first part must be in conflict also with the person. Thus an internal harmony, or integration, must first of all be created if the energies are to be regulated and directed in such a way as to resolve conflicts in the psychological world and with the psychological world of other beings in the community with which we are or come into contact.

The various means of regulating and then utilizing the aggressive energies may be briefly indicated as follows: Elimination of projection, discharge of irritation in muscular activity, transformation of energy into other kinds of expression.

A primary rule requires that we *do not project onto others our states of mind and our conflicts*. Human nature displays a strong tendency to attribute to others the attitudes, impulses, feelings and ideas present within us. Let us apply this rule to a class of conflicts now widespread and particularly acute, those produced by the aggressive and combative energies.

If we feel hostility towards others, we tend to "project" it onto them; that is, we believe it is they who are hostile to us, when in reality they may not be. Such an attitude is as mistaken as the primitive man's belief in a personal hostility of natural forces. This erroneous projection often gives rise to a fear and conviction of being persecuted and threatened, and these in turn create defence and hostility reactions which can easily arouse other people's hostility. Thus is built up a vicious circle, or, in modern terms, a chain reaction.

How then, can we prevent such projections? First of all, it is necessary to recognize them for what they are, to become aware of them. Then when others display hostility, criticize and blame us, we must understand that often they are not really angry with us personally. They are projecting onto us hostility harboured for other reasons and discharging a load of animosity that cannot for the moment be directed towards its real cause.

Therefore their hostility is not to be taken personally. This situation has been well described by Laura Huxley in the first chapter of her book, *You Are Not the Target*, which contains a number of psychological rules and techniques for self-control presented in a lively and amusing manner. She says: "When your husband complains, your wife badgers you, the boss is irritable, your partner gets difficult, your children are rebellious—stop! Stop a moment and realize that their irritability, their unreasonableness, their coldness, in other words their unpleasant and annoying behaviour is not really directed at you...In the majority of cases it is not you that are the target. You merely happen to be around."

The author then gives some advice on ways to behave in these situations; one among them, perhaps surprising and seemingly trivial but nonetheless effective, is to unload a natural aggressive reaction through some exercise involving muscular contraction, without the other person being aware of it, instead of giving it verbal expression. Flex the arm and leg muscles and rhythmically retract the stomach, thus displacing the emotional charge into the physical nervous system. This, says the author, has the added advantage of combining a useful gymnastic exercise. If one can then see the humorous

side of the matter, it helps one to smile inside and so discharge even more effectively. The book is full of similar "recipes", as it calls them—shrewd, somewhat bizarre, but capable of working well.

In addition to these measures of eliminating projections, discharging irritations and transforming our expressions of energy, one can write an acrimonious letter—and not send it, box a punching-bag, etc. Let us remember that a symbolic gratification is often sufficient for the unconscious, which can be satisfied with the action of striking a leather ball in place of an "enemy". It is the energy discharge that is important. Another method is to distract one's attention by throwing oneself into some activity that engages interest. Another aid is to remember the elementary fact that irritation harms oneself most of all. An English writer has said this in the following way: "Rage is a way of making oneself pay for the faults of others". Enlightened self-interest can induce us not to react aggressively.

In reality it is not easy to restrain oneself thus, whether in the right or wrong. It could be advanced that being in the wrong makes it easier to recognize the control of these reactions; but this is not so. The fact is that when one is in the wrong, one is loath to admit it, and therefore we try to persuade ourselves and others that we are right, often going to excessive lengths to do so. This is well expressed in the French maxim, *Il se fache donc il a tort* (In the wrong tempers fly). On the other hand, when we are right we feel our aggressive reaction to be justified, heedless of the trouble it may cause. In these cases the inner satisfaction of knowing oneself to be in the right should suffice, *without* wishing to assert it in words and violent action. In reality the antithesis is artificial; right or wrong are almost never clear-cut; and in any situation it is very difficult to establish their proportions. One can stick to Tommaso Campanella's dictum: "In God we shall discern who did and said the better thing."

Fear is another source of hostility and aggressiveness. The fear of being injured, the fear of being attacked more or less by surprise, prompt one to take the offensive. Inversely, fear attracts the hostility of others. It has been ascertained that fear produces a substance, perhaps an odour, that irritates animals. The beads of perspiration exuded by a frightened individual have been known to arouse reactions of irritation and aggressiveness in animals.

Self-control, with its capacity to regulate combative energies, is of advantage also when one wishes or is forced to fight. This fact is made use of in sport. One of the techniques used by a boxer, for instance, consists in keeping on

the defensive during the early rounds in order to encourage his opponent to attack and tire himself. Then at the right moment he takes the initiative.

A higher and even more effective method is to make liberal concessions; remembering that they are preferable to the damage, the wear and tear and the dangers of a struggle. It is sometimes sufficient to make pro-forma concessions—that is, to the prestige of others. This is a question not only of avoiding humiliating and offending an opponent, but of not crowing over him and of helping him to save face and appease his amour propre. He can even be allowed to consider himself the victor. What do his assertions matter provided the substance of the situation has been preserved? Here is an example. Two American businessmen, Carnegie and Westinghouse, were engaged in a rivalry that was damaging to their mutual interests. During a discussion in which they were trying to reach an agreement, Westinghouse, who was still unconvinced about Carnegie's proposals, asked him: "If we amalgamate our companies, what is the new one to be called?" "Westinghouse", replied Carnegie, and this clinched the other's agreement.

But higher means than calculated concessions dictated by self-interest are to be found, of course, in an understanding indulgence towards the imperfections of human nature, accompanied by consequent generosity.

Firmness and the ability to say no, when necessary, are not thereby excluded, but are to be applied in no critical spirit, without emotional reaction, and from a broader viewpoint. Finally, there is a still higher means for "disarming" an opponent, even an enemy: benevolence and compassion which can reach heights of true fraternal love. It was in this spirit that St. Francis won over the wolf of Gubbio.

The best animal-trainers, however, do not aspire to such heights, but impose their control by means of a mixture of love and force. They also employ the magnetic power of the eye, coupled with a firm and fearless attitude.

Some trainers have said that they really love their animals, caress them and display their affection for them, a treatment that renders them docile. Even at this elementary level benevolence shows itself to be effective. I do not feel it necessary to point out the applications of these methods. Opportunities are legion—if one is willing to take them! They arise continuously, in family life, in all interpersonal relations, between all human groups at every level, between nations and between races. With contacts and communications multiplying in an ever-diminishing world, the establishment of harmonious

individual and social psychosynthesis becomes increasingly urgent. These methods are more effective in preventing war and encouraging disarmament than are external, juridical and formal ones that do not get to the root causes of conflicts. This may appear an idealistic statement; but it is indeed realistic, because based on the realities of human nature.

I shall conclude this section with the confirmation provided by the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO, the great cultural association of the United Nations, which affirms: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

## **PART TWO**

### **SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS AND CRISES**

Spiritual conflicts and crises are different in kind from those of a purely psychological type, and from moral ones in a narrow sense, though sometimes having an association with them. Spiritual crises occur in a different inner dimension, being produced by experiences and conflicts that transcend the level and sphere of ordinary existence.

They concern man's relationships with the great Life of which he is a part, that is, with the essential Reality—however conceived or intuited—which stands "behind" or "above" the little personal life.

More than fifty years ago, in 1921, I developed this theme in a paper entitled *The Awakening of the Soul*. I shall repeat here in part what I wrote then, a statement that has since been included in a later paper, *Spiritual Development and Nervous Diseases*. "A clear understanding of the significance of the unusual inner experiences which customarily precede the awakening of the soul necessitates the recognition of some of the psychological characteristics of the so-called normal man".

He might be said, not so much to live; as rather to simply exist, taking life as it comes and not posing problems about its meaning, value and purpose. If uncultivated, he is concerned simply to gratify his personal desires, seek sensuous pleasures, become rich and satisfy his ambitions. If of a more elevated mind, he subordinates his personal gratifications to the performance of the various family and civil duties that have been inculcated into him. At the same time he worries little about their *raison d'être* or genesis. He may even declare that he is religious and believes in God, but his approach to

religion is superficial and conventional, permitting him to feel "in the clear" when he has fulfilled the formal obligations of his Church and participated in its various rituals. In short, the normal man believes implicitly in the absolute reality of ordinary life and is tenaciously attached to his earthly goods, to which he attributes a positive value. Thus, in practice, he considers ordinary life an end in itself.

Any belief he may have in a future paradise is entirely theoretical and academic as witness the fact that

his eagerness to arrive there, often affirmed with amusing ingenuousness, hardly equals his determination to postpone doing so until the last possible moment.

But among the ranks of the "normal man" it can happen—and cases do occur, though their incidence is proportionately rare—that an individual experiences, to his surprise and uneasiness, a sudden change in his inner life. Sometimes following a series of disappointments, not infrequently after a severe shock, such as the loss of a beloved person, sometimes—and this is of special significance—without apparent cause and in the midst of circumstances of exceptional well being and prosperity (as in the case of Leo Tolstoy for instance), a vague disquiet makes itself felt, accompanied by a sense of dissatisfaction, of lack. But the lack is not of something concrete, rather of something enigmatic, fugitive, indefinable. This emptiness is increased by the addition, little by little, of a feeling of the unreality and of the futility of ordinary life. Personal interests that previously occupied the bulk of his attention start to fade, their importance and value to diminish. New problems present themselves that prompt him to question the direction of life. He wonders about many things which formerly he accepted naturally: the reason for his and other people's sufferings, the justification of the inequalities of fortune, the origin of human existence and its purpose.

This stage provides fertile soil for misapprehensions and errors. The meaning of these new states of mind escapes many of those who, experiencing them, regard them as vagaries or abnormal creations of the imagination. The suffering they cause which is sometimes indeed painful, begets resistance of every kind. Fear of "losing his mind" makes the sufferer strive to recover his hold on ordinary life, which threatens to escape him. Sometimes, indeed, his reaction is to throw himself with the ardour of desperation into a search for new occupations, new stimuli, new sensations. By these and other means individuals who are passing through this disruptive phase do succeed now

and then in stifling their uneasiness, but almost never manage to neutralize it completely. It continues to smolder in the depths of their being, undermining the foundations of their normal existence, and may, years later perhaps, burst forth again with added intensity. Then the state of agitation grows increasingly poignant, the inner emptiness more intolerable, until the sufferer feels shattered. The whole of what constitutes his life now seems a dream, while no new light appears to dispel his ignorance or to substantiate his belief in the possibility of receiving a more illumined view of life.

It is at this point that ideas of and impulses towards suicide are often likely to invade the consciousness of the sufferer. Physical annihilation seems the only logical sequel to the inner collapse and dissolution. It should be noted that the above description is only a presentation of a general outline of this kind of experience and its development. In actual practice individual temperaments account for numerous experiential variations. Some cases stop short of the acute stage, by-passing the gradual transition mentioned; others reach it almost at once. Still others are drawn towards research by philosophical doubts. The moral crisis is the outstanding feature for other persons.

Today, fifty years later, crises of this kind have not only increased in number and intensity at the individual level, but also assumed a collective character. They have become symptomatic in a wide range of human groups and are obsessing a large section of the young. It is not difficult to discern the cause. The second World War, with its enormous toll of suffering, the destruction and convulsion it caused, not only of a material kind, but in all fields of human existence, confronted humanity squarely with life's tragic aspects. The fundamental problems about the meaning of life, the reasons and justification for an individual's personal sufferings and other people's were thereby inexorably presented in an acute and harassing form and on a vast scale.

The most widespread reactions were, and still are, rebellion, denial, mental suffering and even despair. Existential attitudes and convictions of a negative kind (there are others with a positive slant) have led to life being labelled absurd, to the denial of every higher, *transcendent* reality, to a position of protest and challenge which, however, is felt at the same time to be useless and impotent. This has been termed existential frustration and accurately described by Viktor Frankl. Now Director of the Neurological Clinic of the University of Vienna, he underwent an exceptional testing experience in a concentration camp which lasted many months and was accompanied by

acute suffering and continual threats of death. These conditions provided the background of a spiritual awakening which transformed his life and now forms the basis of his thinking and psychotherapeutic approach. In his book, *Theorie und Therapie der Neurosen* which I strongly recommend to doctors, he writes:

"Besides inferiority feelings, psychic illness can be induced in man also by the feeling of absurdity, i.e., by frustration aroused by his need to give life a meaning. In such cases, in which a person sees failure of his aspiration to give his existence sufficient meaning to make it worth pursuing, we speak of existential frustration..."If we seek to get to the bottom of this question and determine the pathogenic basis of these disturbances, we are continually made aware that it resides principally in this fact. What we term the 'will to meaning', in contrast both to the 'will to pleasure' (i.e., the pleasure principle in a psychoanalytic sense) and the 'will to power' (i.e., 'self-assertion' in the Adlerian sense) remains ungratified and frustrated"(Frankl, *Theorie und Therapie der Neurosen*, Ernst Reinhardt, Munich, 1956).

One of the ways in which this crisis manifests itself is the sense of oppression engendered by the immensity of the cosmos and the enormous time cycles revealed by astronomy. This is evident in some people's reaction to the "cosmic test". It consists in showing pictures of the universe increasingly enlarged in scale until the earth is seen to disappear in the immensities of space. Here is how Frankl speaks of this kind of anxiety;

"I remember a case in which the patient's anxiety turned out to be of an existential character. "The infinite", she confessed, "oppresses me. It bewilders me, I feel insubstantial to the point of dissolution." Here let us add an observation of Scheler: "The infinite emptiness of space and time is the void man experiences in his heart". Inasmuch as this anxiety is in the last analysis, about nothing, 'the infinite emptiness of space' here assumes the place of nothing. But this macrocosmic void appears to be simply the projection of an inner emptiness, an existential emptying, that is, a microcosmic emptiness. It resembles the reflection of the insubstantiality of our Dasein (being)."

In other people, however, this sense or awareness of the immensity of space and temporal infinity arouses a different, even an opposite, reaction. They see the universe as regulated by a vast Cosmic Intelligence, as Einstein says, since the movements of the stars are so controlled as to be predictable, and order governs everything (cosmos in Greek means order). This view



produces an expansion of consciousness and a sense of "participation". These individuals feel themselves to be living particles of this great universe, microscopic but essential elements in the totality of Being.

As regards the state of existential anxiety, previously mentioned, few know how to bear it, and therefore it is usually fled from and various ways are adopted to appease it: external activism, from violent sport and reckless car-racing at the physical level to the struggle to contrive the triumph of some ideology; by admiration and imitation of "idols", such as cinema stars and heroes of the boxing-ring and football field. Others seek self- forgetfulness and satisfaction in immoderate sexuality, or by means of alcohol and drugs.

But sooner or later these hypothetical remedies turn out to be ineffective, and the human being is obliged to face up to reality and to try to understand the meaning and value of the obscure and apparently negative aspects of life. When this search for meaning is conducted without mental prejudice, rebellion by the will and personal emotional reactions, one discovers and recognises the positive values that exist in life, values having a reality not less, indeed more substantial and permanent, than the negative ones. They are the great universal and eternal

values: Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, with their human manifestations in love, creative and beneficent activity, in joy and even in suffering itself as a path to increased awareness, deepening and elevation. But this point is attainable only, I repeat, as a result of a great opening-out, a dignified, not dispirited humility in the face of the mystery; of loving acceptance; of a disposition not to make demands upon life and other people, but rather to give, and particularly of oneself; plus recognition of one's essential personal spiritual liberty and acceptance of the consequent responsibility. Thus we arrive at the realization that everything depends upon our attitude, and that this not only leads to the apprehension of meaning and values, but also can create and bestow them. And this, being in our power, depends on free choice on our part, on our decision and therefore on an act of will.

Here then is the lofty goal, the luminous conquest attainable through spiritual awakening and an appropriate spiritual development. But its attainment often demands our confronting and conquering a series of inner conflicts, produced by the multiplicity and complexity of human nature. Since these conflicts are discussed in detail in the article, *Spiritual Development And Nervous Diseases*, since incorporated as a chapter (under the title of "*Self-Realization*

*and Psychological Disturbances*") in Psychosynthesis, I shall limit myself here to summarizing their essential points.

The awakening itself can be the origin of disturbances and imbalances in those whose mind is not well stabilised or whose emotions are overcharged or ill-controlled, or again in those with a too sensitive and delicate nervous system. A similar state can ensue, also when the flow of spiritual energy overwhelms the recipient by reason of its suddenness and violence. Where the mind is too weak and ill prepared to endure the spiritual light, or where there is a tendency towards pretentiousness and egocentricity, the happening can be wrongly interpreted. There occurs, so to speak, a "confusion of levels", in which the distinction between absolute and relative, between spirit and personality, goes unrecognized. The spiritual force can then produce exaltation, and inflation of the personal ego.

In other cases the unexpected inner illumination accompanying the awakening of the soul brings about instead an emotional exaltation, which displays itself in obstreperous and disorganized behaviour evidenced by shouting, crying, singing and other forms of motor excitation. Then the stimulation of the awakening can urge those of an active, dynamic and combative type to assume the role of prophet or reformer and give it expression through the formation of movements and sects, characterized by excessive fanaticism and proselytism. In some people, with a relevant disposition, the inner awakening is accompanied by paranormal psychological manifestations of various kinds. They have visions, usually of lofty and angelic beings, or hear voices and feel the urge to attempt automatic writing. The variable value of the messages received in this way necessitates their being examined and evaluated objectively and without bias, but also without allowing the channel conveying them to impose its own criterion of value.

Other conflicts and crises arise out of the reactions that *follow* the inner awakening. A harmonious spiritual awakening arouses a feeling of joy and a mental illumination that brings perception of the meaning and purpose of life, dispels many doubts, offers the solution of many problems, and bestows a feeling of inner security. In company with this comes a vivid sense of the unity, beauty, and sacredness of life; and from the awakened soul a wave of love radiates towards all other souls and creatures.

But however long this joyous state endures, it is fated to come to an end. The ordinary personality, with its lower elements, has been overcome and put to

sleep only temporarily, not killed or transformed. Moreover, the inflow of light and spiritual love is rhythmic and cyclic, like everything else that happens in the universe. Sooner or later, therefore, it diminishes or ceases. High tide is followed by the ebb. This inner experience is very painful, in some cases producing violent reactions and even serious disturbances. Lower tendencies reawaken and assert themselves with renewed force. All the rocks, debris and waste matter which had been covered by the high water reappear once more.

These reactions are followed by a period in which a process of personality transmutation takes place; and this also creates conflicts and crises. It is a long and complex affair, composed of phases of active purification for removing the obstacles to the inflow and action of the spiritual forces; phases of development of inner faculties which had been latent or feeble; phases during which the personality must stand steady and submissive, allowing itself to be worked upon by the Spirit and bearing the inevitable suffering with courage and patience. It is a period replete with changes, alternations of light and darkness, joy and sorrow. It is a period of transition as well, a quitting of the old stage before the new one is reached. It resembles the condition of the caterpillar undergoing the process that will transform it into the butterfly. It must pass through the chrysalis stage, a condition of disintegration and impotence. But man is generally denied the privilege afforded to the caterpillar of accomplishing this transformation protected within the folds of the cocoon. He must, especially in these days, stay at his post in life and continue to discharge his family, professional and social duties as best he can, as if nothing was happening to him. We cannot be surprised if so complex and demanding an operation sometimes causes nervous and psychological disturbances: for instance, nervous exhaustion, insomnia, depression, irritability, and restlessness. Considering the powerful influence of the psychological nature on the physical, it is easy to understand how they in their turn produce a variety of physical symptoms.

The subject of this article has obliged me to deal principally with the complications, suffering and conflicts aroused by spiritual development; but I would not wish to give the impression that they are more serious than those which afflict people who have not had an inner awakening. Thus it is desirable that the following points be given prominence:

1. Many cases of spiritual development proceed more gradually and harmoniously than that described above, with the result that the

difficulties are overcome and the different stages navigated without nervous reactions and physical disorders.

2. The sufferings and disturbances experienced by those who tread the spiritual path, however disagreeable they sometimes can be, are in reality only temporary reactions and, so to speak, the effect of an organic process of inner growth and regeneration. Therefore they often disappear when the crisis provoking them is resolved, and yield with ease to appropriate treatment.

3. The suffering accompanying the ebb of the spiritual tide and low water are amply compensated for not only by the phases of inflow and elevation, but also by faith in the great purpose and lofty goal of the inner adventure. The resultant vision of glory serves as a powerful inspiration, an unfailing comfort, and an inexhaustible fount of strength and courage. We should therefore be ready to evoke the vision as vividly and as often as possible. One of the greatest benefits we can confer on one tormented by a spiritual crisis and conflict is to help him to do the same.

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# Cheerfulness (A Psychosynthesis Technique)

by Roberto Assagioli

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This subject may occasion some surprise and make the reader wonder how cheerfulness, which is a state of mind, or inner attitude, can be considered a "technique." I hope to show that cheerfulness can indeed be a technique or, more precisely, can be stimulated, developed and maintained by means of psychological exercises. How greatly it is needed, especially nowadays! This subject has a direct connection with that of the *Will*.

The last remark requires a clarification. It may be objected that cheerfulness is a state of mind which one either has or has not; it cannot be artificially generated by means of the will. This objection raises the whole problem of the relationships between the will and the other

psychological functions and activities in general, and with the emotions and feelings in particular. It is true that a change in a state of mind cannot be brought about by a *direct imposition* of the will. A peremptory and repressive imposition of the will is apt to arouse contrary reactions and fail in its purpose. This is the error of authoritarian moralists and educators who use methods based on prohibitions, threats, condemnation and punishment. In contrast, the application of appropriate psychological techniques, guided by an enlightened and *skillful* will, can act powerfully on all the psychological functions and can change the bent of a state of mind. I shall endeavour to demonstrate this in regard to cheerfulness.

A theoretical definition of cheerfulness is unnecessary. Everyone knows, more or less, what it is. Besides, in the psychological field definitions serve little purpose, since knowledge of psychological facts is principally arrived at through direct experience. On the other hand, it may be helpful to indicate *some* of the characteristics of cheerfulness and comment briefly on its associations with other states of mind and inner activities.

Cheerfulness has close links and affinities with *humour*. I have spoken about the nature of humour and its uses in the monograph, *Smiling Wisdom*. Speaking playfully, one may call cheerfulness a "younger brother" of humour: one tends to arouse the other and encourage its appearance. But they

are quite different, as is revealed by the fact that there can be humour without cheerfulness and

cheerfulness devoid of humour. The latter can be satirical, ironical, sometimes even biting. Cheerfulness, by contrast; is serene, good natured, and smiling.

Similarly, cheerfulness can be considered *joy's* younger brother. Cheerfulness opens the way to joy and promotes its manifestations. Conversely, joy includes the state of mind which is cheerfulness. (I shall refer to this later when dealing with Franciscan joy).

Again, cheerfulness has close associations with *play*. Play promotes cheerfulness and this in turn encourages play.

Let us now examine the practical issue: how can cheerfulness be stimulated, cultivated and maintained? There are two groups of methods. In one group are the techniques for eliminating the obstacles to its expression; in the other, those which aim at evoking it directly. Irritation constitutes one of the major obstacles. But fighting irritation with an intervention of the will does not work or, if it does succeed momentarily, can have harmful effects and produce violent reactions. The most direct way to eliminate irritation, and the hostility and aggressive impulse associated with it, is to discharge it by means of harmless activities having a symbolic meaning: such as wood-splitting, tearing up newspapers and the like, thumping a bed or punching a ball. A more reliable and I would say cultivated way of doing this is that described in a recent Reader's Digest article by A. and S. Mydans, *But What Sort of People Are These Japanese?*

"In Japan much importance is attached to group and individual self-control. The ultra-modern Matsushita Electric plant maintains a room reserved for workpeople who harbor repressed feelings, where they can go and regain self-control. Anyone who feels the need can leave his work for this purpose, and fifteen or twenty people make use of the room daily. It contains two dummies covered in heavy canvas, and sticks to beat them with. The smaller of the dummies has become so battered that the metal framework forming the head is visible through the straw stuffing, and the stomach has a large hole in the covering. The dummy does not represent a superior, but the self of the striker."

Another way of discharging irritation is to write recriminating, critical, even abusive letters to people who have aroused our hostility, and then not mail them. All these ways are effective because symbolic satisfactions are as gratifying as real ones.

The method used in Japan has an additional value in that it allows irritation and hostility towards ourselves to surface and then discharge them. This has real importance since an associated, unconscious mechanism can easily inflict self-punishment that may develop extreme forms. It is, in reality, a question of reactions against a *part* of ourselves which we should like to be without. To objectify it in a dummy is a good way of achieving freedom from it.

But direct or better methods are available after, or besides, the application of the discharge method. It may be said that discharge eliminates the irritation of the moment, but to get at its roots one can proceed as follows: first of all examine critically and reflect on the harmful effects anger has on us. They have been defined thus: "Anger is the price we pay for the faults of others." The recognition of the uselessness of anger is tersely expressed in the Chinese saying: "If there's a remedy, why get angry? If there isn't, what is the use of getting angry?"

*Criticism* is one of the ways of expressing hostility. Having spoken of this on other occasions, I will limit myself here to quote what Henry Ford said: "Don't find defects, find remedies. All of us can complain." Much of our ill-humour, much of our suffering and unhappiness, originate in other people's criticism, because of the importance we attach to their opinion of us. This is really one of the most useless things to do. We shall often come in for criticism, so it is better to know and accept it from the start! A Buddhist text, the *Dhammapada*, which dates from several centuries B.C., states: "This is an old saying O Atula! They criticize those who speak, they criticize those who are silent, even those who speak little are criticized, no one in the world goes uncensored."

Another saying which helps to conquer this tendency: "They say. What do they say? Let them say!" And finally an Eastern proverb: "The dogs bark, the caravan passes."

An effective manner of achieving an attitude of non-reaction, both external and inner, towards those who are hostile, or who are regarded as enemies, is to recognize how *useful* they are. As Inayat Khan has said: "My friends send

me to sleep, my enemies keep me awake." Adler was a psychotherapist who devoted himself particularly to the promotion of right human relations by means of eliminating hostile self-assertion. He wrote these fine words: "My enemies have always blessed me. When they don't fight my ideas they go away with them and claim they are theirs, but in this way they give them wider dissemination. Whether what I believe I have discovered is called Freudian or not, is of no concern to me. I believe it to be true and of permanent usefulness to humanity and that makes me happy." So let us then recognize the utility of "enemies." Besides, animosity takes two; if someone is my enemy and I am not his enemy, there is no animosity.

Another serious obstacle to cheerfulness is commiseration with oneself. In other words, self-pity. Widespread and harmful, it is frequently accompanied by an unhealthy sense of complacency. It provides the soil from which spring other negative reactions: envy, resentment, revengeful impulses. Self-pity may be fought and eliminated by recognizing the painful nature of the universal human condition, and especially by thinking of the great number of human beings who are suffering much more than we are (the sick, the prisoners, the isolated and the destitute). The lines of the Italian 'playwright, Metastasio, express in a simple way a great truth: "If anguish were written on the forehead, many who are envied would arouse pity."

Another obstacle to cheerfulness, which is minor but still very common, is *impatience*. A Chinese saying expresses it thus: "Seeing an egg, one expects to hear it sing." Thus one of the psychological techniques to develop is the "art of waiting."

A major obstacle to cheerfulness is *worry*. Much can be said about this matter as well, but I cannot do so on this occasion. The idea is well expressed in the saying: "Today is that tomorrow you were worrying about so much yesterday."

Among other obstacles to cheerfulness, not for all but for many, is attachment to sadness, a finding satisfaction in sadness. Apart from personal causes of this form of rejection of cheerfulness, there are a number of shared or cultural causes which must be clearly seen if they are to be removed. One is a philosophical negativism which conceives of man as alienated, as the victim of outside forces, as doomed to suffering and as doing right when he suffers more, thereby acknowledging with dear eyes, his wretched state. According to this line of reasoning, since suffering is man's lot, self-conscious suffering is the most heroic and intellectually honest way to



conduct one's life. The advocacy of such a position is based on certain assumptions which, while erroneous, are conceived to be axiomatic. Fortunately, however, such mistaken lines of thought are passing out of currency as more and more people begin to see the existence of a natural communion between man and various aspects of reality: I refer to a range of trends from the ecology movement on the one hand to the interest in Eastern religions on the other. As far as man's own conception of himself, humanistic psychology and the more positive varieties of existentialism 'are helping to open man's perspective to the positive and creative forces within him.

At this point it is fair to recognize that, as with all other good qualities, cheerfulness can be overdone and inappropriate. Life holds serious situations, heavy suffering, human problems, individual and collective, which cheerfulness cannot solve. They must be considered and faced with due earnestness, but such earnestness *should be reserved only for them*. We are apt to take so many things seriously which do not warrant it. We fritter away, so to speak, our capital of seriousness so that there is not enough for the truly important things. So the rule is: Seriousness in everything that deserves and demands it, and for the rest, *cheerfulness*.

We come now to the active techniques for the development of cheerfulness. The general method is to cultivate the states of mind and feeling which are the antithesis of those which block it, and also to encourage those which directly express it. As in the case of all other qualities which we desire to develop, it is a matter of opening oneself to influences which emanate the desired qualities. Just as we can expose ourselves to beneficial physical influences, air, sunlight, ultraviolet rays, etc., so we may and should open ourselves *intentionally* to beneficial psychological and spiritual forces. There are numerous ways of doing this. The simplest and easiest is to read appropriate books or listen to appropriate music. There are plenty of books which are likely to evoke cheerfulness, among them P. G. Wodehouse's novels, full of pungent but good-natured humour. The author plays on the comic aspects, the weakness and stupidity of a wide range of characters in the "human comedy." With smiling impartiality, he makes peers and commoners, girls and young men in love, artists and intellectuals, editors and gangsters, English, American, French, take the stage. Particular mention should be made of *Leave it to Smith*, in which the hero circulates among those characters with perpetual good-humour and cleverly extricates himself from a series of difficult and complicated situations. Smith is probably an idealized model of the author.

In some humorists of greater stature, there is a strong strain of biting satire, as in Swift, or a sense of compassion, as in Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*, \* while in others the satire remains goodhumoured and smiling, as in Horace's works. In the sphere of music, vivacity and serenity are constant features of Haydn's works, while the fun which Wagner makes in *Die Meister Singer* of academic music-makers is really diverting. But perhaps the masterpiece of musical humour is Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. Figaro's self-glorification is irresistibly cheering. At a more modest level, there is no lack of songs to "smooth the furrowed brow" and bring a smile to pursed lips. Such pieces are a good antidote in moments of depression, irritation or ill humour.

Another technique, as effective as it is simple and easy to perform, involves the use of *Evocative Words*. It makes use of a series of cards, each printed with the name of a positive good quality. These cards, exhibited in positions easily accessible to a person's glance, tend to evoke in him the corresponding qualities. Phrases, aphorisms and appropriate pictures can be used for the same purpose. (2) There is another established Psychosynthesis Exercise by which cheerfulness can be directly evoked and methodically cultivated. In the *Exercise for Evoking Serenity*, cheerfulness can be substituted for serenity. Thus modified, a description of this exercise is appended at the end of this text.

But the fundamental method of neutralizing both rebellion and self-pity is acceptance, Not a passive acceptance or resigned submission, but an *initial* acceptance, followed by the accomplishment of what is possible-if and when it is-to alter the situation. A good example: An old man was always cheerful in spite of the many troubles he had experienced. His reply to those who asked him how he managed to keep cheerful and calm was: "I've learnt to collaborate with the inevitable." What wisdom there is in those words! An expression somewhat ingenuous but fundamentally apt, is attributed to a disciple of Emerson who went to him one day and announced: "I accept the universe". Emerson looked at her for a moment and replied: "You'd better! ".

Acting "*as if*" is another most useful psychological technique. There are many occasions when there is no time to neutralize a state of mind, such as depression or irritation, and yet the situation must be coped with at once. This is the moment to behave *as if* the mood were nonexistent. To smile, to speak kindly to the person we would like to treat badly is no radical remedy, but it is effective. To divert our attention from a mental state helps us to disidentify ourselves from it and reduce it. But principally it eliminates the vicious circles we often create in such a form as: We are irritated and

conscious of it; then we are irritated with ourselves for being irritated; we are aware that it is stupid and this increases our irritation; and so on! The same thing happens with depression: awareness of being depressed makes one more depressed, and so forth. If, however, one diverts the attention and directs it to the opposite psychological state, and if one acts *as if* not depressed, the negative state is temporarily reduced and controlled. The application of this "as if" technique can be further extended to cultivate inner happiness and cheerfulness *despite* suffering. Elimination of the suffering is not to be expected, but a serene and positive state of mind can be maintained during the distress. The psychological multiplicity of the human mind makes this possible because the various parts of us can, and generally do, function independently of each other. This has been succinctly expressed by the philosopher Campanella in the words "In flesh afflicted, in disposition joyous." While the body suffers, the mind can remain serene, even happy. To accomplish this it is necessary not to identify oneself with one's body, but to regard it as the instrument it is—in St. Francis' kindly phrase: "Brother Ass."

This leads to a consideration of Franciscan joy. Although St. Francis suffered much, he was happy and encouraged happiness in his friars. He used to tell them that they must be "God's jesters," in order to draw souls to God. In fact, joy, gladness, and cheerfulness are magnetic. A significant episode in the life of St. Francis tells how, when he was seeking a place in which to establish a monastery, he came to Chiusi in Tuscany. He gave a sermon at the residence of Orlando, Count of Chiusi, on the theme: "So great is the Good which I am expecting that every pain to me is joyous." His speech made such an impression that Count Orlando offered him the Mount of La Verna for his purpose. This led to the construction of what is today a Franciscan shrine second only in importance to Assisi.

Another method of cultivating serene cheerfulness involves the recognition of the *relative* nature of an event, the appreciation that happenings often have effects unforeseen and even contrary to what they momentarily appear to be. This is highlighted in a Chinese parable quoted by Lin Yutang in his book, *The Importance of Living*: One day an old peasant lying with his son on the top of a hill lost his horse. His neighbors sympathized with him over his unfortunate event, but he replied: "How can you tell if it is a misfortune?" Some days later his horse returned leading a number of other horses. The neighbors now wanted to congratulate him on this stroke of good fortune. Also this time the old man replied: "How can you tell if it is a stroke of luck?" The son started to ride these horses and one day broke a leg. The old man's response to his neighbors' condolence this time was: "How do you

know it is a misfortune?" A little later war broke out, and the son, being disabled, avoided having to take part in it.

Let us always bear this relativity in mind.

The effectiveness of a positive, smiling attitude towards life has been expressed thus by Inayat Khan: "He who looks at life with horror is in subjection to life; he who takes life seriously is within life; he who meets life with a happy smile raises himself above the world."

I should now speak of the applications of cheerfulness, but I can do so only briefly. In psychotherapy cheerfulness has a broad range of applications, since a large part of psychosomatic and psychological disturbances have their roots in the causes I have been discussing: irritation, resentment, depression, self-pity. It is thus obvious that cheerfulness is curative to the extent to which we can eliminate those emotional reactions.

I shall dwell a little longer on the application to interpersonal and social relations. Cheerfulness is an indispensable factor in family life. Much unhappiness, indeed most family failures (separations, divorces) owe their origin to the atmosphere of ill-humour, criticism, demands, to which I have referred. Cheerfulness may be said to be a lubricant of the mechanism of interindividual life, especially the intimate relationships of the family.

There is an important point about interpersonal relations which has been emphasized by Paul Tournier, one of the pioneers in the new humanistic medicine. It is that it is necessary never to assert that one is right, and *above all* when one is or believes that one is right. Tournier says "To be right is dangerous, it has ever been the source of all intolerance." I strongly recommend this valuable maxim. When one is in the wrong, one can come to terms; but when one is right and asserts the fact, conflict results. To demonstrate to others that one is in the right is in fact to humiliate them; it is to offend their vanity and their prestige, and thus to create hostile reactions.

Good human relations in general are generated and fostered by cheerfulness. It has been said "The smile is a very powerful weapon. It even succeeds in breaking ice." One hears much these days about isolation and lack of communication. Well, a kindly smile can help to demolish artificial barriers built by distrust, suspicion and fear of being misunderstood.

Cheerfulness and humour in general, should be constantly applied in the teaching of all subjects. Lessons-and this is particularly true in secondary schools-are too often given in such a way as to make a bore of what ought to be interesting and pleasant. Everything could be taught in an attractive and even amusing way, thus getting the cooperation of the unconscious, to which ideas must penetrate if they are to be assimilated and kept available. What bores the unconscious does not register. Some text books based on this psychological law do exist, even for mathematics, a subject in which it would seem difficult to apply. But such books are few and little used.

Another major department in which cheerfulness should find wide application is that of human relations in social life, especially the "hierarchical" association between employer and subordinates in every field: government offices, the military and business of every kind. This extends to families as well, in which cheerfulness can reduce many conflicts between parents and children. The applications are obvious and do not call for explanation, but I will simply recall a little story which illustrates the consequences of ill-humour. One morning, a Minister had a row with his wife, who happened to have the last word. On reaching his Ministry still fuming, he sent for the Under-Secretary and berated him. The latter, not being able, as a subordinate, to reply, went off in a rage and reprimanded the chief executive, who passed it on to the superintendent, and so down the line until it reached the doorman. Having no one beneath him to find fault with, he kicked the Ministry cat. The atmosphere that day in the Ministry and the way its staff functioned can be imagined. Had the Minister in question availed himself of one of the psychological techniques for discharging aggressiveness, or if he had at least wanted and known how to behave *as if* he had been in a good mood, the Ministry atmosphere would have been very different. All the employees would have done better work in the nation's interest ... and the cat would have gone unscathed. The moral of this little tale may point out how necessary cheerfulness is in the political field as well. It is disarmingly simple to realize that if all who command had a cheerful disposition, it would greatly help to avoid wars.

Another apt approach for people in high positions, politically and otherwise, is the cultivation of a *sense of proportion*. The study of astronomy-observation of the starry heavens, pictures of constellations and galaxies-is conducive to this. It was a method which Theodore Roosevelt used spontaneously when President of the United States. A friend of his, the naturalist Begbie, relates: "Roosevelt and I used to play a little game together. After an evening of talk, we would go out on the lawn and search

the skies until we found the faint spot of misty light beyond the lower left hand corner of the Great Pegasus. Then one or the other of us would recite, "That is the Spiral Galaxy in the Constellation of Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is formed from hundreds of millions of suns, each larger than our sun." Then Roosevelt would grin at me and say 'Now I think we are small enough! Let's go to bed.'

As a balance to this, however, it is well to recognize and remember the value of each human being and of every activity of his, however humble it may be. This helps us to bring good will and cheerfulness to bear in doing *anything*, even if wearisome and boring. However apparently insignificant in itself, an activity is in reality as necessary as actions of greater prominence which seem more important. This balanced appreciation and the resulting good inner disposition are well illustrated by the story of the three stonecutters. A visitor to the site of where one of the medieval cathedrals was being built asked a stonecutter what he was doing. "Don't you see," replied the latter sourly, "I'm cutting stones," thus showing his dislike of what he regarded as unpleasant and valueless work. The visitor passed on and put the same question to another stonecutter. "I'm earning a living for myself and my family," replied the workman in an even tempered way that reflected a certain satisfaction. Further on, the visitor stopped by a third stonecutter and asked him: "And what are you doing?". This third stonecutter replied joyously: "I am building a cathedral." He had grasped the significance and purpose of his labour; he was aware that his humble work was as necessary as the architect's, and in a certain sense it carried equal value. Therefore he was performing his work not only willingly, but with enthusiasm.

Let us remember the example of the wise workman. Let us recognize and always be aware that, however limited our ability may seem, However modest and humble our duties, in reality they are particles of the great Life, We are participating in the unfoldment of the Cosmic Plan, "collaborating with God." This recognition will enable us to accept every situation, fulfill every task, willingly, and with cheerfulness.

1. This paper is adapted from a lecture in the annual course of lessons on Psychosynthesis delivered at the Istituto di Psicosintesi, Florence, Italy.

2. See the pamphlet "*The Technique of Evocative Words*" available from the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation.

\*Translated into English as *The Betrothed*.

## **EXERCISE FOR EVOKING CHEERFULNESS**

- 1) Relax all muscular and nervous tension. Breathe slowly and rhythmically, express cheerfulness by smiling (It will help to assume this expression before a mirror, or visualize yourself doing so).
- 2) Reflect on cheerfulness, conscious of its value and usefulness, especially in our agitated modern world. Appreciate and desire it.
- 3) Evoke cheerfulness directly by pronouncing the word several times.
- 4) Imagine yourself in circumstances likely to worry or irritate you: for instance, in the presence of unfriendly people, having to solve a difficult problem, obliged to do various things rapidly or finding yourself in danger, and yet keeping cheerful.
- 5) Plan to remain cheerful all day, to be a living example of cheerfulness, to radiate cheerfulness. . This exercise can be done (with appropriate modifications) not only for cheerfulness but other qualities as well: courage, joy, patience, will and so on.

This exercise is based on the *Exercise for Evoking Serenity* published in the book *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (N.Y.: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965; paperback-Viking Press, 1971).

# Music as a Cause of Disease and as a Healing Agent

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

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The healing properties of music were well known to the peoples of the past and they made considerable use of it. Among primitive peoples songs and musical instruments such as the drum and the rattle were used not only in order to increase the effect of herbs or drugs, but also as independent means of healing. Such practices have persisted until the present among American Indians. Paul Radin (21), in his essay on "Music and Medicine Among Primitive Peoples," reports that "among the Ojibwa, for example, the so-called *jessakid* practitioners are supposed to function simply by sitting near the patient and singing songs to the accompaniment of their gourd rattles. Similarly, among the Winnebago, those who have obtained their powers from the bear spirits can heal wounds by merely singing their songs."

It was known by the ancient civilizations that music has healing properties, and they deliberately used it for such purpose. In Finland's epic poem, the *Kalevala* (14), we read of a sage who succeeded, by means of his music, not only in appeasing the fury of a mob, but actually in hypnotising the people, sending them to sleep. In the Bible (5), it is reported that King Saul, being tormented by an evil spirit, called upon David, the skilful player on the harp; and "whenever the evil spirit ... was upon Saul ... David took a harp and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." (I. Sam. , 16; 23) According to the Arabs, music has a beneficent effect on animals. They say that the singing and playing of the shepherds make the flocks thrive. Among the Greeks music had a special place as a curative agent. Homer (11) narrates that the flow of blood from the wound of Ulysses was staunched by the melodious song of Autolycus.



We have more precise information on the use which Pythagoras made of music. "Pythagoras," writes Porphyry (20), "based musical education in the first place on certain melodies and rhythms which exercised a healing, purifying influence on human actions and passions, restoring the pristine harmony of the soul's faculties. He applied the same means to the curing of diseases of both body and mind ... In the evening, when his disciples were about to retire, he would set them free from all disturbances and agitations of the day, steadying their somewhat wavering minds and inducing peaceful sleep which brought with it propitious and even prophetic dreams. And when they arose in the morning he freed them from lingering sleepiness by means of special songs and melodies." Porphyry also relates that on one occasion, after Pythagoras had striven in vain to calm and restrain a drunken man who was attempting, as an act of revenge, to set fire to a house, he succeeded in pacifying him by means of music.

Plato (17) accorded just as much importance to music as a powerful means of psychotherapy and education, as is shown by the following statement (among many others) to be found in his "Republic": "Rhythm and harmony sink deep into the recesses of the soul and take the strongest hold there, bringing that grace of body and mind which is only to be found in one who is brought up in the right way."

Aristotle (4) mentions among the various functions of music that of emotional catharsis, which shows an interesting similarity with the aim pursued by modern psychoanalysis.

We cannot deal with many other instances of the appreciation and use of music for healing purposes by the Greeks and the Romans and, later, from the Renaissance on through the eighteenth century. Those interested in the history of musical therapy can find ample information in two essays, one by Bruno Meinecke, and the other by Armen Carapetyan, contained in the book, *Music and Medicine* (22).

In the nineteenth century, owing to the prevailing materialistic trend, this method of psychotherapy has been comparatively neglected. One may even say that the tonic effect of music has been more appreciated by the military than by the medical profession. Every regiment has its own band and constant use is made of martial music, of spirited marches to raise and keep up the morale of the soldiers. Many soldiers not only like singing but have become conscious of the wholesome effect of sound. One of the songs which

often resounded in the trenches during the first world war may be rendered as follows:

"Sing, boys, sing

To keep the wolf at bay.

All listlessness and sadness

With song we'll chase away."

A few medical doctors, however, have made use of musical therapy.

Among them was Hector Chomet. In his book, *The Influence of Music on Health and Life* (6), various cases of healing by means of music are mentioned. He reports the case of a woman subject to epileptic fits who one day happened to be listening to music when the symptoms of an approaching attack set in; the fit, however, did not occur. From that time on, at the first appearance of the symptoms, she arranged for music to be played, and in this way succeeded in entirely overcoming the attacks.

In the present century, and particularly in the last decades, there has been a renewed interest in musical therapy which has shown itself chiefly along three lines: as a means of soothing pain; through collective application in hospitals, especially in psychiatric clinics, with the general aim of producing calming or tonic effects on the patients; and as a means of occupational therapy (treatment by activity).

A truly scientific musical therapy and particularly its individual applications - namely those which aim at curing specific troubles in particular cases - should be based on a precise knowledge of the various elements of which music is composed and of the effect which each one of them has, both on physiological functions and on psychological conditions.

The principal musical elements are: *rhythm - tone - melody - harmony - timbre*.

**1. Rhythm.** This is the primordial and fundamental element of music. The music of primitive peoples consists solely of rhythm. It is, indeed, what the poet D'Annunzio has called it, "the heart of music." Rhythm is the element which has the most intense and immediate influence on man, and it affects directly both the body and the emotions.

Organic life is based on various rhythms: the rhythm of respiration; the rhythm of the heart-beat; the rhythm of the various muscular movements; the rhythm of activity and rest; the rhythms of the various bodily functions, not to speak of the more subtle vibratory rhythms of every cell, every molecule and every atom. It is therefore not surprising that the rhythms of music exercise a powerful influence on those organic rhythms, either stimulating or calming them, harmonizing or creating discord and disruption.

The psychological life of the individual as well as that of his body has its various and complex rhythms: the rhythms of elation and depression; alternations of sorrow and joy, of fervour and lassitude, of strength and weakness, of extraversion and introversion. All these conditions are extremely sensitive to the influence of the rhythm of music. There are also certain activities wherein the rhythms of the body, the emotions and music interpenetrate and become fused in one integral rhythm. This happens in dancing, which one may truly call living music, expressed with one's whole being.

In rhythm itself we must distinguish various elements: chiefly tempo or speed (andante, moderate, allegro, etc.) and meter or grouping of beats. Each of them has its own specific influence; for instance, the more rapid the tempo, the greater is the emotional tension produced. A valuable analysis of the psychological effects of the various metric patterns or designs can be found in the chapter by Howard Hanson (10) on "*Emotional Expression in Music*," of the book already cited, *Music and Medicine* (22).

**2. Tone.** Every note, while physically produced by a specific rate of Vibration, has at the same time both definite physical and psychological effects. As is well known, sound has great power over inorganic matter; by means of sound it is possible to cause geometric figures to form on sand and also to cause objects to be shattered. How much more powerful then must be the impact of this force on the vibrating, living substances of our sensitive bodies!

Each musical note has a specific *quality*, which cannot be expressed in words. This quality produces psychological effects, but one cannot ascribe a *specific* emotional quality to each note, and the various interesting attempts to relate each note to a corresponding colour have not given any sure results, as the asserted correlations varied from individual to individual. More efficacious than isolated sounds are successions of tones in which the effect

of each single note is increased by its combination with others of a different pitch.

**3. Melody.** The combination of rhythms, tones and accents produces those musical "units" or "wholes" which are called melodies. These are the results of the creative activity of the composer - an activity which is often spontaneous or inspired. Speaking in psychological terms, such musical creations as well as other kinds of creative artistic production are elaborated in the higher levels of the unconscious, namely the superconscious. Melodies, being a synthesis of various musical factors, are a very apt means for the expression of emotions. They produce on the listener intense and manifold effects. They arouse not only emotions but also sensations, images and urges, and greatly influence the nervous system, respiration and circulation, in fact, all vital functions.

**4. Harmony.** While melody is produced by a succession of sounds, harmony is produced by the simultaneous sounding of several tones which blend with each other, forming chords. According to the respective rates of vibration of these sounds, the result will be either a harmonious blending or a jarring discord, both of which have definite physiological or psychological effects. Thus we may say that the prevalence of dissonances in modern music, being the expression of the discord, conflicts and crises that afflict modern man, tend with their suggestive influence to accentuate and exaggerate the evil.

**5. Timbre.** The difference in the nature and structure of the various musical instruments, the human voice included, gives to sound a special quality which can hardly be defined in words, but which is easily recognisable, because it evokes special emotional responses. Everybody who has some musical sensitivity feels the specifically different quality of the impressions made by a violin or a flute, by a trumpet or by a harp, by a soprano or by a bass voice.

A composer, through the skilful combination of various instruments of an orchestra, can produce most powerful psychological effects.

Before considering the healing effects of music and their utilization, we must frankly recognise and examine its possible harmful influence. This should not surprise or shock us. Everything which is effective can be so either for good or ill. It is well to make clear outright that the medical effect of music does by no means have to coincide with its aesthetic value. There is "bad" music (from the standpoint of art) which is harmless, and on the other hand

there is music by some of the best composers which can be definitely harmful. It is not a paradox to state that music of a harmful character; the more expressive it is aesthetically the more dangerous it can be.

The harmful effects of music on body and mind are due to various factors.

The most important of these is the kind or quality of the music. But there are others of a secondary character which can be influential and at times even decisive. These are: the amount of the music heard; the combination and succession of different kinds of music; the psycho-physiological constitution of each listener; the particular emotional state in which he or she is at the time. Thus, a piece that is disturbing and upsetting to one person may have no or little injurious effect on another; for instance, a listener who is sensitive to music and whose passions are strong and not under control, will be influenced in a very different way from a listener of the intellectual type who is emotionally cold and unresponsive. If a person is in love, he will be much more disturbed and excited by erotic music than when his passion is dormant or when it has burned itself out, leaving only the cold ashes of disappointment. In some extreme cases, when listeners are abnormally sensitive, music can be the cause of serious troubles. Evidence of this has been given by Dr. MacDonald Hastings, who in his study on "Musicogenic Epilepsy" mentions twenty cases, eleven of them his own patients, in which epileptic fits were brought on by music. (Quoted by

F. Howes in his book, *Man, Mind and Music*, p. 158) (12)

There is then the manner of the arrangement of the concert program, when different and often opposite impressions, experienced in immediate succession, arouse confusing and conflicting emotions. Not seldom does it happen in concerts that the soothing effect of a piece will be destroyed by the exciting nature of the one that follows; the cheerful stimulation of a third piece is neutralized by the depressing influence of a fourth, and so on. Such contrasts can be variously appraised from the aesthetic point of view, but they certainly cannot be approved from the medical standpoint. Also the excessive amount of music at long concerts, showered upon the listeners, can cause nervous fatigue and psychological indigestion.

The kinds of music apt to produce injurious effects are manifold. First, there is the music that arouses the instincts and appeals to the lower passions, that excites by its sensual enchantment. To the musical pieces of this kind, among those having artistic value, belong the Venusberg scene in Wagner's

*Tannhauser* and certain parts of *Salome* by Richard Strauss. Concerning the latter, Frank Howes (12), President of the Royal Musical Association, expresses the following severe judgment: "Some small quantity of art can best be described as *fleurs du mal*. Out of the festering corruption grows an exotic, gaudy, sinister, fascinating beauty. Fascination is an ambivalent emotion in which the attraction is enhanced by the concomitant repulsion. Strauss's *Salome*, from the Dance of the Seven Veils to the end, is an instance of such fascinations; it dazzles, seduces, repels and conveys just that hothouse beauty of evil, the lurid, livid fungus growing on the dunghill." (p. 71)

A second group of musical pieces of a harmful kind consists of those that are very melancholy and depressing, as they express languor and weariness, grief and distress, agony and despair. This kind of music may have great artistic merit and may have afforded relief to the composer himself and been a means of artistic catharsis, but it is likely to act like a psychological poison on the listener who allows its depressing influence to permeate him. Of this kind are certain pieces by Chopin, notably his nocturnes, in which that unhappy soul has given vent to his poignant melancholy and to his weakness and homesickness. They have contributed to the cultivation of that languid and morbid sentimentality which afflicted the young women of the romantic period of the last century.

Another type of music apt to be injurious consists of those musical compositions which, while representing interesting experiments in new forms of musical expression, reflect, with their frequent dissonances, their lack of form, their irregular and frenzied rhythms, the modern mind in its condition of stress and strain. Many modern dances, particularly jazz, combine over-stimulation with the disintegrating influence of their syncopated rhythms. Howard Hanson, in his very good essay, already cited (10), exposes in a drastic way the widespread injurious influence of jazz. He says this: "I hesitate to think of what the effect of music upon the next generation will be if the present school of 'hot jazz' continues to develop unabated. Much of it is crass, raucous and commonplace and could be dismissed without comment if it were not for the radio whereby, hour after hour, night after night, American homes are flooded with vast quantities of this material, to which accompaniment our youngsters dance, play and even study. Perhaps they have developed an immunity to its effect - but if they have not, and if the mass production of this aural drug is not curtailed, we may find ourselves a nation of neurotics which even the skill of the psychiatrist may be hard pressed to cure. It seems, therefore, only poetic

justice that musical therapeutics should develop at least to the point where music may serve as an antidote for itself.” (p. 26.5)

Music, even when it is not directly stimulating the passions nor inducing depression and discordance, can be harmful owing solely to the fact that it arouses and nourishes an excessive state of emotion which, when it is not transmuted into constructive activity, weakens the character. This wallowing in sentimentality was sternly denounced by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (13) in these words:

"There is no more contemptible type of human character than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed. Rousseau, inflaming all the mothers of France, by his eloquence, to follow Nature and nurse their babies themselves, while he sends his own children to the foundling hospital, is the classical example of what I mean. Even the habit of excessive indulgence in music, for those who are neither performers themselves nor musically gifted enough to take it in a purely intellectual way, has probably a relaxing effect upon the character. One becomes filled with emotions which habitually pass without prompting to any deed, and so the inertly sentimental condition is kept up. The remedy would be, never to suffer one's self to have an emotion at a concert, without expressing it afterward in some active way." (p. 125-126, Vol. I)

Finally, music can, and often does, have injurious effects on the performers themselves, who are subjected to a combination of harmful elements: muscular and nervous fatigue as a consequence of intense technical study and the excessive quantity of music, both heard and performed; the anxiety caused by public performances; the particular contrast of psychological attitudes required by the performance itself, which demands on the one hand perfection of technique, concentrated attention and self-control, and on the other an emotional identification with the mood expressed by the music, needed to produce that warmth of expression, that powerful suggestion which fascinates the audience.

For these reasons performing musicians need, more than anybody else, to train their will, to control their emotions and to help themselves, or be helped, by a judicious use of relaxation and of all available means of psychotherapy.

Special attention should be paid to film-music. Superficially considered it would seem that such music is of no importance since in a cinematographic performance it is the picture which is of primary importance. However, such is not the case. From the very beginning - that is to say, at a time when the later invention of the sound-film could not yet be foreseen - cinematograph performances were accompanied by music, which proves that the important effect of music on the spectators was well recognized. It is a Psychological law that the impressions which come to us through our senses are much more effective if related emotions, through the aid of other sense organs, are awakened within us.

There is also another psychological reason why accompanying music has a special effect upon the spectator. The *conscious* attention of the latter being completely concentrated upon the pictorial performance produces, instead of lessening the influence of the accompanying music, a tremendous increase in the effect which the picture has. Research pertaining to the mechanism of suggestion and to the part the unconscious plays in the life of the soul has demonstrated that impressions received at the exclusion of waking consciousness and of critical judgment penetrate much more deeply into the individual; they affect man not only psychologically but also in his body and are even able to call forth functional disturbances.

Since music definitely increases the individual's receptivity to the impressions conveyed by film episodes, it seems highly desirable - from the medical as well as the pedagogical standpoint - thoroughly to examine film music and, where the effect is found to be harmful, to take steps to eliminate it.

Often such accompanying music is sensual in character or overtly emotional and its effect upon the listener-spectator is enervating. Not seldom does it happen that through such music feelings of oppression and terror, created by film scenes, are reinforced so that their exciting effect is thereby greatly increased.

After having dealt with the dark aspects of the picture, let us now consider the bright ones.

Music can indeed be a powerful healing agent. There are many and diverse ways in which it can and does exercise a beneficent influence on both body and mind. First of all, its effect can be wonderfully restful and refreshing, and we need not emphasize how valuable this is in our times of physical



exhaustion, nervous tension and emotional and mental excitement. The general and obvious prescription for the elimination of these conditions is a rest cure. But the men and women of our day do not know *how* to rest, or even what real rest means. They are accustomed to constant movement and noise so that they are unable to keep still and endure silence. Here music comes to their rescue. As Father Gratry (9) pithily says: "There is no agent so powerful in giving us real rest as true music ... It does for the heart and mind, and also for the body, what sleep does for the body alone." (*Les Sources*) Indeed, many peaceful and solemn adagios, many soothing lullabies and "barcarolles" induce with their soft charm a beneficial relaxation in a more natural and healthy way than any chemical sedative.

More specific applications along these lines, with the purpose of inducing calm and soothing pain, have been made with patients undergoing dental treatment or surgical operations.

The following characteristic examples, which the New York Times reported a few years ago, will illustrate the kind and the results of such attempts:

"The University of Chicago clinics experimentally introduced music to alleviate tensions of patients undergoing surgery ... So successful was the experiment that the University of Chicago medical research center will introduce music with anaesthesia in its six major operating rooms and its six preparation rooms, when it opens Chicago's first cancer research institution, the Nathan Goldblatt Memorial Hospital ... Music with anaesthesia is especially applicable to abdominal surgery, but it has been used in almost all types of operations. It has been found especially helpful to the peptic ulcer patients who are already so tense and nervous that the routine medical sedatives are not very effective. It is very important in cases where the patient is too old or ill to receive sedatives."

We have indicated how intensely music can work upon the feelings, and have pointed out the danger of this fact, but in many cases an emotional stimulus may be very opportune and helpful. For instance, there are a great many persons belonging to the practical or to the mental type, who have an undeveloped or repressed emotional nature, and this is apt to make them arid, dissatisfied, shut-up within themselves. To them music may give the magic touch which reawakens and warms the heart and restores communion with nature, humanity and God.

Then there is a kind of music, both instrumental and vocal, of a strong and virile nature, which arouses the will and incites to action. Such music has stimulated innumerable individuals to noble deeds, to heroic self-sacrifice for an ideal. Against all negative and depressive emotions, such as despondency, pessimism, bitterness and even hate, music of a gay, vivacious and sparkling character, and also music that expresses true humour, acts as a true counter-poison. It cheers and gladdens, smoothing the wrinkled foreheads and softening into smiles the hard lines of tightly closed lips. Such effects are produced by many compositions of Haydn, Mozart and Rossini.

What more efficacious, genial and acceptable means than music could a doctor devise for giving joy; that joy which the intuition of the ancients and the investigations of modern science alike declare to be a powerful tonic both for the mind and for the body?

The particular stimulating action which music exercises on the subconscious can have many good effects; for example, it can stimulate memory, a faculty that depends largely on the subconscious. In this connection the following statement by the accomplished musicologist, Professor Mario Pilo (16) is of interest:

"For myself, music performs a special action in arousing my memory, which is capricious and undisciplined, subject to lapses and slips that are often very annoying. More than once music has enabled me to retrieve from its hiding place, quite suddenly, some reluctant and elusive memory. Several years ago, a Neapolitan melody of no special merit, which was being played on a mandolin by a neighbour, enabled me in a few minutes to remember the subject of a manuscript I had lost years ago, also the ideas contained in it which I had tried in vain, at intervals, to put together again."

Music can and does also quicken and facilitate intellectual activity and favour artistic and creative inspiration. There is, among others, the case of the Italian author Alfieri who relates that he conceived nearly all his tragedies either at the moment of listening to music or immediately afterwards.

Through its influence upon the unconscious, music can have a still more definite and specific healing effect of a psychoanalytic character. If of an appropriate kind, it can help in eliminating repressions and resistances and bring into the field of waking consciousness many drives, emotions and complexes which were creating difficulties in the unconscious.

Music can then help also, through its charm and uplifting influence, to transmute and sublimate those impulses and emotional energies so as to render them not only harmless, but make them contribute to the deepening of experience and the broadening and enriching of the personality. We have the works of a great composer who, having lived through periods of intense stress and strain, was finally able to rise to some extent above his personal pain and to draw inspiration from it, expressing strength, joy and faith, and praising the goodness of life. I am referring to Beethoven. In some of his sonatas, particularly in the later ones, the releasing and sublimating process is easily discernible. The storms and alternations in the first parts of these sonatas are followed by a peaceful and triumphant conclusion.

And there is the noble poet Francesco Chiesa who intuitively perceived, and expressed with admirable art, this psychoanalytic and sublimating action of music, this high lesson of strength and optimism. In his poem *L'Uccello del Paradiso* (The Bird of Paradise - See Appendix A), he describes the emotional and mental states induced by a violin recital.

The previously discussed process of integration into the conscious personality of unconscious contents and their subsequent transmutation and harmonisation can in a certain respect be regarded as a process of synthesis. But there is a more specific process of psychosynthesis which is of three kinds, or rather, consists of three stages, each wider and more inclusive than the preceding one. They can be called respectively: spiritual psychosynthesis; inter-individual psychosynthesis; cosmic psychosynthesis.

The first - spiritual psychosynthesis - recognises the inclusion and integration into the conscious personality of higher psycho-spiritual elements of which it is not consciously aware, because they reside in the highest sphere of the unconscious, the superconscious.

Truly religious music is very effective in producing or favouring such a synthesis. It awakens and stimulates the spiritual "germs" which exist in every one of us, waiting to come to life. It lifts us above the level of everyday consciousness, up into the ethereal realms where light, love and joy ever reign. There are many musical compositions which produce such effects. We can mention only a few of the most significant examples, omitting the consideration of less accessible ancient and Oriental music: the Gregorian Chant which still evokes the highest religious emotions. Then there is Palestrina of whom it was said by Scott (24), in his chapter on "Beethoven - Sympathy and Psychoanalysis," that he "was the first European composer to

restore music to its original function - that of constituting a definite link between man and God.”

Next we must mention J.S. Bach whose music not only arouses the deepest religious feelings, but has a still greater synthesising influence which we shall discuss later; nor should we fail to mention Handel and his impressive oratorios.

Among the modern composers we find three who are markedly different from each other, but whose music, in diverse ways and with dissimilar techniques, produces powerfully spiritual effects: Cesar Franck, that pure and noble soul who succeeded in giving adequate musical expression to the Evangelical Beatitudes; Richard Wagner, who in Lohengrin and Parsifal evokes with the magic of sound the flight of an angelic host from heaven to earth, the feeling of spiritual love and compassion, and the sacred rites of the Grail Brotherhood; Scriabin who, through the use of daring combinations of sounds, endeavours to lift the consciousness to the heights of rapturous bliss and ecstasy.

The second kind or stage of psychosynthesis - inter-individual psychosynthesis - is one which is established between an individual and his fellowman within a group of which he forms a part - from the smallest combination consisting of a man and a woman, to the family group which includes the children, on to the various social groups, the national groups and ever greater units, until his consciousness embraces in an harmonious relationship the whole of humanity.

Such inter-individual psychosynthesis is promoted by all music which expresses collective emotions and aspirations. It includes national anthems, marches and folk songs belonging to particular occupations or group activities; harvest songs, grape-gathering songs, etc., and many choruses from the operas of Verdi and others. The highest and most effective musical expression of the psychosynthesis of humanity is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which reaches its climax with the intonation of Schiller's words "*Seid umschlungen, Millionen.*" (Be embraced, ye millions of men.) This subject will be dealt with further in the section on *Collective Applications*.

The third stage - cosmic psychosynthesis - consists of an ever increasing recognition and acceptance by the individual of the laws, the relationships and the rhythms governing life itself, in its widest sense. It could be called the discovery of, and the tuning in with, "the harmony of the spheres," the

conscious participation in the great life of the universe. This subject has been ably treated by Aleks Pontvik who has expounded his views and has related some of the results of his musical experiments in a stimulating little book entitled *Grundgedanken zur Psychischen Heilwirkung der Musik* (19a). (Fundamental Thoughts on the Psychic Healing Effect of Music.) In this book the author adopts the Pythagorean conception of the universe as an ordered whole. The cosmos is built according to harmonious - and that means musical - laws and proportions. And he quotes in this connection Brantzeg's summary of Kepler's development of this principle (15): "Before all things were created there was geometry. This, since eternity, is a reflection of God; it gave Him the original *pattern* for the artistic structure of this world in order that it may become similar to its Creator. The fundamental elements of geometry are the divisions of the circle. They produce harmonies, they create earthly forms through the harmonious consonance of music and they give to the constellations of the zodiac their cosmic pattern. In music, harmony is the result of the composer's intuition, but among the stars it is produced by the geometrical necessity of the heavenly mechanics. God has given to the human soul harmonious proportions."

According to Pontvik, the following conception gives the key to psychotherapy in general, and to musical therapy in particular: healing can be attained only by starting from the whole. "It means the establishing, or re-establishing, of a harmonious equilibrium through the reconciliation of opposing elements within the whole. Thus the healing process of psychoneuroses can be indicated in musical terms as a progressive development which brings about, or restores, the fundamental harmonious chord." (p.30) (19a)

The technique of this healing action consists, according to Pontvik, in the evocation or musical expression of primordial symbols corresponding to what Jung calls archetypes. The music which can especially produce this kind of healing influence is that of J. S. Bach. Pontvik found in his experience that Bach's music evokes religious symbols particularly that of a temple, the harmonious proportions of which are in their structure analogous to those of the universe. He supports his contention by two interesting quotations; one from Albert Schweitzer, who not only has to his credit great "humanitarian achievements but is, besides, one of the most prominent authorities on Bach. Schweitzer (23) calls a composition by Bach "an expression of the Primal Power which manifests itself in the infinite rotating

worlds." The other quotation is from the writings of a Chinese sage: "Perfect music has its cause. It arises from balance.

Balance arises from that which is right. That which is right arises from the world's significance. Therefore one can talk about music only with one who has become aware of the world's significance."

One of my students expressed in the following way the effect of Bach's music upon her: "when, last evening, in the light of the moon, I listened to the Second Suite, I became aware of all the grandeur of Bach's poise. His music is really a marvellous harmony of the three divine aspects; a song of love, unfolding itself in the light of intelligence, and impelled by will. That is why it enriches so much."

Musical therapy, in order to prove effective, should be applied according to certain rules which are based on psycho-physiological, rather than on aesthetic or artistic principles. Here are some of the more important ones:

1. Prior to the performance, the patient or group of patients should receive *adequate information* about the piece to be executed. Its nature, structure and particularly the effect to be expected, should be explained. In this way the listeners can contribute intelligently to the influence of the music upon their unconscious, and consciously assimilate it. For the same reason it is useful for the listeners to know beforehand the text of pieces which are to be sung, or to have the text right under their eyes. Often, also, in regular performances the strain to catch the words (which are not usually clearly pronounced, or which are submerged by the sound of the orchestra) interferes with the effect aimed at.

2. It is advisable for the patients to *relax* as much as possible before and also during the musical performance: This, too, helps them to "open the doors of the unconscious," so to speak, and to receive the full benefit of the musical influence. Such relaxation can be induced by a comfortable physical position, by subdued *illumination*, by verbal suggestions made by the doctor, and also by a short introductory musical piece of a soothing nature, even if, subsequently, one wants to produce stimulation or joyousness through appropriate pieces.

3. The *right dosage* is of importance. In general, a musical treatment should be of *short duration*, in order to avoid fatigue and, therefore, possible defence reactions.

4. Repetition can be, and has been found to be, helpful. Dr. G.W. Ainlay, who combines the qualities of medical doctor, violinist, pianist and composer, states in his valuable paper on "The Place of Music in Military Hospitals" (2) the following: "It is quite astounding to see the good effects and relaxation that may be produced in certain types of neuropsychiatric patients by repeating soothing measures or phrases. The repetition seems to act like a gentle massage if properly done." (p. 328) However, we should remember that repetition of motifs and small sections is often adequately expressed in the compositions themselves, and that, if repetitions are too insistent, they can become annoying and even obsessing. Such an effect, for instance, is produced on some people by Ravel's Bolero.

5. The *volume or loudness* of the music should be *carefully regulated*.

Generally, one should adopt a low volume of sound, not only in the case of soothing music, but also when music is brilliant and stimulating. The desired effect is produced by the rhythm and other qualities of the music previously mentioned (tone, melody, harmony, timbre), and not by the amount of sound which, when great, is apt to tire or jar the nervous system.

6. For the same reason as indicated in section 2. of these rules, it is advisable for the patient to rest for a while also after hearing the healing music. This favours its full and undisturbed action in and on the unconscious.

7. Due to the fact that the unconscious is not only active spontaneously during sleep, but also receptive to outer influences, musical therapy can be applied during the patient's sleep as well. The fact that music does affect the unconscious during sleep was proved many years ago by a series of experiments made by one of my co-workers, Dr. G. Stepanow, using the following technique. After having performed a piece of music during the subject's sleep, he awakened her and asked her to tell him what she had been hearing.

He found in every case that these dreams had been definitely affected by the nature of the music performed. The therapeutic use of music during sleep is particularly indicated for children, for psychiatric cases, and in general for people who are restless and agitated when awake.

8. The choice of the musical pieces to be used requires careful thought and is more difficult than may appear on first consideration. It is sometimes necessary that the guiding principles, which would seem obvious and of general application, be qualified and even disregarded. Here are two such instances:

It would seem to be a matter of common sense to adapt the music to be performed to the social and cultural level of the listener. Indeed, in the majority of cases, simple uncultured people ask for, and enjoy, popular music and appear to be unresponsive to, and bored by, classical music. Yet there have been many instances in which such people were deeply affected by music of high quality by the great composers. Pontvik mentions several such cases, and one that is particularly convincing will be quoted in the next section on collective applications. This may be due to the fact that the main effect of music is on the unconscious and that, to some extent, the unconscious is independent of the conscious level and accomplishments of the personality.

In the case of uncultured people, therefore, it is advisable to attempt to use the simpler but most impressive works of the great composers.

Another obvious rule would seem to be that of using music of a specific character (soothing, stimulating, cheerful) in order to arouse the corresponding emotions and conditions which appear to be lacking in, and are needed by, the patient. However, in actual practice the matter is not so simple.

Cheerful music may jar on a person weighed down by grief. A patient in a state of excitement and agitation may not be impressed by solemn adagios and become still more restless. On the other hand, when an individual who is dejected hears sad music, it can have an uplifting effect. In this connection I can quote a statement by one of my patients: "When I hear sad music composed by a man who suffered, as did Chopin, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, I feel that I am "seconded," and in feeling the beauty of that music I forget that I am not well ..."



But there is another and more general reason which complicates the choice of the music to be used. It is a fact that the appraisal of the very character of a given composition, and consequently its subjective effect, can vary according to the listener. As C.M. Diserens pointed out in "*The Development of an Experimental Psychology of Music*," (7) a positive correlation between many musical works and the moods aroused by them in the listener does indeed exist, and this has been proved by the experiments made by Bingham, Hevner, Campbell and others: But the percentage of such correlation varies considerably from piece to piece, and there is in every case a larger or smaller minority of listeners whose reactions differ from or even oppose those of the majority. For instance, according to the data gathered by Capurso (5a) from his experiments with 1075 subjects, 50% of these considered Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* as joyous, stimulating and triumphant, whereas 32% ascribed to it agitating and irritating influence. In the case of Paganini's *Perpetual Movement* the respective proportions were 82% and 14%. Moreover, even the same listener

can receive a different impression of the same work according to the varying psychological or physical conditions in which he or she is at the time.

Owing to these individual differences in the reactions to music, it is advisable to ask each subject or patient to furnish a report - as accurate as possible, and preferably in writing - on the effects of music on him, both in the past and after each application of musical therapy. Such reports have a threefold purpose and usefulness. First, they offer data on which to base the further choice of music to be used in that particular case. Second, they represent for the patient a training in self-observation and in exactitude of expression which has psychotherapeutic value. Third, they contribute to the accumulation of relevant material for the progress of musical 'therapy. For this purpose I have prepared a Questionnaire which will be found at the end of this paper. (See p. 22, Appendix C)

However, we should not base our judgment regarding the effects of a musical composition only on such reports, which depict the immediate and conscious reaction of the hearer. There are other effects which operate on unconscious psychological levels, and emerge only later, or even remain unrecognized, while they may influence the general condition of the patient.

The accumulation of such data and a careful observation of the therapeutic effects will in the future facilitate the selection, in an increasingly reliable way, of the musical pieces best suited to each patient and his particular trouble. Until such progress has been achieved, the specific "prescriptions" of musical pieces for various morbid conditions, given by some writers on the subject, should be regarded with the utmost prudence and qualification.

Meanwhile, there is one type of music which can safely be applied with satisfactory results in all cases, regardless of the patient's difficulties and physical age; and that is kindergarten and folk music. This, according to Dr. Ainlay (2), seems to "re-supply, or re-activate, the mother-child complex and so offer temporary security and sanctuary." Another more general reason is that the unconscious, or more exactly a considerable part of it, is of a primitive and childlike character. Such music should be used preferably in the first therapeutic applications, or as a prelude to other specific pieces.

9. In the future, the development of musical therapy may make it possible for musicians, who are also psychologists or doctors, to compose special music aiming at definite therapeutic effects. This may not be as remote as would appear on first consideration. One of my student, Miryam Viterbi, who is an accomplished pianist and has taken up the study of medicine, is planning experiments in this direction. The technique she has worked out for the treatment of obsessive ideas is reported in her own words in Appendix B (see p. 21).

#### 10. *Combined use of musical therapy with other kinds of treatment.*

Of course, no medical treatment should be confined to music; this can be only one of the various means used by a doctor. But here we refer to a specific use of music more or less simultaneous with other kinds of therapy. Up to now there have been mainly two kinds of such combined therapeutic applications:

(a) *Music and Anaesthesia.* In order to hasten or facilitate the anaesthesia, music has been and is being applied, both by individual doctors (generally dentists) and in hospitals. On page 7 we have already mentioned the use of music for this purpose in the University of Chicago clinics. Recently (1955) similar applications have been introduced at the Vaugirard Hospital in

Paris with marked success. We cannot enter here into the technical details of such applications, but interested doctors can find a description of them in the periodical, "Anaesthesia and Analgesia, II Vol. 29, 1950 (3), and in Dr. Podolsky's book, Music Therapy (18). In such cases the choice of suitable music is comparatively easy; it only needs to be soft, slow and soothing.

(b) *Music and Psychotherapy*. The two main objectives of psychoanalysis - namely, that of bringing into the light of consciousness psychological elements hitherto confined to the unconscious, and that of releasing and transmuting instinctual and emotional energies - can be greatly promoted by the use of appropriate music. The same can be said concerning the awakening and activation of the superconscious spiritual elements and the integration of the personality aimed at by psychosynthesis.

For these purposes music can be used, according to the specific effects desired, either before or after a psychotherapeutic treatment, or during an interval in the course of such treatment. Music can help also to solve inter-individual conflicts and bring about right human relations. A significant instance of such an effect deserves to be quoted in full. Here is what Aleks Pontvik (19b) reports in *Contributions aux Recherches sur les Effets Psychiques de la Musique* (an unpublished, privately circulated article):

"We ourselves have had the experience that suitable music at the critical moment of a discussion between two human beings can play a determining role in the sense that somehow its influence can be "disarming." It takes the sting out of aggressiveness and renders it unfit for the battle by dissolving the effects before these have had a chance to express themselves.

"We are able to report the case of a couple who had firmly decided on a divorce. They were sitting at a table, engaged in a violent discussion which left nothing to be desired as far as its acridness was concerned. Then someone came into the adjoining room and began to play the piano. The discussion had just reached the point where a definite decision regarding their separation was imminent. "Suddenly, however, nothing came of it. Within half an hour an agreement was

reached. Someone in the adjoining room had played Haydn for half an hour. Of course, one must not generalise this case. Subsequent examination of the matter, however, yielded interesting details on the interposition of the musical effect on the critical, problematical, intellectual situation of these two human beings. Above all, both felt pleasantly, calmingly paralyzed. They felt somehow that the conflict had 'split off' and become non-essential. It was a 'disarmament' in the best sense of the word."

11. *Musical performances by the patients themselves.* This is the most effective kind of musical therapy because it combines several beneficial results. It furnishes a direct and easy outlet for pent-up emotions; it awakens the higher feelings and uplifts the consciousness; it offers all the advantages of occupational therapy. An eloquent testimony to these effects has been given by Georges Duhamel, the great French novelist, essayist, poet and surgeon, in his excellent book, *La Musique Consolatrice* (8). The experience which he reports occurred during the first world war, while he was serving as a military surgeon at the front. He writes: Whenever I happen to ponder upon music, upon the upliftments and clarifications I owe to it, upon the graces it has showered upon me, upon the secret relief for which I owe to it an everlasting gratitude, and upon the place it occupies in my thoughts and even in my decisions, I often evoke certain days of the year 1915." (p. 69)

"During my hours of rest, in the evening, I drank deeply of the humble song I played on the flute. I was still very unskilled, but I kept at it, closing my lips tightly and measuring my breath ... By and by my most painful thoughts went to sleep. My body, which had been completely occupied, with the effort of enlivening the magic tube, became lost to thought. My soul, purged of its miseries, relieved, freed from all anguish, rose, lightly, in luminous serenity." (p. 72)

"I began to grasp that music would permit me to live. It could certainly not diminish the horror of the massacre, the suffering, the agonies; yet it brought to me, at the very center of the carnage, a breath of divine remission, a principle of hope and salvation. For a man deprived of the consolations of faith, music was nevertheless a kind of faith, that is to say, something that upholds, reunites, revives, comforts. I was no longer forsaken. A voice had been given to me with which to call, to complain, to laud and to pray." (p. 75)

Still more effective, but possible only for the minority of those who have special musical talent, is *creating* music, either through free improvisation on an instrument or through actual composing.

12. *Collective Applications.* These, too, are of two kinds, receptive and active. Concerning the first, it has been ascertained that even an indiscriminate listening to music of various kinds, such as that offered by the radio, has a helpful effect. For instance - similar to very many other hospitals - at the Central Hospital of Milano, a number of radio-earphones were placed at the disposal of the patients with good results. The invalids became calmer to the extent that care could be noticeably reduced. Concerning the second, the training of psychiatric patients to play together in small bands has yielded very gratifying consequences. It is remarkable how amenable even serious cases are to this kind of organized collective activity; and the patients like it. The chaplain and organist of the Asylum for Insane Criminals at Montelupo, Italy, stated that the worst punishment for the inmates was to be excluded from participation in the musical performances. Another very helpful means is that of teaching patients to sing together in choirs.

A wide use of music in hospitals, particularly in military and psychiatric wards, has been carried on in the United States since the Second World War.

In a "convalescent reconditioning program" Dr. G.W. Ainlay (2) has outlined a detailed plan for many different applications of music.

There is considerable scope for the application of musical therapy in prisons. Criminals should really often be considered as sick, neurotic or psychopathic individuals and therefore as human beings to be treated by means of psychotherapy and re-education. Correspondingly, prisons lose more and more their character of places of punishment and acquire that of institutions in which offenders are kept in seclusion for reasons of social security, but are, at the same time, actively helped towards recuperation. Good beginnings have been made in this direction, but much more could and should be done as rapidly as possible.

Definite applications of music have been made upon the inmates of prisons in various countries. An impressive example of the potent therapeutic effect of music, and a confirmation of the statement

previously made about using "great" music with uncultured people also, was contained in a press article a few years ago quoting the report issued by the "Prisons Musical Group" of Paris:

"The bold idea of introducing high-class music into Paris prisons has been crowned with complete success. One audience consisted of about two hundred women whose average age was barely thirty. Musical pieces of a very high order were played to them for an hour. We believe that in order to touch human beings of low character we must offer them the highest. In our opinion, this music in the prisons is not an entertainment for the prisoners, but a real means of cure capable of arousing individuals, of moving them and of assisting them to take their proper place in life.

"From the first bars the majority of the women were in tears. Under the impression of music, one of the girls who had been arrested for vagrancy and for leading an immoral life, broke down and retracted her assertion, which she had made to the authorities, that she was alone in the world. She revealed her secret to the director and gave him the name and address of her grandmother.

The girl, who would have been sent to a convict settlement, was returned to her relatives and undoubtedly owes her salvation to the effects of music."

The field of musical therapy is indeed large, and the fruits it can yield are significant and precious. Its cultivation calls for a widespread cooperation between physicians, psychologists and musicians.

We trust that the magic of sound, scientifically applied, will contribute in ever greater measure to the relief of human suffering, to a higher development and a richer integration of the human personality, to the harmonious synthesis of all human "notes," of all "group chords and melodies" - until there will be the great symphony of the One Humanity.

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## **THE BIRD OF PARADISE**

“Naught could I see, closed in I was, low down

Behind a moving mass of hats, behind

A sombre wall of shoulders; then every whisper ceased



When he, the artist, forward came: all in an instant,

Like a sudden hush of waters

When winds get still ... My eyes, unneeded now,

I closed, and motionless remained, and silent.

But yet there was no darkness 'neath my lids,

Only faint shadow, dewy and silver-glowing.

The morning dawned all red, the violin

Began for him to whisper its first notes,

Its primal tones of wonder and delight.

Uplifting then my gaze I seemed to see

From out the flaming sun a Bird of Gold

Winging a rapid flight. From earth uprose

A mighty tree whereon the wanderer,

In rhythmic song, staying its dazzling flight

With airy wing scarce bent the flowering crown.

A sombre throng around the tree was massed;

Each one had come, with close-drawn cloak,

Hiding the secret dormant of his soul,

With knife-thrust in his heart, and knife held ready.

Each one with claws, and yet with greetings

In his hands, the mask upon his face.

All sadness; and the Bird of Paradise

Did but accentuate with sweetest song  
The secret grief, the damp, pale lips  
Of each and all. Loudly it wept,  
And in the streaming tears that silently  
Furrowed our cheeks, the Heavenly Bird was weeping.  
It sang; our slower speech, our every word  
It did transform, as though intoxicate,  
Into its own delirium of joy.  
From out the vast of Heaven, with arduous toil  
It did dissolve and free the voiceless soul;  
The crude, hard soul which, since our birth,  
Coiled dumbly in the throat, has lain asleep.  
And, as though drawn in darkness to the earth,  
Downward it rushed; the Voice divine,  
Reft of its glorious pinions .. further still  
To lower depths descended than ourselves  
Do know; then, rose its flight, gaining new impetus,  
And with the flight, upward the abyss was drawn.  
And so down it rushed, like eagle to the assault,  
The Bird Divine, its lovely plumage dimm'd  
To dullest black, all brilliance gone; like swords  
The stiffened feathers - hardly had it reached

With ready, open claws, the victim, suddenly  
Upward it bounded, bearing its prey.  
And as it rose, its golden hue returned;  
Our rancorous thoughts, likewise transformed, rose also,  
And our funeral garments, rising, changed  
From dark to light, to silver, then to gold;  
Our hair, now turned to grey with passing years,  
Displayed the ardent colours of our youth.  
And thus from out the narrow cloistered walls  
Of custom we broke free; then at the foot  
Of the great flowering Tree we found ourselves  
And saw, but with a new and different vision,  
As if beyond the present; hence,  
Our life, and ourselves with it, were transported.  
Under that spreading Tree the crowd now was  
Gentle and harmless, like a field of corn  
Bending in slow and ample undulations  
The glorious Song outpoured alike on all;  
A breeze most lightly stirred the wings of gold.  
Then spoke the ethereal Voice: "O Man, it is  
Thy weeping, like an airy veil, that lays  
A soft transparent shadow on the eyes

Sated with seeing; let it overflow  
And take its course; the furrows in thy cheeks  
Shall now be filled with rivulets of light.  
The joy that thou hast lost, O Man,  
Seek in thy pain, seek it, until thou find  
This or another, maybe more sweet and pure  
For joy is like a tree of sombre bark,  
And wood within like to the plum and blackthorn,  
Yet often upon the crown will flower a rose ...  
O Man, this is the Tree where Woman first  
Did seem to hear from out the Leafy Bower  
Perfidious hiss within the foliage hid ...  
Here, where the twisting Serpent met Eve's gaze,  
My wings I spread; and this shall always be,  
Where'er was bitterness, thou shalt have sweetness.  
A power, stern, breaks and wears away  
The rocky mountain pass, but thou shalt find  
The steps and pathways where that strife has passed;  
A thousand furies waste and rend the earth,  
And pass away; the empty tracks of evil  
The caves and valleys - here behold them filled  
With azure waters; here behold the rivers,

Here the lakes, the good alone reflecting ...”

*Francesco Chiesa*

## **Appendix B**

### **MUSICAL THERAPY OF OBSESSIVE IDEAS**

The case of a patient suffering from an obsessive idea - an idea which dominates him and renders his actions compulsive - offers an instance of the application of musical therapy by means of a special technique for creating unconscious associations.

Listening to a piece of music brings about an involuntary association between the music and the more or less latent emotions and thoughts of the patient. It is this association, which has been demonstrated by experiments, that forms the basis of a special music-therapeutic process whereby it has been found possible to disperse, or at least to modify, a morbid condition generated by an obsessive idea. It is, of course, necessary that the patient should never before have heard the music to be used, because any familiar piece would already have "impressed" other thoughts and emotions on the patient, likely to interfere in a negative way. The use of original pieces of music adapted by specialists to each particular case would be ideal.

This therapeutic technique can be briefly described as follows. The patient is invited to let go and to "live" his state of anguish with as much intensity as possible. At the same time he is made to listen to a piece of music selected for its ability to reflect his emotional state. The experience is then repeated until it is observed that an actual and intimate fusion between the music and the obsessive idea has taken place in the patient; until, in fact, the former is seen to evoke immediately the emotion associated with the latter. When this pattern of response has been firmly established, a short interlude precedes the second phase of the treatment.

This time the patient is invited to imagine that he is cured and freed from every trouble, that he is able to overcome, normally and naturally, the trials which he has regarded as fearful and difficult. He is made to listen, as before, to another piece of music, this time in harmony with a feeling of victory and inner peace. This phase is more difficult because, if the patient has succeeded easily in yielding to his anguish, he encounters serious obstacles in trying to identify himself with the picture of being cured; the principal reason being

that, in the first phase, the situation is "lived," while in the second it is only imagined.

These two phases are a preparation for a third, which is the actual therapeutic stage after the two pieces - the one expressing anguish, the other the overcoming and the release - have been profoundly assimilated and identified by the patient with his own feelings. This time the patient is asked not to think of anything in particular, but only to allow the music he is about to hear to flow into him and affect him as it will. The composition should begin with the principal theme of the first piece with which the patient will, more or less consciously, associate his feelings of anguish. A bridging' passage should follow, designed to link the first theme to a clear statement of the main theme of the second piece. The structure of this passage should express the inner conflict of the patient, his efforts to conquer his condition of anguish and to attain inner peace; the struggle between the two themes gradually culminating in the triumph of the second theme, which is then reinforced by variations of it.

Many such "auditions" may be required before a cure is arrived at, or substantial improvement obtained. The process is mainly an unconscious one wherein the patient, listening to the development of the musical conflict, will feel an upsurge of his real conflict - thanks to the technique of establishing the associations previously. He will pass through crises of anguish and experience moments of hope, to arrive at last at the stabilization of a state of tranquillity and well-being.

Such is briefly the technique of this specific method of musical therapy.

It is particularly applicable in the case of patients who lack a strong "will to get well."

*Miryam Viterbi*

## **Appendix C**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE ON MUSICAL THERAPY**

1. What beneficial or harmful effects of instrumental and vocal music have you noticed?

(a) Upon your physical health in general, and upon different bodily conditions (in particular, blood circulation; nervous system; physical pains; etc.)

(b) Upon your emotional life (emotional release; joyous elevation or depression; excitement; excessive emotions)

(c) Upon your imagination.

(d) Upon your intellectual or artistic activities (memory; intellectual work; inspiration; creativity).

(e) Upon your will and your external activity.

(f) Upon your spiritual life.

2. Could you cite specific effects derived from given musical compositions?

Have you noticed that the same piece of music has produced on you different effects, according to the different physical or psychological states in which you were on various occasions? Can you quote some specific instances of such different effects?

3. Which of all these effects have you been able to observe in others?

4. What physical or emotional effects do music and singing have upon you *as performer*?

5. What are the effects produced upon you by rhythmic movement (rhythmical gymnastics; dancing)?

# **Life as a Game and Stage Performance (Role Playing)**

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

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As a rule, we live life more or less as it comes. Yet the business of living is in reality an art and should be the greatest of all the arts.

Every art has its specific techniques; likewise the art of living has its own techniques, and mastering them is indispensable in practicing it successfully. One such technique is to consider life as a game and stage performance. To deal with play is not easy. The concept of play is complex, many-faceted and elusive to the extent that it could be said to play hide-and-seek with whoever tries to pin it down and define it. Huizinga, in his book *Homo Ludens* (Gallimard, Paris, 1951) lists a number of views held by various writers on the subject. Thus, play has been considered:

1. A means of discharging an excess of vitality;
2. A way of meeting the need for relaxation;
3. A training in preparation for some serious activity;
4. A means for developing self-control;
5. A medium for dominating others;
6. An outlet for the drive to compete;
7. A harmless method of discharging harmful tendencies;
8. A compensatory activity;
9. A fictitious and imaginary substitute for the gratification of unattainable desires.



Each of the above views emphasizes an aspect of games, but each is partial, and this fact calls for a preliminary observation: The functions of a game are to be distinguished from its nature. In fact, the same activity is or is not a "game" according to the psychological attitude, the intention, the purpose that motivates the "player." Sport offers a clear example of this. Etymologically considered, and in its pure nature and original meaning, sport is play, ludus, something done for diversion. But nowadays many people go in for sport in an increasingly "serious" way, and for motives such as ambition or financial reward, which are inconsistent with its intrinsic nature. It thus loses the quality of play and takes on the character of work. When it becomes a profession, sport is no longer truly sport. In reality there is no clear dividing line between "play" and "non-play," or more precisely that, in any ostensibly playful activity, the proportion of what is play and what is "serious" (in the strict sense of the word) is a variable. Indeed it can change during the course of the activity itself. This is brought out clearly in the case of children who, beginning to fight in fun, get angry and come to blows in earnest. Gambling provides a striking example in which the high proportion of the seriousness tends to minimize the game element. Where the urge to gamble has become an overwhelming, obsessive passion, the "play" aspect disappears.

A true, sporting attitude aims at "playing well" rather than at winning. They are two different things: winning can depend upon a number of contingent factors such as an opponent's inferior skill or favourable conditions of some kind or another. The same applies to losing. The genuine sportsman is not bent on winning at the expense of style, good form and fair play. And, as in other fields of human endeavour, freedom from worry whether one wins or not can contribute to victory!

### **Role playing in life**

Much more could be added on the subject of games-playing and its functions in education, psychotherapy and psychosynthesis, but I shall confine myself to discussing one particular aspect of play, interpreted in its widest sense, that is, as a performance, or acting. Play and acting have both affinities and differences. One affinity is indicated by the fact that several languages, besides English, use a word that stands for to play, as well as to act in a theatrical production. The French jouer and the German spielen are examples. The differences will appear as the exposition proceeds.

To act a part or role in life, in fact several ones, constitutes a psychosynthetic technique of fundamental importance. It can indeed be considered as the pivotal technique of the art of living, with which all the others are linked and on which, in a certain sense, they are dependent. At first, this claim might occasion surprise and even be thought as shocking, as too frivolous an attitude. Yet dispassionate observation of ourselves and others, unclouded by preconceptions and illusions, reveals-indeed forces upon us the recognition - that every one of us performs, or "acts" a variety of "parts" in life. This is inevitable, and such roles constitute the "plot" of our interpersonal and social relations. But most of the time we act our parts unconsciously without being aware of them and we perform them poorly, unskillfully, like bad amateur actors. Among primitive peoples and in ancient civilizations, play and theatrical performances had a sacred character and were regarded as the way in which the Gods acted. In continuance of this tradition, the Passion Play of the Middle Ages has survived until today in some places, such as Oberammergau, while other towns have revived it, as has Grassano, near Florence. The history of this sacred character of "performing" is abundantly documented in Huizinga's book.

Also, Wagner conferred a profound significance and spiritual purpose on the musical theatre. He styled some of his musical dramas "Buhnenweihfestspiele," that is, sacred (or consecrated) and joyous performances.

The conception of life as a stage performance is an ancient and widespread one. While this is not the occasion to trace its historical background, one or two points about it have a special relevance in this context. The cosmic manifestation itself has been seen as a game, a performance, a divine dance. Thus, the "Dance of Shiva" appears frequently in sculptures in Indian temples. The Bible, a work of great solemnity, contains the passage: "Deus ludit in orbe terrarum."

A sonnet of the philosopher Tommaso Campanella is in similar vein. Here are its beginning and end:

"In the theatre of the world, our souls play a masquerade, Hiding themselves behind their bodies and their effects."

"When at the end we render up our masks to earth and sky and sea, In God we shall discern who did and said the better thing."

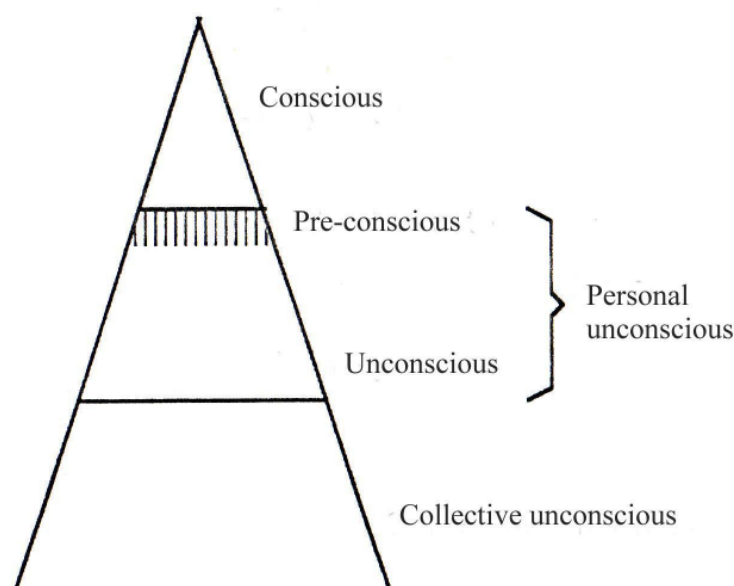
The modern Russian writer and dramatist, Nicholas Evreinoff, has emphasized this aspect of life in his book, *The Theatre of Life*, in which he dwells at length on what he terms the "theatrical instinct." In addressing himself to "My God Playwright," he says:

"My face and body are but masks and costume with which the Heavenly Father has clothed my Ego before ushering it upon the stage of this world, where it is destined to play a given part. This rime, the part entrusted to me by my cosmic Producer, Playwright, is a difficult one. Yet, I shall neither neglect my duty nor complain. As befits a noble and therefore a loyal actor, I shall summon all my forces and play my part upon this stage as best as I can. And I am sure that the Playwright will not fail to reward my efforts."

In several of his plays Pirandello has exploited this theme, but his approach is pessimistic. He features the fictitious, illusory and dramatic aspects of the interplay between roles. Hermann Keyserling, on the contrary, in the twelfth of his *South American Meditations*, significantly entitled "Divine Comedy," [†] has interpreted more profoundly than any other author the relations between game, performance and real life.

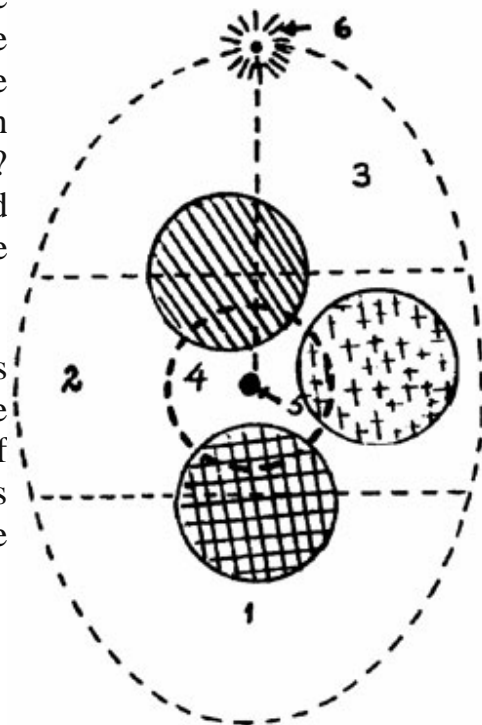
### **The inner author, director and actor**

As a technique of Psychosynthesis, the art of acting in life is founded on the psychological structure of the human being. This is described in my book, *Psychosynthesis* [‡]



The production of a play in the theatre requires contributions from three principal agents and their mutual collaboration: the author, the director and the actors. In the case of the "play" which each one of us has to perform on the stage of life, the author is, or should be, the Higher or Transpersonal Self. He selects the theme, the task or-better-the play the personality is to undertake and the parts it should "impersonate." It is to be noted that as a rule this takes place without any clear awareness on the part of the ego, or "I," since the Transpersonal Self operates from the level of the superconscious. The conscious "I," the center of consciousness, is the director. His function is to carry out the life plan, which is revealed to the "I" by degrees, through inspiration, inner promptings and the unfolding of life's circumstances. The success of the production depends in large measure on the director, on his grasp of the play's plot and situations, on his acceptance of them and on the care and skill with which he directs his cast. Who are these actors? They are the various sub-personalities created by each and every human being during the course of his life.

In the diagram below, three sub-personalities are depicted. The central circle represents the area of the conscious "I," into which a part of each sub-personality penetrates, while its greater part operates on one of the unconscious levels.



1. Lower unconscious
2. Middle unconscious
3. Superconscious
4. Field of consciousness
5. The personal self or I (ego)
6. The transpersonal Self

It should be observed, however, that the respective areas of the unconscious depicted as occupied are not fixed in extent, each subpersonality being able

to "rise" or "descend" during the activity in which it is engaged. Moreover, each level accommodates not only one sub-personality (as shown in the diagram for the sake of clarity) but a variety of them.

Each sub-personality performs its specific function; that is to say, it plays its own "part" in family and social life. The family creates the "parts" of son or daughter, of husband or wife, of father or mother. In the milieu of society the "parts" correspond to a person's occupation or professional role, to the various public capacities in which he may serve.

Expanding the theatrical analogy, let us examine first of all the author-director relationship, i.e. the rapport between the Transpersonal Self and the conscious "I." These relations are very varied. Unfortunately, until a certain stage in the development of the individual is reached, this relationship is usually warped by lack of understanding, misinterpretations, resistance and conflicts on the part of the "I." This stage gradually can give place to the recognition by the conscious "I" that it is in its own interest to understand the "Author's" intention, to put himself in accord with the Self and to cooperate with Him.

Then there are the relations between director and actors. The success of the "production" depends upon the director's ability and authority in carrying out his specific responsibilities: training the actors how best to interpret their parts, plotting their interactions, etc. In terms of life, this corresponds to the work of the conscious "I" in developing, training and harmonizing its various sub-personalities so that they learn the art of cooperating with one another.

Then come the "rehearsals." They correspond to the "imaginative training" that should be undergone prior to performing any "part" in life. Such "rehearsals" have a function akin to that of play as a preparation for life; this is a method that should be employed much more-and especially so in family and school education.

From a somewhat different angle, one of the most important and illuminating aspects of the analogy between acting and life concerns the relations between the personality of the actor, as a human being, man or woman, and the characters he sequentially "impersonates," his "mask" in a psychological sense. This brings up an important and much discussed question. How far should an actor identify himself with the character he is playing? Or should he keep himself psychologically - that is, emotionally - detached from the part

so as to enable him to apply his full technical resources to the control of his interpretation? Which method makes for the best actor?

Diderot aroused lively discussions about this question with the position he took in his book, *The Paradox of the Comedian*. He maintained that "extreme sensitivity (in an emotional sense) makes for a mediocre actor, while its total absence contributes to making a sublime one." Dogmatically expressed like that, it has incurred much criticism, and has formed the subject of scientific research. Among various investigators, Professors Marzi and Vignoli addressed a questionnaire to eighteen prominent Italian actors, and published the results of their survey in an article, *The Expression of the Emotions on the Stage* [§]. These indicated that the extent to which actors involved themselves in the emotional content of the characters they play varies widely. Some of them replied that they experience a partial identification with the character. According to Renzo Ricci, the emotion that an actor feels on the stage is relatively similar to the real emotions, with their psychosomatic reactions. He states that:

"After preparing himself, the actor is in the character, or the character is in him. The fusion is not complete however ... until the most dramatic moments, in which the actor does abandon himself completely to the role of the character."

Others declared that during their performances they maintain an attitude of observation and criticism, and a clear awareness of themselves. Anna Proclemmer indeed goes further in saying:

"The actor must feel the character, but not during the performance, when a control must be established that precludes any surrender to emotion."

A few, like Ruggero Ruggeri and Elena da Venezia, speak of a split and Anna Torrieri's observation carries particular significance in this connection:

"Always to control oneself in any of life's emergencies, to habituate oneself to a continuous control, leads to control in the theatre becoming habitual, when the part will be lived with the balance and self-control that characterize real life."

It would be more realistic to say "should characterize"

Thus, these actors keep their individual self-conscious awareness distinct, albeit in various degrees, from the parts they play in the theatre. By means of the ability to preserve a state of self-observation and self-control, they establish a dichotomy between the part of them that observes and directs and the one which acts, and thus achieve a disidentification. Their statements are significant because they are spontaneous and represent the fruit of personal experience rather than opinions garnered from technical psychological research.

### **From unconscious to conscious role playing**

Let us now examine how all this may be applied to the functions we perform in life, and what conclusions we may draw from it. In this sphere too we may observe that the degrees of identification of "actor" with "part" vary widely. In general, one "lives" one's roles "instinctively" (employing the word in the usual and not the scientific sense), that is to say at the behest of inner impulses or by reactions or responses to external stimuli and conditioning. This fact provides the basis for the psychological conceptions which regard human beings as activated by needs, drives and conditioned reflexes. These conceptions, in which the behaviourist and reflexological theories are rooted, are extremely one-sided in that they take account only of what is least "human" in man's make-up. Yet they must be given the credit for having thrown light on this aspect of human nature, and by making us aware of it, helping us - intentionally or even unintentionally - to cope with it.

It is true that the vast majority of men and women allow themselves to be so controlled by their "parts," and often are so carried away by them, that they have virtually no autonomous, genuine, self-conscious life apart from them. Typical examples are to be seen in those women who identify themselves entirely with their maternal function, and in those men who feel they are truly themselves and important only when exercising their function as commanding officer, magistrate, managing director, and so forth. There are also those who identify themselves with their possessions. A French landowner went so far as to say: "I am my land!"

Important reasons exist, however, for not identifying ourselves too closely with a single part or a single function. If we restrict ourselves to one role, totally committing ourselves to it and concentrating all our interest in it, we severely limit our capacity to attend adequately to other functions which we must perform as well. The public official, the professional man who devotes all his forces to his work will have little time and energy left to attend

properly to his function as husband or father. Similarly, the woman who identifies herself wholly with her maternal function will not be able to properly fulfill her role as wife, and will risk the atrophying of her potentialities for experience and expression as a human being in the social milieu. Furthermore, when the performance of the function to which a person has devoted himself almost exclusively is made impossible by force of circumstances (illness, age, loss or separation from marriage partner or children) a serious crisis may ensue, a collapse leading to psychosomatic illness or even suicide. In contrast, a person who has acquired skill in distributing his vital interests, inner attention and energies among the parts which life has called upon him to play, and which he has voluntarily accepted, will be in a position to find compensations and in some cases even to make active use of talents and undertake activities that up to now he has neglected or had to put on one side.

On the other hand, there are those people who maintain constant self-observation during their activities, and subject themselves to frequent self-criticism. Some indeed practice this to excess, thereby allowing their self-analysis and criticism to inhibit or even paralyze action. These are among the extreme introverts.

There are also those who consciously play a part for utilitarian purposes, for deceiving and exploiting or for amusement. But this should not encourage the belief that an instinctive way of living is the only genuine one, and every conscious "performance" a sham. This false notion might be termed the "fallacy of misconceived sincerity," since it equates sincerity with uncontrolled impulsiveness.

### **The authentic art of living**

There is instead a manner of "acting" in life which is not only as genuine and real, but is so in a higher way, and which at times may constitute a duty.

In a general way the difference between the two styles of life can be compared to the difference between nature and art. One style is living "naturally," according to the dictates of instinct, the other exercising the art of living, or living as art." The right relationship between the two ways is synthetically expressed in the saying; "Art is based on nature, but improves it." From another point of view it may be said that the genuine, and therefore the human, ethical and spiritual value of our conduct lies in the intention



which animates it, in the goal towards which it is directed, and finally in the wisdom and technical skill which informs our actions.

Let us now apply what has been said to describing the method which can guide one in giving a good "performance" of his or her "part" on the world stage. The essential step consists in our getting acquainted with our true being, with our Self, with what we really are. But in order to achieve this, we have to make a voyage of discovery in order to ascertain the various elements that comprise our personality, to become acquainted with the "anatomy" and "psychology" of our psychological structure. This is the real meaning of the age-old but always topical injunction: "Know thyself." Its accomplishment demands the disidentification of ourselves from the many contents of our psyche and from our various sub-personalities. This enables us to recognize ourself as pure "selfconscious and permanent identity": both the personal (self-awareness) and transpersonal, or spiritual Self.

There is an exercise, The Exercise of Disidentification and Self-identification, which is of much help in cultivating this attitude of "detached observer." [\*\*]

The second phase is that in which the existing sub-personalities are transformed and trained by the "director." It is to this stage that the two other "passwords" adopted by psychosynthesis refer: Possess thyself and Transform thyself. All psychosynthetic techniques have this as their goal.

But what, one may ask, is the degree-the percentage, so to speak-of partial identification during action? This varies widely according to the kind of action and the psychological type of the person concerned; but in every case an optimal proportion exists and can be found and adopted. A general rule to apply when a new function or skill is being developed is to devote the maximum attention to it at the outset, learning it and performing it to the best of one's ability. Practice progressively reduces the need for attending closely to its performance, as control of it is gradually taken over by the unconscious, while the quality of performance improves, with less and less emotional involvement. This is analogous to the way in which actors, becoming increasingly familiar with their role in a play, can afford to decrease their personal involvement in it. There is also an effective method, analogous to the rehearsals of a play, which consists in preparatory action by means of the exercise in "Imaginative Training." [††]

The use of all these methods, however, presupposes a clear and stable self-consciousness, the employment of a firm and decisive will, and a constant sense of self-awareness, both as subject and, at the same time, as agent. This attitude can be taken at the level of the personal "I," the ego, but the most effective way is to establish contact and a relationship with the Transpersonal Self, of which the personal "I" is an emanation, or reflection. From this higher Reality, we can constantly draw light and strength needed for resisting every inner and external attraction, every enticement and inducement which seek to divert us from our task: to give the best performance we are capable of in playing the part allotted to us, or chosen by us, in the great human drama.

#### Notes

[†] Hermann Keyserling-Meditations Sud-Americaines-Paris: Stock, 1932.

[‡] Psychosynthesis, A Manual of Principles and Techniques-New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965. Paper back Edition-N.Y.: Viking Press, 1971.

[§] Published in the "Rivista di Psicologia"-1944-1945.

[\*\*] It is described in my book "Psychosynthesis; A Manual of Principles and Techniques "- Chapter IV, page 116.

# THE TECHNIQUE OF EVOCATIVE WORDS

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

There are numerous techniques that permit us to act on our psyche (and on that of others) in order to modify and even transform it. One of them is simple, easy to apply, and at the same time very effective. It involves the use of evocative words and is based on well substantiated facts about the psyche.

The fundamental fact upon which this technique is based is the receptivity, plasticity, or malleability of one's psyche, which can be compared to a practically limitless series of unexposed photographic frames that are continually being impressed by internal and external stimuli.

For the presentt, let us concern ourselves with the effects of external stimuli. The impressions that reach us from the environment exert a strong influence on the psyche. They modify it and continually condition it, very often in a harmful way. We live in a septic psychic climate or atmosphere by which we are constantly being contaminated. No special demonstration of this is necessary; present-day life offers clear and often dramatic proof of it. And yet, we expose ourselves and others to these influences with a careless disregard and nonchalance which a future civilization will deem inconceivable, and symptomatic of our psychological "stone age." But effective and easily applied means exist both for safeguarding us from these harmful influences and for neutralizing their effects. One of them consists in consciously exposing ourselves to beneficent and constructive stimuli and influences.

## The Effectiveness of Words

That words have their effects on our mood and ideas does not require demonstration. Words are symbols that not only indicate or point out objects or psychic facts, but that also possess the power of stimulating and arousing activity associated with them. They "evoke" and make operative the meanings and *idées-forces* that they signify. This process follows certain laws of which the principal ones are:

- I. Every idea or image tends to produce the state of mind, the physical state, and the acts that correspond to it.
- II. Attention and repetition reinforce the effectiveness of the idea or image.
- III. The effects of the idea or image, i.e., the activation of that which it signifies, are produced without our being aware of them. Baudoin (1920) called this the "law of subconscious teleology."

Recent research (Zajonc, 1970) has shown that the mere repetitious perception of an unfamiliar stimulus word, even a non-valued nonsense syllable, is enough to increase one's attraction to that stimulus. Other studies indicate that persuasion is more effective if it aims to fit opinion in a positive direction rather than in a negative one.

## **Methods Of Using Words**

- I. The first step for using a word-concept to modify behavior or attitudes is to choose a word that expresses the quality we want to evoke and develop. We then put a card with that word printed on it in a place where it will be easily noticed and where the eye will readily fall upon it: at the bedside, on a desk, on a table, or on a wall. Even if we do not consciously notice it, the visual image produces an impression on our psyche, or more precisely on our receptive unconscious, and it works on it. A stronger effect is obtained by positioning several cards with the same word in many places and rooms, thus creating what might be called a "beneficent obsession."
- II. Bringing conscious attention to bear on the word provides an even more effective method. This can be done in various ways:
  - A. Assume a state of relaxation and then observe the word attentively for a period of one or two minutes. If ideas and images associated with the word emerge from the unconscious, let them come and then record them.
  - B. Reflect on the meaning of the word, and then record the results.
- III. Try to feel the psychological quality that the word embodies, letting it permeate oneself to the point of identification with it.
- IV. Subsidiary methods of reinforcement:
  - A. While observing the word, say it aloud or murmur it.
  - B. Write the word many times.

These methods combine visual, auditory, and motor images, and thereby increase the effectiveness of the exercise.

## **Different Methods Of Application**

- I. The choice of which word to use can be made in either of two ways:
  - A. By deliberately choosing a word that corresponds to the quality that one desires to arouse and develop.
  - B. By drawing a card at random from a group of cards and adopting its word as the "password" for the day, or for the period decided upon.
- II. The rhythm to be adopted may be:
  - A. Either continuous use of the same word for a certain time: a week, a month, or more-followed by its repetition after an interval,
  - B. Or rapid rotation, i.e., the use of a different word in the series every day.

The preference to be given to one or the other of these different methods depends upon the psychological type of the individual using the technique and his objectives. It is advisable to experiment with all of them, and then adopt the one that is most attuned to one's own constitution, or that seems most rewarding.

## **Fields Of Application**

- I. *Individual use*: When used by an individual, the application may be termed psychagogic or psychosynthetic. It serves the purpose of evoking and enhancing qualities which are insufficiently developed, thereby fostering a harmonious and integral self-actualization and realization (psychosynthesis). This concept is presented in detail elsewhere (Assagioli, 1965).
- II. *Educational uses*: Evocative words can be employed with advantage within the family as well as in school. At home, parents may profitably participate in the exercise with their children. This assists in the formation of the family psychosynthesis. In school, the method, when appropriately presented, has been welcomed particularly by elementary school children. And good results are obtainable in secondary schools as well. The pupils of one international school for pre-adolescent and adolescent girls, the

Institut Bleu Léman at Villeneuve, Switzerland (whose curriculum includes the techniques of psychosynthesis), have been greatly benefited by the use of the Words. Teachers as well could find their use helpful. For instance, the words PATIENCE and UNDERSTANDING come readily to mind as qualities that teachers may want or need to develop.

III. *As foci for concentration:* The use of the Words can be a valuable preparation for meditation. Even a brief but attentive observation of the word corresponding to the meditation theme will help to concentrate attention on the chosen topic and set in motion the mental activity associated with it.

IV. *Psychological conditioning:* In a general way, the Words can create a favorable psychological condition before facing the kind of situations that arouse nervousness or fear: examinations, competitions, concert performances, challenging sporting events, etc. This technique also serves as a good introduction to the Imaginative Training and Ideal Model exercises of psychosynthesis.

V. *Psychotherapeutic applications:* The medical field offers opportunities for the extensive application of the Technique of Evocative Words:

A. *General use:* Sick people appreciate cards printed with words which are particularly suited to their condition (Patience—Confidence—Courage, etc.). The necessity of staying in bed presents a favorable opportunity for pondering them at length. They are already in use in a number of clinics and hospital wards in Italy, in some cases as a result of patients' initiative. They can also be recommended for nurses.

B. *Specific uses:* Some of the Words, especially those just mentioned, can be used advantageously in the psychological preparation for all surgical operations. One special use that has been found particularly effective has been in the preparation of expectant mothers.

C. *Inter-personal and social relations:* The Words can exercise a beneficial influence in various circumstances of community life. They can be displayed in offices and workshops and they can be especially useful in meetings. In moments of emotional heat, when tempers are mounting, the chairman may have the word CALM projected onto a screen where all present cannot fail to see it!

## **Modifications And Developments**

The use of the Words represents the simplest and most elementary application of a general method whereby psychological influences are employed to modify states of mind and to condition human conduct. This is the method of suggestion, or, as it is at present more often euphemistically called, "persuasion." It has been adopted on a vast scale and used skilfully in all forms of advertising. A few of these techniques are:

- I. Displays and posters of large size: Advertisers spend huge sums on full-page spreads in newspapers, confident of their bringing a substantial return.
- II. Suggestive phrases, slogans, etc.
- III. "Persuasive" and fascinating pictures.
- IV. Persistent repetitions, hammering of a trade name, theme, or slogan.
- V. Musical themes or extracts that are associated with related words or phrases.
- VI. Rhythmic movements, gestures, and dances that are associated with a message.

These techniques, so widely and effectively used for commercial ends, can and should be systematically employed for higher and helpful purposes in the various fields mentioned above. It is indeed humiliating to acknowledge how little this is done. And yet, the organization and execution of widespread and intensive eupsychic publicity campaigns directed towards the individual and collective improvement and the uplifting of humanity should present little difficulty.

In a dramatic attempt to induce the advertising industry to propagandize for a more moral outlook, Farbad Hormozi (1970), an Iranian advertising executive, proposed that desirable personal qualities and socially healthy attitudes could easily and inexpensively be promoted by incorporating these concepts in all forms of advertising copy.

## A Word of Caution

It should be pointed out that sometimes the Words are apt to arouse negative reactions. Some people will resent the simple appearance of an unobtrusive card with a pleasant word like JOY, CONFIDENCE, SERENITY or COURAGE. They feel as if the Words are preferring charges against them, as if the words are making them painfully aware of their lack of these qualities, and this irritates them. Although everyone may know that he has defects, in practice few are willing to admit it. When this happens it may be advisable to postpone the use of this technique and engage in other kinds of psychotherapy.

## How to make a Set of Cards

The cards which we are using are plain white file cards whose approximate dimensions are 4" x 6". The words are printed in colours that tend to emphasize their significance and enhance their evocative qualities. The following seventeen evocative words are printed in capital letters ranging from 1/2" to 5/8" in height. Of course, others may be added *ad libitum*. The matching of a colour to a concept is a matter of personal preference and subject to individual taste.

CALM (dark  
green) JOY  
(yellow)  
COMPREHENSION (yellow)  
LOVE (blue)  
CONFIDENCE (reddish-orange)  
PATIENCE (green)  
COURAGE (red)  
SERENITY (deep blue)  
ENERGY (brick red)  
SILENCE (blue)  
ENTHUSIASM (brick  
red)  
SIMPLICITY  
(gold)  
GOODNESS



(gold) WILL  
(red)  
GRATITUDE  
(gold) WISDOM  
(dark blue)  
HARMONY  
(green)

## **REFERENCES**

Assagioli, Roberto, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, N.Y.: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965.

Baudoin, Charles, *Suggestion and Autosuggestion*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1920. Hormozi, Farhad, "Lock Means Key"-*New York Times* , March 1, 1970.

Zajonc, R. B., "Brainwash: Familiarity Breeds Comfort" in *Psychology Today*, February 1970, Vol. 3, number 9

# **From the Couple to Community**

**by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.**

Source: Undated, unknown source

## **I. Spiritual Psychosynthesis of the Couple**

In order to complete this brief paper on the psychosynthesis of the couple, we need to examine its highest and most essential aspect, that of communion between marriage partners and their mutual participation in the transpersonal spiritual Reality.

In psychological terms we may call these:

1. The communion between the spiritual Self of the couple.
2. The recognition - or rather the actual lived experience - of union and of the identity of individual Selves with the Universal Self.

This neutral language may be applied to any metaphysical or religious concept.

Moreover, recognition, in this scientific, psychological sense, of the reality of the spiritual Self and its intimate relationship with the other Selves and with the Supreme Reality, opens the door to all superconscious experience of every conviction and faith.

The methods for achieving this spiritual communion are the same as those used for the realisation of individual psychosynthesis. In this instance I need only enumerate them: they are meditation , invocation, inner listening; after which follow inspiration and illumination .

Through their use the personal 'I' increasingly recognizes its essential identity with the spiritual Self, "rises" and approaches it until more or less temporarily achieving complete identification.

When these methods are used jointly by a couple, by marriage partners, a doubly beneficial result is obtained. Thanks to the reciprocal influences - exchanges which happen naturally, I would say inevitably, in every interpersonal relationship.

Moreover, communicating what they perceive in their respective silence leads to mutual integration and also the possibility of reciprocal regulation and correction. For example, one of the partners may receive a symbolic image and the other may help to interpret and understand it.

Furthermore, the sharing of this "inner activity" facilitates and increases the spiritual communion between the partners, as well as their integration and synthesis, on every level. In fact, these methods can and should be used to solve the problems and eliminate the conflicts of cohabitation. Dealing with human problems in the light of the Spirit, asking for light and guidance from the superconscious and from the spiritual Self, depersonalizes, so to speak, these problems and eliminates, or at least diminishes the emotional reactions which stimulate and complicate them. This greatly facilitates their solution and sometimes can be the only way to reach a solution and attain a real and solid psychosynthesis of the couple. By what I have said here I hope I will have succeeded in showing how necessary psychosynthesis of the couple is, especially in marriage and what could and should be done to prepare young people for this task. This requires above all a widely diversified knowledge and appreciation of its importance, through a well organized educational system that could and should be established in schools. This education should consist of four parts:

1. *General psychology*, knowledge of human beings. It is absurd that it is neglected when it should be the fundamental subject in every school. In a more advanced civilization our present method of teaching will be considered primitive and barbarian!
2. *Differential or typological psychology*, or knowledge of the various psychological types.
3. *Differential psychology of the sexes*.
4. *Specific preparation for marriage*, for the psychosynthesis of the couple.

Besides this education which could take place in the school - and afterwards - *premarriage counsellors* should be available for the discussion of individual problems. And finally, for those who have already formed a family, marriage counsellors would be very helpful.

These are the most effective and necessary means to deal with the serious crisis in marriage and the family today. Everyone who is convinced of this need should unite in voicing it and stirring public opinion to bring about action in this direction.

## **II. The Family Group**

Now we will go beyond the couple. We must recognize that psychosynthesis of the family group is not confined to the relationship between the marriage partners and their children and that between the children themselves. The family, especially in the psychological sense, is a vaster entity which takes in the past and the society. This is evident in the case of so-called "old" families which have strong links with tradition. In some families tradition can have a decisive influence even in the choice of marriage partners, and the new family group becomes an extension of the "historical" family group.

This happened much more often in the past but it still exists to some extent, especially in some countries. In addition, there is the family background of the respective marriage partners; i.e. each partner brings to the marriage all the psychology of his or her own family, and these psychologies are very often different and even conflict with one another. There is the influence often direct of both sets of parents. They sometimes have a positive function, especially in modern society where both parents work, the grandparents providing valuable assistance by looking after children. But in other cases they constitute an element of disharmony, because of the old-fashioned mentality which elderly people often have and which is not in keeping with modern life. Such problems can seriously hinder the psychosynthesis of the family group.

## **III. Group Dynamics**

I would like to briefly mention the different human groups which both the family and the individual have relationships with, indeed of which they are often an active part. These relationships (which are often conflicts) in and between the various human groups are rapidly increasing and becoming more complex in modern life. Hence the prolific development of social psychology which deals specifically with human relationships and with what has been called "group dynamics". It deals with fundamental psychological problems, even when they are complicated by various factors - economic, technical, as well as political - and has been the subject of strong and even violent debate. A serious and objective treatment of this subject would require an entire

course of lessons and would go beyond the specific field of psychosynthesis, and therefore I cannot deal with it here. On the other hand I do feel it would be appropriate to make brief mention of a sector of inter-individual psychosynthesis which is particularly relevant to the present day: that of the *psychosynthesis of nations and between nations*.

It could be called a 'hot' issue since it appears to invade the political field; I say "appears" because psychosynthesis is in fact neutral in the fields of philosophy and religion, as well as social and political neutrality. Psychosynthesis is a scientifically based concept and procedure which deals with problems from the psychological point of view in an objective, impartial manner, without prejudice.

#### **IV. Nations and Internationalism**

Where there is nationalism and internationalism there are always the attendant problems of peace and war, competition and co-operation. These are particularly serious and acute today and the solution may be decisive for the future of humanity. It is therefore of utmost importance to search in every way possible for constructive solutions.

The starting point is the indisputable reality of growing world *interdependence*. The last war proved to be tragic evidence of this. No nation can truly prosper while others do not; one nation can momentarily dominate and conquer others by means of violence, but this provokes reactions that doom such domination to failure. This fundamental principle of the interdependence of nations has also been proclaimed in the past. I need only mention Emerson and Mazzini who demonstrated this clearly in the last century. But now with the enormous development that has taken place in all kinds of transportation, communication and exchange of raw materials and commercial products, personal and cultural relationships are continually multiplying and all this leads to a growing recognition of the *solidarity* of all mankind and all nations. This solidarity is not only an ideal, but is an absolute necessity and every violation of good relationships between men and nations has damaging and sometimes ruinous consequences to the perpetrator (1).

All this may seem obvious, just elementary common sense. And yet it is far from being universally recognised - and above all practised! Why? The answer can be found in the field of psychology. The obstacles are neither logical nor political in themselves: they are *psychological obstacles*. It is a

well known fact that around the turn of the century there was a great internationalist movement in which various "international organizations" were created. There were a number of pacifist movements which were more or less dedicated, but they all failed in their goal: they did not succeed in arresting the outbreak of world war. Why? Because of a psychological error. Those noble idealists were fascinated by the vision of humanity as a whole and they saw the nations only as an obstacle to the realisation of their grandiose projects of a World Government, an international State, and this attitude led them to oppose the nationalistic element. Their mistake was, and still is, a failure to recognise that a nation is a psychological reality.

## **V. Nations as "Psychological Entities"**

Leaving aside territories and other factors of a materialistic or socio-economic character, a nation is a "psychological entity". There are enormous psychological 1.) forces inherent in every nation: cherished traditions, emotional attachments, pride, tendencies to self-assertion, internal solidarity. All these put together have produced and are still giving rise to patriotism, the spirit of dedication and the sacrifice of so many for their country. These attachments may be called irrational, yet they may have a profound psychological justification.

It is a fact that nations, peoples, are not just simple aggregations of individuals, but rather "psychological entities", which may have their place and their specific function in the great body of humanity. The popular analogy which depicts an individual as a cell in the body of humanity, has an aspect that has not been sufficiently emphasized and from which conclusions have not yet been drawn. The cells of a living organism are not directly and uniformly connected with their vital centre or with the directive power of the organism. The marvellous intelligence, which presides over all, regulates the vital functions and tends to conserve life. At the most one could say that the blood cells have, to some extent, this direct relationship. But in general the cells are grouped into well defined organs, like muscles, glands and larger organs such as the stomach, liver, etc. These organs are, in turn, grouped into systems according to their *individual physiological function*, i.e. the *digestive system* (from the mouth down through all the organs - stomach, intestine, glands - which collaborate in the digestion and assimilation of food), or the circulatory system (heart, arteries, veins, etc.). They are all directed by a regulatory principle and a central co-ordinator, but each differs considerably from the other.

The psychological structure of humanity is composed of similarly differentiated systems, rather than having the uniform constitution of an amoeba or other unicellular beings. Nations are therefore very real, alive and distinct, though not separate entities, in the great body of humanity.

Just as every organ which becomes separated from the organism dies, so every nation that chooses to be outside or in conflict with the human community dies psychologically, and can be invaded and conquered. Yet it is also true that intermediate groups between the individual and humanity as a whole are necessary.

Therefore the individual psychosynthesis of each nation should be realised as a preparation and introduction to the psychosynthesis of humanity. Nations, as individuals, have a "body" which consists of their material means of expression; that is to say, native soil, geographical Position and material assets. In addition each nation has an emotional life consisting of feelings and the modes of reaction prevalent among its citizens, as well as its own "mentality". All this constitutes a "personality", possessing well-defined and recognizable psychological characteristics. We may even go further and say that every nation has a soul.

However this is in a latent state, so to speak, as it is in the vast majority of individuals; it is not manifest or, if it is, only in a limited and imperfect way. But at certain times, especially in moments of great crisis or danger, the soul manifests itself, both collectively and individually through superior human beings.

If we take an objective look at the degree of development and integration which existing nations have achieved, we are bound to admit that it is rather lacking! The "personalities" of "nation-entities" show psychological characteristics and types of behaviour which roughly correspond to those displayed by children of 11 to 14 years, the age of pre-adolescence, or in some cases, children in mid-adolescence (14 to 17 years).

This realisation should not shock or depress us, for it explains and partially justifies much of what has happened and is happening now. I would say, on the contrary, that we should be reasonably optimistic about it. We may hope that the wrongs due to immaturity will decrease with growth.

The characteristics of the pre-adolescent stage may be regarded as having several aspects similar to those of primitive man. According to the "law of

recapitulation", the individual, in his development, actually goes through a rapid re-run of all the stages through which humanity has passed. Even biologically the ontogenesis repeats the phylogenesis; i.e. the human embryo, during the nine months of gestation, goes through the various stages of animal evolution (at a certain point it even has a temporary formation similar to the gills of fish). The same thing happens psychologically from birth to maturity. Thus, when a child begins to develop his individual conscience, he shows it in an excessive and exuberant way, with separate and aggressive self-assertion.

Here it might be argued that there have been nations with glorious pasts and with highly developed forms of culture and civilization. However we are not considering nations in general, but more specifically nations as established entities, and these have only come into being relatively recently. Moreover, we must recognise that a nation can produce works of art of great literary and artistic value and men of genius, without having acquired a well-defined mature national personality. They can be compared to "child-prodigies", who, although they create works of great value, remain children or adolescents and never develop a mature personality. This is the case with many artists. A typical example is Mozart, who began composing at the age of three or four. He was unconsciously inspired by his superconscious, but psychologically he always remained an adolescent.

The evolution of nations does not follow a continuous line of progression, but rather it unfolds in a cyclic manner, passing through highs and lows. An analogy may be drawn with the lives of individuals in which periods of activity and rest, progression and regression, maturity and rejuvenation alternate. We find a good example of this in the life of Goethe, who experienced such a rejuvenation that he fell in love with a girl of 19 and wrote juvenile poems to her.

But there is still another important point: at present the cycles of particular nations are affected - and in a sense overshadowed by a greater cycle of global character which corresponds to the end of an era and to the birth pangs of a new age. The first manifestations of every new cycle are inevitably of a primitive type with barbaric characteristics. This was very obvious at the beginning of the Christian Era, when a series of barbaric invasions took place in the decadent Roman world. One could say that at present there is an "inward return to barbarism". In every nation the old forms are decaying, falling apart, before new, more adequate ones are constructed. This produces a period of confusion, of chaos and conflict, an explosion of instinctive



forces, that is a real "return to the barbaric". This is happening everywhere, in "old" nations and in "new": it is a worldwide phenomenon.

The study of national entities as psychological beings brings to light another interesting fact. The greatest part of a nation's psychological life corresponds to that in the individual which takes place at unconscious levels. This life is mainly instinctive, irrational, emotional, imaginative and suggestible, often dominated by elements of the collective unconscious, e.g. ancestral images (such as tradition and myths). It is easy to recognise these characteristics of psychological life in crowds and, to a large extent, in the public at large.

The self-aware part of the "national personality" is represented by the minority of people, and especially by those who *think*: philosophers, historians, scientists, psychologists, and a few statesmen who seek to awaken and develop the true "consciousness of the nation", to interpret its past and point the way to its future development. But this minority is still, more often than not, at the stage of investigation and research rather than that of sure solutions. Its members are often in disagreement and have contrasting opinions.

The Self, the true spiritual Centre, is "superconscious", in nations as well as in individuals; it exists at a higher level than that of normal consciousness. As mentioned earlier, there have been clear indications of its existence and its effect when it has burst forth during exceptional moments of national consciousness.

Sometimes it is manifested in moments of emergency or danger and in the form of surprising and unexpected collective manifestations, reawakening latent energies and producing unhopd-for and almost miraculous effects which save the life of the nation. This has happened several times, in Italy and in other nations, during both the first and second world wars.

More often the spiritual Self of a nation manifests itself through its unusual beings in various fields: its leaders, its geniuses, its saints, those who are carrying out constructive and humanitarian endeavours. These individuals have reached a certain degree of psychosynthesis, of fusion between their personality and their Self, and this enables them to be instruments, spokesmen, representing the Self of the nation. Generally no single individual can represent this in toto: each one expresses the aspect which corresponds to his own individual qualities and constitution.

In the United States the Self has found partial and differing expressions at various times through men such as Washington, Franklin, Lincoln, Emerson, Walt Whitman. At the beginning of Italy's life as a nation a great genius, Dante Alighieri, gave expression to the highest and most essential characteristics of the Italian people. It should be recalled that Dante had a great vision of a universal State, formulated naturally in terms of his day.

Sometimes the Self of the nation, manifests through individuals who act simultaneously, but not necessarily in harmony, since each one represents only one aspect of the national entity, and these often contrast and even conflict sharply with one another. One example is the passionate discussion, sometimes to the point of schism, among those who launched the "Declaration of Independence" which marked the birth of the American nation; another is Italy's struggle for political independence, which was accomplished despite the country's divisions into various states and its partial occupation by the powerful Austrian Empire. This miraculous unification was brought about by the co-ordinated efforts of four men of totally different character, all of whom played a vital part, but were in open conflict with each other: Victor Emanuel II, Cavour, Garibaldi and Mazzini. Each of the four performed a separate, unique task, and if we size up their activities from an historical point of view, it is clear that they fit together like the pieces of a mosaic.

This examination, albeit brief, of the psychological character of nations constitutes a necessary foundation on which to base a consideration of how one might and could go about realising their psychosynthesis.

# Symbols of Transpersonal Experience

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

*Source: Transpersonal Development*

A discussion of what is transpersonal—and therefore, in a certain sense supernormal—should be prefaced by a clarification of what is meant by "normal." The current criterion of normality is generally considered to be represented by the average man who observes the social conventions of the environment in which he lives—in other words, one who is a conformist. But "normality" understood in this way is a conception that offers little satisfaction; it is static and exclusive. This normality is a "mediocrity" which either refuses to admit or condemns everything outside the conventionally accepted and thus considers it "abnormal" without taking into account the fact that many so-called abnormalities in reality represent the first steps or endeavours to rise above mediocrity.

Now, however, a reaction against this narrow-minded cult of "normal" has set in; thinkers and scientists of our time are opposing it vigorously. Among the most outspoken one may mention Jung (1933), who has not hesitated to state:

To be 'normal' is a splendid ideal for the unsuccessful, for all those who have not yet found an adaptation. But for people who have far more ability than the average, for whom it was never hard to gain successes and to accomplish their share of the world's work—for them restriction to the normal signifies the bed of Procrustes, unbearable boredom, infernal sterility and hopelessness. As a consequence there are many people who become neurotic because they are only normal, as there are people who are neurotic because they cannot become normal.

Another writer, Professor Gattegno of London University, has gone even further, stating that he regards the ordinary average man as a pre-human being and reserves the word "Man," with a capital M, only for those who have transcended the common level or stage of development and are, in this respect, supernormal.

In the past, the veneration of superior beings was widespread. The genius, the sage, the saint, the hero and the initiate were recognized as the vanguard

of humanity, as the grand promise of what each man could become. These superior beings, while in no way disdaining ordinary humanity, sought to arouse in it the urge and the longing to transcend the "normality" and mediocrity in which it existed, and develop the transpersonal possibilities latent in every human being.

In speaking of the transpersonal we are faced with a serious difficulty and that is the inadequacy of human language, particularly of modern language, which is rational and objective. All words designating psychological or spiritual conditions or realities are in origin metaphors or symbols based on concrete things. For instance, soul (anima) is derived from "*anemos*," meaning wind; spirit from "*spiritus*," meaning breath. But the difficulty is not insurmountable if we remember and keep constantly in mind the symbolic nature of every expression, be it verbal or other kinds. Symbols properly recognized and understood possess great value: they are "evocative" and induce direct intuitive understanding. Indeed, the fact that the words indicating higher realities have their roots in sensuous experience serves to emphasize the essential analogical correspondences between the external and the inner worlds.

Yet symbols have their dangers. In fact, he who takes them literally and does not pass beyond the symbol to reality, but halts before it, does not arrive at the underlying truth.

Moreover, symbols are unilateral. No symbol can express more than an aspect, a quality, a partial conception of a given reality. This qualification can, however, be obviated by the employment of different symbols to indicate the same truth. Thus the sum, the convergence, the synthesis of many points of view can provide a greater and more integrated understanding of the reality they symbolize.

So, to designate the transpersonal experiences and achievements open to man, we find that there are fourteen categories or groups of symbols:

1. Introversion
2. Deepening-Descent
3. Elevation-Ascent
4. Broadening-Expansion

5. Awakening
6. Light-Illumination
7. Fire
8. Development
9. Strengthening-Intensification
10. Love
11. Way-Path-Pilgrimage
12. Transmutation-Sublimation
13. Rebirth-Regeneration
14. Liberation

These symbols are not only suggestive and illuminating; they can be used as subjects of meditation, indeed of "psycho-spiritual exercises." This has already been done for anagogic and psychotherapeutic purposes. These meditations and exercises have proved themselves very effective, sometimes producing surprising transformations. (*The Exercise of the Rose*, a description of which is given at the end of this article, provides an example of such use.)

1. *To the first group belong the symbols of introversion, of inner orientation.* Introversion is an urgent necessity for modern man; our present civilization is exaggeratedly extraverted and man is caught up in a frenetic vortex of activities that become ends in themselves. "Normal" man today may be said to live, psychologically and spiritually, outside himself. This expression—which in the past was applied to the mentally ill—is well-fitted to describe modern man! He has now reached the point of living everywhere except within himself; he is in reality "ex-centric," that is to say, he lives outside his own inner centre. (In French there is another apt expression: *désaxé*, off one's axis.)

The external life must, therefore, be counterbalanced by an adequate inner life. We must turn back into ourselves. The individual must renounce his many and continuous escapist expedients and address himself to the

discovery of what has recently been termed "inner space." Recognition must be given to the existence not only of the external world, but of different inner worlds, and to the fact that it is possible, and indeed man's duty, to know them, explore them and conquer them.

Modern man has learned to control nature and exploit her energies, but generally is not aware that, in reality, all that he accomplishes externally has its origin in him, in his mind, and is the result of desires, drives, impulses, programmes and plans. These are psychological, that is, inner activities; every external action has its source in inner causes.

First of all, therefore, these causes should be known, examined and regulated. Goethe, a genius who well knew how to play the part of the "normal man" when he wanted, said: "When we have done our part within, the exterior will unfold itself automatically." Interiorization, besides giving balance and nervous and psychic health, is the way to experiences of a transpersonal character. Turning within ourselves, we discover our Centre, our true Being, the most intimate part of ourselves. Here belong the "peak experiences" so ably described by Maslow (1962).

*2. The second group of symbols is composed of those associated with deepening, with the descent to the "ground" of our being.*

The exploration of the unconscious is symbolically regarded as the descent into the abysses of the human being, as the investigation of the "underworld of the psyche." This symbol has come into use particularly since the development of psychoanalysis—although not discovered by it. Its origin is remote and, indeed, in antiquity it carried a deeper meaning. Let us recall the descent of Aeneas into Hades in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's description of hell. Furthermore, many mystics have spoken of the "abysses of the soul." Beside psychoanalysis in the strict sense, there is the "depth psychology," represented by Jung and others. Its fundamental principle is that man must courageously become aware of all the discreditable and obscure aspects of his being, those which have been called "the shadow," and then incorporate them into his conscious personality. This recognition and this inclusion are acts of humility and, at the same time, of power. The man who is willing and courageous enough to recognize the lower sides of his personality, without allowing this knowledge to overwhelm him, achieves a true spiritual victory. But this carries its own dangers: The allegory of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* contains a warning of how easy it is to make the "waters" gush out, but how difficult then to control them and command them to retreat.

In this connection the practice of Robert Desoille (1945), with his method of the "*rêve éveillé*," is valuable. He makes use of the symbol of the descent, but puts greater emphasis on that of the ascent. Of the descent he observes that it is to be used prudently and "fractionatedly," i.e., commencing by seeking to activate the higher realization and then, as the subject becomes stronger, cautiously exploring the zone of the lower unconscious. The aim is the elimination of the dissociation between the consciousness and the lower unconscious, which has been produced by repression and condemnation on the part of the conscious ego and his unwillingness to admit, from pride or fear, that there exists this aspect of the personality. To repress it serves no useful purpose; far from eradicating it, it exacerbates it, while it is man's task to redeem it. But to accord it recognition does not mean surrendering oneself to its demands; it is preparing the way for its transformation.

*3. The third group of symbols is of widespread use. It includes elevation, ascent, the conquest of "inner space" in an upward direction.*

There is a series of inner worlds, each of which has its specific characteristics, and its higher and lower levels. Thus the first, the world of emotions and feelings, exhibits a marked difference of level between blind passions and the loftiest sentiments. Then there is the world of the intelligence, of the mind; and here also are found different levels: those of the concrete, analytical mind and of higher, philosophical reason (*nous*). There are, moreover, the world of the imagination; the world of the intuition; the world of the will and—higher still—the ineffable world which can only be indicated with the designation, world of transcendence.

The symbolism of elevation has been used in every age. Every religion had temples erected in high places, on mountain tops; and in antiquity many mountains were considered sacred. Moreover, there are symbolic legends, such as that of Titirel's ascent of the mountain to build on its summit the Castle of the Holy Grail. The symbol of the sky, or heaven as a superior realm, the habitation of the gods and the goal of human aspiration, is universal.

4. The symbols of the fourth group are those of expansion, or broadening, of the consciousness. It is well to note that, although the different symbols may appear to be contradictory, in reality they are not so, but indeed are integrative. In the same way that the descent does not exclude ascent—it is in fact advisable, as we have said, to ascend first in order to be able to descend without danger—so the ability to expand the consciousness without losing

oneself in its vastness, requires the taking up of a firm, stable position at the center of one's being. Those two realizations complement and do not exclude each other.

The psychiatrist, H. Urban, speaks of the "spectrum of consciousness," and maintains that we are only conscious within a limited area corresponding to the band of the light spectrum between red and violet, while there are other psycho-spiritual areas corresponding to the infrared and ultra-violet bands. Our consciousness can be enlarged or broadened, to include increasingly larger zones of impressions and contents. This expansion must be conceived spherically, that is, in all directions, vertical as well as horizontal, that is from the individual to the group, to society, to the whole of humanity. But it is necessary to maintain one's self-awareness within the whole and not "lose" oneself therein.

Another series of symbols of magnitude and breadth is based on the Sanscrit root "mah," which means "great," and from which are derived "magister" (master), magician, mahatma, etc. One generally speaks of "great" men in distinction to "little," ordinary men. The expansion that leads to the inclusion of other beings in oneself is associated with the symbolism of love (see Group 10).

Time provides another direction in which expansion takes place. Man generally lives in the present, absorbed in the interest of the moment; but he can expand his consciousness to include ever-wider cycles, a temporal continuum of varying dimensions. This leads to comprehension that the meaning and value of a human life do not lie in any one isolated moment, but in a process which unfolds, at the very least, between physical birth and death. This expansion in time, this inclusion of ever-widening cycles, serves as a preparation for the passage—one might say the leap—from time to the eternal, understood not as unlimited duration, but as an extra-temporal transcendental dimension, in which our inner center, the Self, exists and persists above the flow of the temporal current.

*5. We come now to the fifth group of symbols, which are among the most suggestive and effective: The symbols of awakening.*

The state of consciousness of the average man can be termed a dream state in a world of illusions: The illusion of the "reality" of the external world as our senses perceive it, and the many illusions created by the imagination, the emotions and mental concepts. As far as the external world is concerned,



modern physics has demonstrated that what appears to our senses as concrete, stable and inert is, on the contrary, constituted of congeries of infinitesimal elements in extremely rapid motion, of energy charges animated by a powerful dynamism. Thus matter, as our senses perceive it and as it was conceived by materialistic philosophy, does not exist.

Modern science has thus arrived at the fundamental Indian conception, according to which all that "appears" is maya, illusion.

Then there are the emotional and mental illusions, which concern us more closely, conditioning our life and continuously producing errors of evaluation and conduct, and sufferings of every kind. In this field also, modern psychological science has reached the same conclusions as the ancient wisdom, that is, that man sees every thing and every being through a thick veil of colouring and distortions deriving from his emotional reactions, the effect of past psychic traumas, external influences, etc. The effects of this are mental illusions which lead him to believe that he is thinking objectively, while instead he is being affected by what Bacon called "idols," by preconceptions and by collective influences.

All this creates a veritable dream state from which one can and should wake up. This awakening demands first of all an act of courage and the confrontation with reality. We have to reach the recognition of our psychological multiplicity, of the various sub- personalities co-existing within us, to the extent that every human being can be said to be a Pirandello character. The first step consists, therefore, in becoming aware of all that exists and stirs restlessly within us; the second, in discovering what we really are: a center of self-awareness, the Self, the spectator of the human tragedy-comedy.

The doctrine and practice of the awakening are of ancient date. The Buddha laid particular insistence upon it in his teachings, so that he became known as the "Perfectly Awakened One." An effective exercise for promoting the awakening can be performed after the normal waking up from sleep in the morning, by passing from this state to a true second awakening in the world of transpersonal awareness. The relationship between the

two states might be expressed in the form of an equation: Sleep is to ordinary waking state as this state is to transpersonal wakefulness.

*6. In the sixth group of symbols are found those of light, of illumination .*

Just as ordinary waking marks the passage from darkness of the night to the light of the sun, so the awakening transpersonal awareness marks the transition that has been designated "illumination." The first step—which corresponds to the first stage of the waking state—is a simple (but not on that account easy) ability to see clearly within ourselves; the second, of illumination, is the solution of problems hitherto appearing insoluble, and this by means of the specific instrument of inner vision, the *intuition*. Thus intuitive awareness comes to replace intellectual, logical and rational consciousness, or better, to integrate and transcend it. The intuition in fact leads to identification with what is seen and contemplated, and to the recognition of the intrinsic unity between object and subject. There is a further degree or kind of illumination: it is the perception of the *light* immanent in the human soul and in the whole of creation. We have numerous evidences of this; many mystics have described their inner illuminations. In Buddhism, and particularly in Zen, special disciplines aim at producing a sudden illumination with its accompanying revelation of reality.

*7. The seventh group—the symbols of fire—is one of the most comprehensive and at the same time most essential.*

The worship and veneration of fire are found in all religions.

Everywhere, on altars, in torches and in lamps, the sacred fire burns—the flames glitter. The flame of the Olympic torch is a symbol of contests in which athletes strive to give proof of exceptional physical prowess. The inner experience of fire has been lived through by many mystics: it is sufficient to mention St. Catherine of Siena and Blaise Pascal. The function of fire is primarily one of purification, and it is employed with this intent in "spiritual alchemy."

*8. The symbols of the eighth group are among the most closely associated with human experience, and are indicated by the words evolution and development.*

In a certain sense these words might be said to be synonymous. Development signifies release from encumbrances and denotes the passage from the potential to the actual. The two principal symbols of development are the seed and the flower: the seed which enfolds within itself the potentiality of the tree; the flower which opens from the closed bud and is the precursor of the fruit.

Familiarity has bred in us indifference to the miracle by which the acorn develops into the oak, and the child into the adult. Where, in reality, is the tree in the seed, where the oak in the acorn? Aristotle speaks of "entelechy," others of "model" and "archetype." An immanent Intelligence must be admitted which directs the various phases of the development of the seed from the tree, from the cell or germinal cells to the complete organism.

The other symbol, widely used since ancient times, is the flower: *the Golden Flower* (in China), the lotus (in India) and the rose (in Persia and Europe). The symbolism of the lotus is closely associated with what happens in man. The lotus has its roots in the earth, its stalk grows in the water, and its flower opens in the air in response to the action of the rays of the sun. It is an apt symbol of man, who has a physical body as a terrestrial base and develops psychologically in the sphere of the emotions ("water") and of the mind ("air"). The realization of the Self, the inner centre, corresponds to the opening of the flower brought about by the vivifying action of the sun, the symbol of the spirit. Some Eastern methods of development and meditation are based on this symbolism of the lotus.

The same applies to a great extent to the rose, whose symbolism originated in Persia, where the mystic poets speak of the rose in this sense. In Europe we find *Le Roman de la Rose*, Dante's "mystic rose," and certain more or less secret movements, in particular those of the Rosicrucians. I have used the symbol of the rose in a special exercise which has proved very effective in stimulating and promoting the opening, or blossoming, of the transpersonal consciousness.

The symbol of development is applicable to two different stages: the first, extending from childhood to adulthood; the second, from the state of "normal" man to that of the "awakened" individual. Maria Montessori—who devoted herself to the education of children and revolutionized preceding educational systems—is justified in saying:

Development of the child into the man takes place actively within, and the child pursues this task joyously when the adult does not interfere by dispensing the treasures of his wisdom. The child is the human seed: as the oak tree subsists in the acorn, so the adult subsists in embryo in the child.

We may recall that Plutarch had already said: "Man is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to kindle." To educate, in fact, should be—as its etymology indicates—(to) "e-ducere," to draw forth (from within), that is, to *develop*. Of

the second phase of man's development, it may be said to be truly representative of the passage to a transpersonal stage.

9. *The ninth series of symbols includes those of strengthening, or intensification.*

Transpersonal experiences may be regarded as a reinforcement or intensification of the life consciousness, a tension or psychological "voltage" higher than that in which the average man lives. Herman Keyserling (1938) speaks of a "dimension of intensity," associating the symbolism of intensification with that of proceeding along a different dimension which he terms "vertical" (the other dimension being horizontal). In using this term "vertical dimension," he refers to a "verticality" that rises from the world of becoming, or flux, towards the world of being and of transcendence. He applies this symbol also to time, a "vertical passing" from time to the extra-temporal eternal. Strengthening also has two stages or degrees. The first consists in the reinforcement of all man's latent, underdeveloped energies and functions. In his essay, *The Energies of Men*, William James draws attention to a number of energy-potentialities existing in man, waiting to be brought into manifestation when he wills to discover, activate and use them.

The second degree of reinforcement permits the passage from the personal to the

transpersonal level referred to above, in which also the manifestation of various para-psycho-logical powers may occur. At times, such powers, when associated with the higher ethical and spiritual endowments, have been ascribed to illuminates, to the "awakened," to "initiates" from Moses to Pythagoras, from Buddha to Christ and various mystics. Some have employed them deliberately and consciously; in others they manifested spontaneously, even against the will of the subject. One might say that these powers are sometimes a consequence, a by-product as it were, of transpersonal experiences.

10. *The symbols of the tenth group are those of love.*

Human love itself is, in a certain respect, a desire and an attempt—more or less conscious—to "come out" of oneself, to transcend the limits of separate existence and enter into communion, to fuse oneself, with another being, with a "thou." The devout and mystics of every age have spoken of their experience of communion with God or with Higher Beings, employing the

symbolism of human love. One may recall the *Song of Songs* in the Bible and the expressions—sometimes of a surprising audacity—used by St. Catherine of Siena and St. John of the Cross.

11. *The symbols of the eleventh group include those of the Way, the Path, and of pilgrimage.*

These two have been, and are, universally used. The religious employ the term "mystic way." The symbol of "pilgrimage" has often been, and still is, used in a physical and external manner in connection with the pilgrimage to various sacred places. Dante's passing through the Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise has been called a pilgrimage. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* will also be recalled in this connection.

12. *We now come to the twelfth group, the symbols of transmutation.* The body and psyche can be transmuted by means of a regenerative transformation. This produces an organic and harmonious unification of all man's aspects, a "bio-psychosynthesis." A "psycho-spiritual alchemy" is achieved. When one speaks of alchemy, one thinks of the attempts to make gold (something which used to appear incredible, but now seems less fantastic since man has learned to transform one element into another by the manipulation of atoms). But in reality the Arabian and medieval alchemical books often veiled in chemical terms the psycho-spiritual alchemy, that is, the transmutation of man.

This has been recognized by some modern writers, notably Jung (1940), who devoted much time during the last years of his life to the study of, and writing about, alchemical symbolism. In his book *Psychology and Religion*, he discusses it extensively and relates how he discovered this symbolism in the dreams of his patients and in the drawings of both the ill and the healthy.

Transmutation and transformation occur in two different ways, in two opposite directions, but ways which are not in opposition; they alternate and complete each other.

The first is transmutation through sublimation; the second is the transformation produced by the descent, the irruption of superconscious energies into the personality, including the body. Their combined action brings about a complete bio-psychosynthesis.

13. The *thirteenth group comprises the symbols of regeneration, of the "new birth."* it is related to the preceding group, since a complete transmutation prepares or opens the way to regeneration, which, in its most profound and essential meaning, constitutes a "new birth," the birth of the "new man," of the spiritual man within the personality. In India, Brahmins are called Dwigis, that is, twice-born. This symbol has been much used in Christianity, and mystics have spoken of the "birth of the Christ in the heart."

14. *The symbols of the fourteenth group are those of liberation and have a relationship with those of development.*

They mean the elimination of the encumbrances, a process of liberation from our complexes, our illusions and from identification with the various "parts" we play in life, the "masks" we assume, with our "idols," etc. It is a release in the etymological sense of the term, a freeing and activation of latent potentialities.

The symbolism of liberation has pervaded all the great world religions. In India, the Buddha said: "As the water of the sea is all pervaded by salt, so my whole teaching is pervaded by liberation." In Christianity, Paul affirms the "liberty of the Sons of God."

In our times, during the second World War, Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed the Four Great Freedoms: *Freedom of expression; Religious Freedom; Freedom from need; Freedom from fear.* The last, the freedom from fear is fundamental, since only he who is free from fear is truly free.

Here, however, we find ourselves confronted by a paradox. In contrast with his spontaneous yearning for freedom, man fears it at the same time. This can be explained by the fact that freedom implies commitment, self control, courage, and other qualities. It has been justly said: "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." Freedom must be won again and safeguarded every day, one might say every moment. Man, even if unaware of this, but feeling it intuitively, fears this "burden of freedom" and, in consequence, recoils from it. This fear is one of the motives of the wish to remain at the pre-adult level, or even to regress into infancy and take refuge therein. This is a general tendency, and if we look with sincerity within ourselves, we can find a number of infantile and regressive elements. The nostalgically minded of all ages, who lament "the good old times" are examples of this. But it is a useless and dangerous tendency—useless, because every attempt to arrest the irresistible forward course of life in us and around us is doomed to failure;

and dangerous, because it is apt to create serious neuro-psychic conflicts and disturbances.

All these symbols can be utilized in psychological exercises for fostering the corresponding transpersonal experiences and to bring about an increasing synthesis between the personal and the transpersonal aspects or levels, the manifestation of the Whole Man.

### **EXERCISE ON THE BLOSSOMING OF A ROSE**

Let us imagine looking at a rose. Let us visualize its stem and leaves with a bud closed.

This appears green because the sepals are closed, but at the very top a rose-colored point can be seen. Let us visualize this vividly, holding the image in the center of our consciousness ... Now begins a slow movement; the sepals start to separate little by little, turning their points outward and revealing the rose-hued petals, which are still closed...The sepals continue to open...We can see the whole bud of a delicate rose color...The petals also slowly separate...until a perfect fully-opened rose is seen.

At this stage let us try to smell the perfume of the rose, inhaling its characteristic well known scent... so delicate, sweet, pleasant... Let us smell it with delight.

Let us identify ourselves with the rose itself; let us "introject" it into ourselves...Symbolically, we are a flower, a rose...The same life that animates the Universe and has created the miracle of the rose is producing in us a like, even greater miracle...the awakening and development of our spiritual being and that which radiates from it.

Through this exercise, we can effectively foster the inner flowering.

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## **SUPPLEMENT NOTES ON SYMBOLS**

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The subject of symbolism is vast and manifold, and requires a corresponding extensive treatment and discussion. The following notes aim only at indicating some fields for further study, research and experimentation.

### *I. Paradoxical Nature and Function of Symbols*

This has been clearly expressed by Carlyle: "In a symbol lies concealment or revelation." The solution of this apparent contradiction lies in the realization that the difference depends not on the symbols themselves, but on our attitude towards the symbol. If we

stop at its appearance, at its form, then it veils and hides. If we try to understand its meaning and succeed in grasping what it signifies, then it is a means of revelation.

### *II. Plurality of Meanings of a Symbol*

This multiplicity, which corresponds to the various levels of reality, has been well described by Dante in his *Convito*. According to him, symbols have or can have four meanings: Literal, Allegorical, Moral and Mystical. It is important to keep clearly in mind this plurality of meanings of symbols, in order to avoid errors in their interpretation. An historical example of such a misinterpretation is that of St. Francis. After his conversion one day, while he was praying, he heard an inner voice, which he thought was the voice of



God, saying: "Go and restore my church." There was in the neighbourhood a small church half-ruined. St. Francis thought he had been ordered to rebuild it, and he set himself to work. But later he realized that the inner command was to work at the restoration of the Catholic Church, which in his times was decaying, and all his subsequent activity was courageously directed towards that great mission.

### III. *Various Kinds and Classes of Symbols*

They are many and various and may serve or be used for different purposes. There are Nature Symbols, Animal Symbols, Human Symbols, Man-made Symbols, Religious and Mythological Symbols, Abstract Symbols and Individual or Spontaneous Symbols

A special class of symbols is that which is expressive of transpersonal experiences. There are fourteen kinds of them:

1. Introversion
2. Deepening-Descent
3. Elevation-Ascent
4. Broadening-Expansion
5. Awakening
6. Light-Illumination
7. 7. Fire
8. Development
9. Strengthening-Intensification
10. Love
11. Way-Path-Pilgrimage
12. Transmutation-Sublimation
13. Rebirth-Regeneration

## 14. Liberation

These symbols are not only indicative, but if used as subjects of meditation can be helpful for inducing or fostering the corresponding inner experiences and realization.

### IV. *Universality of Symbolism*

Owing to the fundamental oneness of Reality and the synthetic correlation of all its parts and aspects, each of its manifestations has a symbol, character and meaning, and can be a means of perceiving under or behind the multiplicity of the appearances which overlie

that unity. This has been beautifully expressed by Shakespeare: "...Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything." Goethe has summed up the same truth in a synthetic way at the end of Faust: "Alles Vergangliche ist nur ein Gleichnis." (All that is transitory is only a symbol.)

## **APPENDIX A**

### **THE BANQUET OF DANTE ALIGHIERI (*Il Convito*)**

#### **Chapter 1.**

Since I, the servant, with preliminary discourse in the preceding treatise, have with all due care prepared my bread, the time now summons, and requires my ship to leave the port: wherefore, having trimmed the mizen-mast of reason to the wind of my desire, I enter the ocean with the hope of an easy voyage, and a healthful happy haven to be reached at the end of my supper. But in order that my food may be more profitable, before the first dish comes on the table I wish to show how it ought to be eaten. I say then as is narrated in the first chapter, that this exposition must be Literal and Allegorical; and to make this explicit one should know that it is possible to understand a book in four different ways, and that it ought to be explained chiefly in this manner.

The one is termed Literal, and this is that which does not extend beyond the text itself, such as is the fit narration of that thing whereof you are discoursing, an appropriate example of which is the third Song, which discourses of Nobility.

Another is termed Allegorical, and it is that which is concealed under the veil of fables, and is a Truth concealed under a beautiful Untruth; as when Ovid says that Orpheus with his lute made the wild beasts tame, and made the trees and the stones to follow him, which signifies that the wise man with the instrument of his voice makes cruel hearts gentle and humble, and makes those follow his will who have not the living force of knowledge and of art. who, having not the reasoning life of any knowledge whatever, are as the stones. And in order that this hidden thing should be discovered by the wise, it will be demonstrated in the last Treatise. Verily the theologians take this meaning otherwise than do the poets: but, because my intention here is to follow the way of the poets, I shall take the Allegorical sense according as it is used by the poets.

The third sense is termed Moral; and this is that which the readers ought intently to search for in books, for their own advantage and for that of their descendants; as one can espy in the Gospel, when Christ ascended the Mount for the Transfiguration, that, of the twelve Apostles, He took with Him only three. From which one can understand in the Moral sense that in the most secret things we ought to have but little company.

The fourth sense is termed Mystical, that is, above sense, supernatural; and this it is, when spiritually one expounds a writing which even in the Literal sense by the things signified bears express reference to the Divine things of Eternal Glory; as one can see in that Song of the Prophet which says that by the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt

Judea is made holy and free. That this happens to be true according to the letter is evident. Not less true is that which it means spiritually, that in the Soul's liberation from Sin (or in the exodus of the Soul from Sin) it is made holy and free in its powers.

But in demonstrating these, the Literal must always go first, as that in whose sense the others are included, and without which it would be impossible and irrational to understand the others. Especially is it impossible in the Allegorical, because, in each thing which has a within and a without, it is impossible to come to the within if you do not first come to the without. Wherefore, since in books the Literal meaning is always external, it is impossible to reach the others, especially the Allegorical, without first coming to the Literal. Again, it is impossible, because in each thing, natural and artificial, it is impossible to proceed to the form without having first laid down the matter upon which the form should be. Thus, it is impossible for

the form of the gold to come, if the matter, that is, its subject, is not first laid down and prepared; or for the form of the ark to come, if the material, that is, the wood, be not first laid down and prepared. Therefore, since the Literal meaning is always the subject and the matter of the others, especially the Allegorical, it is impossible to come first to the meaning of the others before coming to it.

Again, it is impossible, because in each thing, natural and artificial, it is impossible to proceed unless the foundation be first laid, as in the house, so also in the mind. Therefore, since demonstration must be the building up of Knowledge, and Literal demonstration must be the foundation of the other methods of interpreting, especially of the Allegorical, it is impossible to come first to the others before coming to that. Again, if it were possible that it could be so ordered, it would be irrational, that is, out of order; and, therefore, one would proceed with much fatigue and with much error. Hence, as the Philosopher says in the first book of the Physics, Nature desires that we proceed in due order in our search for knowledge, that is, by proceeding from that which we know well to that which we know not so well; so I say that Nature desires it, inasmuch as this way to knowledge is innate in us; and therefore, if the other meanings, apart from the Literal, are less understood - which they are, as evidently appears—it would be irrational to demonstrate them if the Literal had not first been demonstrated.

I, then, for these reasons will discourse in due order of each, Song, firstly upon its Literal meaning, and after that I will discourse of its Allegory, that is, the hidden Truth, and sometimes I will touch incidentally on the other meanings as may be convenient to place and time. (Dante Alighieri, *The Banquet*, translated by E.P. Sayer, London, Routledge, 1887, pp. 47-50)

## **APPENDIX B**

### *1. Nature Symbols:*

These include air, earth, fire, water; sky, stars, sun, moon. Among the chief nature symbols are the mountain (with its correlated technique of "ascent"), sea, stream, river, lake, pond, wind, cloud, rain, fogs; cave, tree, flames and fire, wheat, seed, flowers (rose, lotus, sunflower, etc.); jewel, diamond and various symbols related to light (including sunrise, sunset, rays of light, etc.) and darkness (including shadow), etc.

### *2. Animal Symbols:*

Lion, tiger, snake, bear, wolf, bull, goat, deer, fish, worm-chrysalis-butterfly (as symbols of transformation); birds (eagle, dove, etc.); domestic animals (horse, elephant, dog, cat, etc.); and the egg.

### 3. *Human Symbols:*

a. General human symbols: Father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, son, daughter, sister, brother, child, wise old man, magician, king, queen, prince, princess, knight, teacher; the human heart, the human hand, the eye. Birth, growth, death and resurrection.

b. Modern human symbols: These include the mountain-climber, the explorer (including the space explorer), the pioneer, the scientific investigator (physicist, chemist, etc.), the automobile-driver, the aviator, the radio or TV technician, the electronics engineer, etc.

### 4. *Man-made Symbols:*

Bridge, channel, reservoir, tunnel, flag, fountain, lighthouse, candle, road, path, wall, door, house, castle, stairway, ladder, mirror, box, sword, etc.

### 5. *Religious and Mythological Symbols:*

a. Universal and Western Religious Symbols: Cod, the Christ, the Holy Mother, angels, the devil, saints or holy men, priest, monk, nun, resurrection, hell, purgatory, heaven, the Grail, temple, church, chapel, the cross.

b. Eastern Symbols: Brahman, Vishnu, Shiva, the Buddha, etc.

Mythological Symbols: Pagan gods, goddesses and heroes; Apollo, the Muses (symbols of the arts and sciences), the three Graces (symbols of femininity in the refined

sense), Venus, Diana (symbol of the woman who refuses her femininity), Orpheus, Dinysus, Hercules, Vulcan, Pluto, Saturn, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Wotan, Siegfried, Brunhilde, Valhalla, the Nibelungen, the Valkyries, etc.

### 6. *Abstract Symbols:*

a. Numbers: in the Pythagorean sense of psychological significance-for instance, one symbolizing unity; two-polarity; three -interplay, etc.

b. Geometrical Symbols:

Two-dimensional: Dot, circle, cross (various forms, such as the mathematical plus sign, the long-limbed Christian cross, the St. Andrews Cross or multiplication sign), the equilateral triangle, the square, the diamond, the star (five pointed, six-pointed, etc.). Three-dimensional: the sphere, cone, cube; the ascending spiral, etc.

7. *Individual or Spontaneous Symbols:*

These emerge during treatment or spontaneously in dreams, daydreams, etc.

# Training - A statement

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

**Source: Paper from The Psychosynthesis and Education Trust**

1. Undertaking training in psychosynthesis means beginning to learn about psychosynthesis and experiment with it on oneself, in order then to help others to use it on themselves. Before being able to communicate psychosynthesis to others, we must have experimented with it in depth on ourselves. Intellectual knowledge is not sufficient. Every single technique must be tried out at length on oneself. Only thus shall we be in a position to communicate it with authority.

2. While psychosynthesis is offered as a synthesis of various therapies and educational approaches, it is well to keep in mind that it possesses its own original and central essence. This is so as not to present a watered-down and distorted version, or one over-coloured by the concepts and tendencies of the various contemporary schools. Certain fundamental facts exist, and their relative conceptual elaboration, deep experience and understanding are central, and constitute the sine qua non of psychosynthetic training. These experiences are:

- a) Disidentification
- b) The personal self
- c) The will: good, strong, skilful
- d) The ideal model
- e) Synthesis (in its various aspects)
- f) The superconscious
- g) The transpersonal Self (it is not possible in the majority of cases to have a complete experience of this; but it is good to have some theoretical knowledge of its characteristics and the experience of its guidance).

3. Different levels of meaning are associated with each of these experiences, none of which will ever be definite and complete. Continuance of one's training, however, will always reveal new and more interesting aspects, which link the experiences together. That is to say, each experience will be seen to be not isolated, but to imply others. It is therefore unrealistic to speak in terms of "having understood or not having understood". Understanding being ever partial, belief in having understood all indicates lack of understanding. It is a question of a gradual process.

4. The preceding point clearly suggests that the best attitude to adopt – and one that is at the same time more realistic, more honest and more effective in achieving rapid progress in training – is one compounded of humility, patience and experimentation.

5. Psychosynthesis is not identified with any technique or practice. Despite the fact that in group work use is often made of guided imagination and visualization exercises, psychosynthesis can by no means be levelled down to these techniques.

6. One can know all the principal ones and still not have grasped the spirit of psychosynthesis. And vice versa. Real training entails both these factors – intuitive understanding of the spirit of psychosynthesis and a sound technical knowledge.

Psychosynthesis functions in five main fields: the *therapeutic* (psychotherapy; doctor-patient relations); *personal integration and actualization* (realization of one's own potentialities); *the educational* (psychosynthesis by parents and by educators in school of all degrees); the *interpersonal* (marriage, couples etc.); *the social* (right social relations within groups and between groups).

Each one can choose a particular field of work and specialize in it alone. Being familiar with the other fields, however, is valuable, since all fields are interconnected. But the field of self-actualization and integration being the heart of psychosynthesis, a thorough knowledge of it is necessary for anyone operating in the other fields.

The achievement of a certain degree of mental polarization is required for becoming a psychosynthesist. This does not mean developing the mind while repressing or ignoring the emotions. On the contrary it means cultivating the mind and not only the emotions, as well as acquiring a personal centre of



gravity within a sort of balanced and loving “reasonableness” (in the widest and deepest sense of the word) rather than an uncontrolled emotionalism.

Training in psychosynthesis has no end. At a certain point hetero-training (meaning training guided by someone else) is replaced by self-training. Psychosynthetic self-training should never stop. Psychosynthesis is an open system: there is no end to it, but only temporary halting places.

Only when one has acquired a thorough training (and this in the judgement of whoever is directing the training) is it wise to commence to engage in psychosynthesis professionally with individuals or groups. The time this needs is impossible to establish in advance, there being many variables involved.

10. Since the training is endless, it is wise to modify both the duration and intensity of the hetero-training received: by intensity is meant the number of sessions a month.

11. Since each can only be a partial expression of what we call “psychosynthesis”, it is well to gain experience of psychosynthesis through the methods and personalities of various psychosynthesists.

Like any other form of training, training in psychosynthesis can fall away and become distorted after a certain period of time, particularly when not actively maintained and continued. Therefore it pays to undergo a refresher period now and then.

# The Psychology of Woman and Her Psychosynthesis

by Dr. Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

Source: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, Issue No. 24

*(In a later interview: A Higher View of the Man-Woman Problem, Roberto Assagioli recognized that some of his view on woman has been influenced by old-fashioned notions. So please read the interview for a balanced perspective.)*

## 1 – Introduction

Before entering upon the specific subject, let us – for the sake of those who are not yet acquainted with psychosynthesis – touch upon the theme in a general way.

Why is psychosynthesis necessary? Because all of us have within ourselves different and contrasting psychological elements which alternate and collide. They often reach such a degree of forcefulness as to form separate personalities or subpersonalities which struggle for supremacy within us. This results in a number of contradictions, conflicts, turmoil's and upheavals, which may produce serious nervous difficulties, and often gives the individual a painful and growing sensation of dissatisfaction, instability and disharmony.

But this “human condition” is by no means fatal and inevitable; we can change and remedy it if we are willing to examine ourselves thoroughly and if we apply the methods that are necessary in order to combine the dissociated and contrasting elements and transform them into a rich and harmonious synthesis.

Synthesis is an organizing and unifying principle which acts in all the kingdoms of nature. We find manifestations of it in inorganic matter in the form of chemical combinations. It acts in a more evident and complicated way in organic life as the power of self-regulation of living bodies, as the delicate and admirable balance between the wear and tear and the rebuilding of tissues.

In the psychological life, the principle of synthesis finds its application in different ways: by unifying opposite vital interests and activities in regard to the outer as well as the inner world of the individual (extraversion and introversion); by synthesizing thought and feeling and other psychological elements around a unifying centre in the psychosynthesis of the personality.

Then there is the problem of spiritual psychosynthesis, that between the personality and the Self or soul, which constitutes the high aim and aspiration of all individuals who cannot be satisfied with terrestrial values only. Another aspect of synthesis is that which unites and individual in numerous relations of integration with other individuals. There is, first of all, the psychosynthesis of the human couple, the eternal problem of the relation between the sexes, about which we shall have

more to say further on. Then comes the synthesis of the family group, of social groups, national groups and, at the very last – as the final ideal - the psychosynthesis of all mankind.

## **II – Psychological Differences between Men and Women**

The first question which calls for our consideration in this context concerns the functions and duties which a woman can and must discharge, the particular types of psychosynthesis which she can bring about in accordance with her particular psychological constitution, and the many problems which arise from woman's own psyche or in her relation with man.

Situations and problems of this nature arise in every woman's life and it is necessary that she face them in a way that is most satisfying to herself and to the other people concerned.

The most natural thing and frequent role for woman is that of being man's companion, his wife. An Italian author, Lucio d'Ambra, wrote two novels entitled respectively *The Occupation of the Husband* and *The Profession of the Wife*. In these different designations an important psychological truth is alluded to, namely that while man's principal functions are his activities *outside the family* and are of a social character, woman's most important activity, her "profession", is generally *in and with the family*. To use a less modern but gentle and apt expression: woman is, or should be, "the queen of the home".

Unfortunately, this kingdom of the home is often troubled by silent or noisy disharmonies and conflicts which sometimes shake it to its very foundations and can even dismember it. If we search for the causes of these discords, we discover that there are mainly two: selfishness and lack of understanding. The corresponding remedies can, therefore, be reduced to two principal ones:

The first one is goodness and a spirit of sacrifice. These are hard to develop, but are high qualities which everybody should cultivate because their fruits are most rewarding.

The second remedy consists of an intelligent, intuitive, willing psychological and spiritual understanding. This understanding is not easy to acquire because the psychological constitutions of man and woman are deeply different, much more so than we generally realize. One could almost say that they belong to two different species. It therefore seems useful to pause and examine somewhat the differing characteristics of male and female psychology. In speaking frankly, I may at times seem rude to both sexes.

Typically, although by no means universally, there exists between a husband and his wife polarities of psychological functions. The man tends to excel in certain vital operations while the woman manifests others. For example, in dealing with the physical world, man has active, manipulative and creative functions while woman, as wife and mother is primarily concerned with maintaining and preserving the life and resources of the family. On the other hand, in the sphere of the emotions and of the imagination, it is the woman who is usually the better developed, more positive and productive of the two. In this area, the husband is apt to be relatively naive and easily confused. So there is an apparent inversion of dominance functions that man and woman need to appreciate, and therefore collaborate with each other in order to form an effective team.

There is a similar inverted polarity between man and woman in the intellectual sphere. Man tends to be the more rational, logical, and active. He is consciously oriented toward facts, their relationships and their implications. By contrast woman's mental functions are less developed, but balanced by her superiority in another sphere, that of the *intuition*. This is the capacity for attaining understanding in non-rational and unconscious ways which are fully as valid as man's thoughtful rationality.

These different polarities define some important qualitative distinctions between man and woman. These differences can explain many psychological conflicts and disorders.

Speaking of man in general, the average so-called normal man develops qualities and functions such as aggressiveness, mental activity, and efficiency. These he manifests to a marked degree, whereas qualities of a feminine type such as sensitivity, feeling, imagination, and intuition remain in an undeveloped and, at times, almost atrophied conditions. Because these latter functions do not keep pace with the rest of his growth, it therefore often happens that the average man remains relatively primitive and sometimes even barbaric. His imagination, generally repressed in the unconscious, is disordered when it does rise to the surface, and often expresses itself in fancies of which he himself is ashamed.

His feeling nature tends to remain primitive; he has neither delicacy nor plasticity. He can pass from outbursts of almost savage passion to hardness and insensitivity, and vice versa, or he can pass from insensibility to almost childish weakness and sentimentality. His intuition is generally rudimentary, almost non-existent. He endeavours to solve all problems, whether practical or abstract, through mental processes only, and because he does not take into consideration the more subtle and imponderable elements, he is often mistaken. In the various events of life, his cleverly formulated plans and programs often come to naught, and instead of finding the faults that lie within himself and his own shortcomings, he blames other people and events for his failures.

The psychological processes of the large majority of women are the very opposite. The average woman's opinion are usually nothing more than prejudices and superstitions to which she clings obstinately, even in the face of factual evidence to the contrary. Of course, her opinions are sometimes correct, especially when based on good intuition, but only too often they are erroneous outcomes of personal emotions, of imaginings of various kinds, or of blindly accepted traditions. It is typical of many women (particularly of those who do not work in the professions or hold executive positions in public life) that they do not consider the true nature of the problems with which they are faced. Their mental activity consists of examining things in an unanalytical, diffuse, and inconclusive manner, with arguments that are often of a personal rather than objective character.

It should therefore be apparent that the one-sided psychological development of the average man or woman engenders deficiencies that result in serious problems. Most men and women are in themselves incomplete, almost psychologically maimed beings. They can find the solution of their problems only through mutual integration, i.e., by combining their qualities so as to constitute together a complete human being.

Man, insofar as his feminine functions are rudimentary, cannot understand and appreciate woman. He feels himself attracted towards her, sometimes irresistibly; vaguely he is aware that she possesses traits he needs, but he does not know how to approach her psychologically. She appears to him as a strange, elusive, chameleon-like creature. The acuity and changeability of her sensitivity, the wealth and plasticity of her imagination disconcert and confound him; her intuition impresses him, but he cannot understand its nature and origin; it perplexes him, and generally he is sceptical concerning it.

The average woman, in her turn, is unable to get out of her subjectivity and personal approach to things, lacks understanding of masculine activities and qualities, and often does not even try to understand them. She loves man, but with a personal, possessive, jealous affection. But although she loves him, she neither understands nor appreciates his world, his interests, his ideals. She is inclined to regard him as a savage who holds a delicate butterfly with a rough hand, who ruthlessly destroys perfumed and many-coloured flowers, as a naughty boy who is inclined to fight with others, as one who foolishly risks his life in darling enterprises, who plays with his complicated machines, and who neglects those who love him in order to chase after ancient ruins or rare manuscripts or to construct difficult and useless theories and systems.

I have purposely exaggerated my description of extreme cases in order to drive home my point with greater clarity. Fortunately, things are not as bad as all that, generally. Mutual understanding is growing; modern life provides instructive experiences and encourages adaptation. The painful shocks to which people are exposed often force them to think, and this happens in social relations as well as with married couples. In this way, much has already been accomplished, but more can be done. Decisive steps are needed in regard to our own psychosynthesis, our internal unification. We shall then recognize that the qualities that we observe in the opposite sex are external manifestations, projections, so to speak, of some of the faculties which we also possess but which have remained latent, rudimentary and below the threshold of our own consciousness.

In observing, understanding and appreciating women, man can develop his own latent and rudimentary femininity, and a woman can do likewise as far as masculine qualities are concerned. In this way, each can become, psychologically, a complete human being. Naturally, each should always retain a preponderance of the psychological characteristics pertaining to his or her own sex, but enough of the traits of the opposite sex can and should be developed to produce the much-needed balance and integration. In building the “psychological bridge” between the two sexes we shall arrive at a mutual understanding and an adequate appreciation of each other. We can thereby eliminate painful misunderstandings and artificial and unnecessary contrasts, and in their place produce a happy and fruitful collaboration, the psychosynthesis of man and woman, the miracle of true love.

### **III. Woman’s Maternal Functions**

Let us now consider another womanly function, one that is just as important and perhaps even more fundamental than the wifely one, namely, the maternal function. These two functions complement each other in the whole woman, and each woman should aim at achieving this psychosynthesis within herself. While some women are more inclined to fulfil primarily the function of being man’s companion, others become absorbed in motherhood. But apart from constitutional tendencies toward these different vocations, the circumstances of life induce and often oblige a woman to centre her interests and activities in one or the other of these two functions. The woman that has a husband but no child has a greater opportunity to devote herself to spiritual communion, intellectual rapport, and practical collaboration with her husband. She can even make something more of the relationship by being also “maternal” toward her husband. And this protective, kindly and generous behaviour can add a new note that makes the union of the two souls and personalities richer and more harmonious.

On the other hand, the woman who has lost her husband or who, for some reason, cannot live in harmonious communion with him, may adopt motherhood as her central aim. She then seeks the reason, the meaning and the value of her life in that role.

Motherhood, considered in its broadest and deepest sense, was a cosmic principle before it was a human function. Matter, the substance which received the creative impulse of Spirit and then elaborates it and expresses it in myriads of beings, is the Universal Mother. It – or she – makes the existence of the manifested universe possible. In our planet, this Universal

Motherhood, is called Nature, the terrestrial mother, which moulds and nourishes all creatures. This has been understood and deeply felt by all people from the earliest times. In ancient Egypt, the worship of Isis, and in Greece, that of Demeter and Cybele were expressions of this belief. Then, in Christianity, we have the worship of Mary, the Virgin Mother of the Saviour, who joins the son in His redemptive mission.

If, from the examination of these forms of worship and from the direct observation of motherhood, we try to define its fundamental characteristics, we discover that they are fecundity, creativity, the giving of life and generous love infused with sacrifice, devotion, and protectiveness. These functions are not exclusively human; they are also expressed in the animal kingdom. As is known, the brooding hen will deprive herself of nourishment, if necessary, in order to feed her chicks. But there are still more dramatic examples. Among insects, the pine-bombyx takes the down off her breast to make her nest and expires after this act of abnegation. Some cochineals so place themselves before dying that their dead bodies tend to protect their offspring from inclement weather. Among quadrupeds, mothers often defend their young even to the point of sacrificing their own lives.

For primitive woman, motherhood is the highest expression of being. In some savage tribes, woman is considered to be endowed with a soul only after having had a child. As a mother, she attains a degree of dignity that she did not have as a mere wife. In all civilizations, the moral function of the mother has been great. In addition to responsibility for physical care, the mother is charged with the duty of educating her children's feelings and imagination and of instilling them with the foundations of moral and religious beliefs. Other specifically maternal functions are to evoke a sense of beauty and to train the child to selflessness, compassion, and devotion.

If I appear to lay emphasis on those well-known facets of maternal behaviour, it is because I think it necessary to provide a counter-balance to a negative view of motherhood. The mistake, unfortunately, all too common in the exercise of the maternal function, is what can be called a materialistic one. The essential physical care given to children during their first years is necessary and basic. But physical care is not the only necessary care; and when it predominates over other aspects of maternal care, a materialistic limitation of the maternal function occurs which may be very harmful. If we compare the care that many mothers give to their children's bodies, to their children's preparation for careers, and for external success in life with the care given to their children's souls and with the degree of intellectual and



spiritual communion achieved with their children, we see the scale going down heavily in favour of material values. As a consequence, many children are well taken care of, well protected, and well directed into professional studies, but lack sensitivity to spiritual realities and responsiveness to moral values.

Another mistake is to manifest an excess of maternal love. This is expressed by the words “attachment”, “identification”, and “possessiveness”. This mistake is more human and forgivable, but it may be just as harmful as the first. It is understandable that the more you put of yourself into somebody else and the more sacrifices you make for that person, the more you may bind yourself to him, identify yourself with him, and attach yourself to him. But sooner or later, there comes the moment in the life of children when detachment from the mother is necessary. There comes the moment when the son or daughter must obtain freedom and autonomy to conduct his or her own life. This is such a natural event that we find it expressed by animals instinctively. In them, where many human complications are absent, detachment occurs in a simple way and at the right moment.

A typical example is that of birds that push their young ones out of the nest so that they have to learn to use their own wings. (This, incidentally, is an expression which has a high symbolic meaning).

Among primitive people, a similar event takes place. In their well-organized societies there are rites of initiation and puberty. The moment of separation from the mother, which coincides with puberty, is acknowledged as a crucial point in the life of the young. It is the moment at which adolescents become really conscious of themselves as responsible individuals.

But often the “civilized” mother has neither the understanding nor the wisdom necessary to make this supreme and most subtle of all sacrifices, the one which costs her the most and which might be paradoxically called “the sacrifice of the preceding sacrifices”. To sacrifice one’s own attachment to one’s children, to be able to “retire”, is very difficult because it is contrary to all one has wanted to do until then. And yet, life is full of these changes and transitions in which what was good and right at a certain time becomes excessive, untimely, and harmful at another. And so, very often the mother does not see, and cannot make this sacrifice. She tries to bind her children to herself in every way, not perceiving and even encouraging their defects. The worst part of it is that she thinks, or wants to deceive herself and others into thinking, that it is for their good.

Children who accept this easy state of protection, a kind of padding against harshness of life, without rebelling and sometimes with complacency, enter life unprepared for its struggles and snares. From such lack of psychological and spiritual preparation arise dangers to their health and to their future position in society and among their fellow men. They often remain weak, timid and ineffectual. But in many other cases, the contrary happens.

When a child has a more manly and energetic temperament, he is inclined to escape from the tyranny of the family. The ties with mother, which had been prolonged unnaturally, are broken violently; and the rebel is accused of ingratitude and of lack of love. Mother does not understand him, so painful quarrels ensue. An abyss is dug between mother and child, and it is the mother who suffers the most from it. So, she loses both her relationship to her child and his appreciation of her sacrifices because she has forced him to assert his independence. But because her over-protectiveness had prevented him from developing his own judgement, and because he is still quite a dependent person underneath his rebelliousness, he is especially prone to fall under evil and harmful influences.

This crisis in the life of a woman also explains a fact we joke about but which causes serious harm and deep suffering: “the mother-in-law problem”. The crisis of a mother whose daughter gets married is often dangerous. Whereas an adolescent son usually detaches himself gradually from his mother, a daughter’s marriage sometimes creates a sudden and painful separation. Right up to the moment of marriage, a daughter may be very close to her mother. But suddenly there is a newcomer who meddles with their intimacy and interrupts it. This is a dangerous moment for the mother. If she cannot overcome it with wisdom and courage, she may become a “mother-in-law” in the pejorative sense of the word. She feels hostile and shows jealousy towards the man who appears to have deprived her of her daughter and companion. Naturally, her unjust reaction evokes a resentful response from her son-in-law, and sometimes from the daughter, too. The well-known complications and conflicts ensue.

In recent times, this situation has become less frequent because girls, especially in large cities, are increasingly emulating the independence of boys, thereby detaching themselves from their mothers at an earlier age. But this fact makes it even more necessary for mothers to keep up-to-date psychologically with their daughters. To maintain a meaningful relationship with a rapidly changing adolescent takes a real effort toward understanding on the part of the mother.

There is one basic preventive for these problems: we must not let ourselves be absorbed exclusively by any one human function, whatever it may be, even the most noble and finest. Woman, in order to be a mother in the best and most effective way, must not fall into the trap of being *exclusively* a mother. Instead, she must be a human being who is also a mother and who exercises the functions of a mother with all the love it requires. But, I repeat, she must not be merely a mother. It is necessary that she realizes that there coexists within woman (and, I would say, above the mother role) a human soul that is aware of itself, that also has other interests and activities, and that is involved in social affairs and in the life of the spirit.

This does not make the woman less a mother, but a better mother. In the first place, the woman who is interested in social problems and who participates in the life of her time, her community, and her country can better understand the world in which her children are growing up. If, when her children are small, she deprives them of some attention in order to keep up with the issues of her time, to read significant books, and to take an interest in problems which transcend the little sphere of her family, then, when her children are adolescent, she will be able to follow and understand them, to be their friend and companion.

Therefore, in the interest of the maternal function itself, it is wise for the mother not to be exclusively a mother. When the moment of separation comes, she will have another series of human and spiritual interests ready to which she can devote her energy and time.

I would like to illustrate this point with an example of an American woman faced with the necessity of going to live with her married daughter and son-in-law. In order to avoid becoming the typical “mother-in-law”, at the age of fifty, she returned to college and studied for a degree. As she used to say, “You see, coming back in the evening for dinner I had something better to occupy myself with than the quarrels between my daughter and son-in-law. I was thinking of Plato and the Egyptians”.

Actually, when a woman has wider and richer interests, she can look at the petty everyday family disputes, the conflicts, and the problems of adjustment which may occur in the conjugal life of her daughter with much greater serenity. Because of this detachment, instead of being an obstacle and complication, she may be of real help to her daughter. That same American woman used to say of her son-in-law, who had an unpleasant personality and

who used to get upset about everything, “He deserves our pity; we can ignore his unpleasantness, but he can never escape from himself”.

Naturally, this is an exceptional case. It is difficult at the age of fifty to shift abruptly from domestic duties to the life of a student. Therefore, one should prepare oneself gradually for the transition by combining broader intellectual, social and spiritual interests with one’s maternal functions. Whereas in the first years of married life, the woman had often to sacrifice to some extent her wider interests to her domestic duties, now she can satisfy her postponed thirst for cultural and spiritual activities. This will make her new way of life much easier.

#### **IV – Psychological-Maternal Roles**

##### **a. Teaching**

This leads us to a consideration of those women who are not mothers in actual fact. For these women the essence of motherhood is in no way precluded. On the contrary, they can manifest its broader and socially more useful aspects; they can embody spiritual motherhood. This can be achieved in many ways, depending upon different abilities and circumstances. One of the first and more important is that of education.

The elementary school teacher is often called upon to substitute for those mothers who do not know how or are unable to educate their children properly. Therefore she should always consider her function to be partly maternal. By doing so, she puts her relationship with her pupils in a properly human light, and she avoids many of the mistakes that are frequent in education.

She effectively supplements the barren and over-intellectualized aspects of the educational curriculum with a humanizing quality. Through her effect on her students, she can indirectly perform a valuable function by spreading light and harmony among them and indirectly among their parents.

The high school teacher also has a partially-maternal task. This is harder, more complicated and more delicate than that of the elementary school teacher, just as it is harder and more complicated for a mother to guide her adolescent children. The teacher must be able to guide rapidly changing personalities, both morally and intellectually at the most critical period of their development. Therefore, she must be mature, knowledgeable, and

disciplined. She needs much inner preparation, psychological insight, tact, and discretion. In compensation, she will obtain results and satisfactions that are deep and gratifying. She should really be able to awaken and to reveal people to themselves, and to rescue confused and deluded young people from mistakes and faults. But to do this effectively, a teacher must be more like an understanding and loving mother than like a formal instructor. In other words, although she must demand from her pupils the necessary mental work, she should not adhere to a sterile intellectualism, nor should she seek to impart a cold and often useless mass of information to her students. Instead, she should deal with pupils as individuals, win their confidence, and offer them parental interest and support.

### **b. Nursing**

The maternal vocation of woman, the need of the feminine heart to devote itself to the protection and care of others, finds one of its noblest expressions in the succor of the sick and suffering. The nursing profession provided it is taken up with humanitarian and compassionate motives and feelings, may become a mission in the real sense of the word, as in the case of Florence Nightingale, the pioneer of the great modern nursing movement.

### **c. Social Work**

Another vocation in which women can do much good work while exercising a maternal function is social work. In talking with some of these women who are employed by European industries, I have been impressed by how much they can do for the families of workers in all their social difficulties, in their relations with the authorities, in questions of health, etc.

Through this kind of work, many women may bring spiritual light and moral education to thousands of working families. In the United States, social work takes many different forms that are equally as influential for the promotion of physical welfare, psychological health, and spiritual well-being. The advocacy of the needs of the poor, the underprivileged, the sick, and the emotionally disturbed is a calling of high spiritual value. It is especially suited to the expression of feminine qualities.

Although we have so far spoken in terms of specific roles, all the functions of those roles – or at least some of them – can be developed and utilized by woman irrespective of her situation; for instance, by an unmarried career woman in her many contacts and relationships with her fellow human beings.

## V – The Woman as a Source of Inspiration

Still another feminine function remains to be mentioned. It is one of the noblest and highest callings for a woman to inspire others. In this spiritual activity, woman makes use of the highest feminine power, her intuition. The woman whose intuition is active and who is neither troubled by personal emotions nor too involved in intellectual work may arise to the luminous sphere of the superconscious from which she is able to perceive durable values and essential truths. Sometimes, she is actually able to foretell the future by intuiting trends which are preparing to become manifest in the visible world.

In ancient civilizations these superior sensibilities of woman were acknowledged, appreciated and utilized. They were used by the priestesses of the Druids and by the Sibyls. Authoritative and wise men like Numa Pompilius did not hesitate to avail themselves of their wisdom. Later on, women were the inspirers of poets and artists. A fine psychological study of the relationship between women and poets is found in the books by Edouard Schuré, *Femmes Inspiratrices et Poètes Annonceurs and Prophètes de la Renaissance*. And surely Goethe was referring to this superior aspect of femininity when he finished **Faust** with the words “*Alles Vergängliches ist nur ein sin Gleichnis. Das Ewig- Weibliche zieht uns hinan*“. (Every transient thing is but a symbol, the eternal feminine draws onward).

In the present world, we either neglect this spiritual function of woman or we try to exploit the inferior aspects of her psychic sensibility out of curiosity and self-interest. It is therefore hoped that either through the scientific study of parapsychological faculties or through a spiritual awakening (of which there are clear signs even in the midst of the world's prevailing materialism) woman will recover consciousness of her superior psycho-spiritual gifts, and that man will appreciate them and make use of them again for the sake of their mutual spiritual growth.

## VI – Conclusion

Woman, therefore, can make good use of her femininity in every field of human life. This is particularly necessary in our times when our civilization is based too much upon masculine qualities. The masculine aspect has much in its favour; it is dynamic, constructive, and progressive. Let us

acknowledge these good points, but let us also recognize its excesses and defects. The tendency towards self-assertion, the thirst for dominion and power, and the impetuosity of the combative energies produce hardness and cruelty, wars and destruction. On the contrary, the special function of woman is that of preservation. She defends life, maintains it, and transmits it.

Therefore, in human society, we need a proper balance between the adventuresome and creative push of man and the safeguarding compassionate protectiveness, of woman. Woman then, has an important social function to perform, and she can fulfil it best without any commitment to “feminism”. Rather, to be a feminist would be to abandon her true nature and to make her a poor imitation of man. It is true that she should develop some of the better masculine qualities to some degree, that she should thus enrich and complete her own personality; but she can do this while remaining essentially feminine in the highest meaning of the word. Besides being a good wife and mother, she can gradually evolve out of the limited domestic sphere and demonstrate within society her “spiritual motherhood”. In this way she can bring comforting love, compassionate tenderness, and a healing protectiveness to her fellow men.

The more woman becomes conscious of this vaster mission of hers, the better will she fulfil it, and the nearer shall we all approach the true “psychosynthesis of mankind”, that integration which will make possible more serene and more satisfying ways of living, more warmth of cultural expression, and higher spiritual possibilities.

# **The Science and Service of Blessing**

**by Roberto Assagioli**

**Source: Sundial House, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK, 1968**



Sundial House Premises

## **The Science and Service of Blessing**

### **Part I**

#### **Radiation and Blessing**

The value of the age-old service of Blessing needs to be reaffirmed. It is a conscious and deliberate use of radiation and is one of the greatest contributions we can make to the well-being of our fellow men.

Blessing is therefore a service which is based on the laws that govern energy and radiation, and to bless effectively we should have some understanding of radiation, its nature and its laws.

In general terms, radiation is an outward projection of energy from some originating source. It is a subject which is today being increasingly studied by scientists, and the extensive explorations in this field now being undertaken by, for example, the Radiation Laboratory of the University of



California, are an indication of its growing importance as the New Age science emerges.

As a result of these investigations, we may expect to learn a great deal more about this ancient means of distributing beneficence. In the meantime, let us remember that radiation is magnetic, and similarly that Blessing is an act which blesses those who give as well as those who receive. When we seek to bless, we place ourselves in a divine circulatory flow of benediction.

## **What Is Radiation?**

Active, or conscious, human radiation finds a close analogy in the projection of radio or television waves from a transmitting station. It can be put into operation in two ways:

1. *In all directions*, with no specific aim or target as in broadcasting, and addressed to "all it may concern," to all who may be able and willing to receive the message or impression. In order to be effective this type of radiation demands a considerable degree of inner power, a high spiritual "voltage."

2. *Specific Radiation directed towards a definite target.*

This is analogous to those etheric waves which are projected in only one direction. This method does not demand so high a "voltage," because the effect is increased by the focussing of the energy, much as the heat of the sun's rays can be sufficiently amplified by concentration through a lens to kindle a fire.

## **What We Can Radiate**

By means of mental and spiritual telepathy we can radiate *ideas*: either pure abstract ideas, or ideas formulated into thoughtforms. We can also radiate qualities, aspects, attributes, such as Love, Light, Joy, Strength, Will. These two forms of radiation can be combined, that is, we can radiate ideas or thoughtforms conditioned or vitalised by spiritual qualities.

Each of us necessarily and inevitably radiates *what he is*.

It is time that we realised this and became aware of the opportunity it offers and the responsibility it entails, so that we may consciously utilise this power

to the full and use it only in constructive and helpful ways. Radiation can be considered a form of telepathy; it is a way of "impressing," and it has both general and specific aspects. It expresses what we really are, which, in both a higher and a lower sense, is much more than we are aware of.

Emerson wrote in his essay on *Social Aims*: "Don't say things. What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary. One may disguise the tone of the voice, but the radiation of the heart cannot be falsified."

## **Techniques of Radiation**

Let us consider *how* to radiate. This is important for the success of our endeavour.

1. First comes a general preparation in which we concentrate on what we want to radiate. In the case of a spiritual quality, an effective preparation consists in arousing in ourselves that quality, of identifying ourselves with the idea, the feeling, the qualified energy. Then it radiates spontaneously. In this way we can combine both spontaneous and purposeful, directed radiation.

Another factor which increases the effectiveness of radiation is joy. This may cause surprise at first, but we can easily become convinced of it by realising that joy has always a stimulating and vivifying effect, so that it facilitates and enhances the effectiveness of every action.

2. After this preparation comes the exact formulation or visualisation of the idea. It can be a word or a phrase and, whenever possible, an image or a picture.

3. In the third stage we link up with and tune in to the recipient. This is accomplished in two ways:

(a) By visualising the person, nation, world, etc.

(b) By sending a wave of love in the same direction. Love is a great linking and unifying energy.

4. In the fourth stage comes the actual *projection*. This is best done by visualising a channel or beam of light projected towards the target; or, in the case of a general radiation, beams of light in all directions.

## **Responsibility**

A real danger arises when, prompted by our will-to-power, we are tempted to impose our radiatory influence on others. Even if we do this with the best motives, it may be harmful. Let us remember that we never have the right to infringe the freedom of others, and we must beware not to project on others our "ideal" image of them, or what we think they should be.

This very common mistake is often made by parents.

It is committed either by an outward display of authority, or by means of "persuasion" and suggestion, but it can be just as harmful in a subtle way if it is done through radiation. Therefore, let us realise our responsibility in this respect and never try to influence in any specific direction.

The same warning may be given concerning "prayers" or projected thoughts used for influencing political or religious leaders in specific directions. Radiation may also be too intense, and this may have two effects: it may repel the recipient, evoking a contrary reaction, or it may "burn" and be destructive. The effects of the sun's rays provide a good example. The Sun is the source of all life and its rays are beneficent, healing and life-giving; but when they are too intense, we retreat into the shade, or, if we persist in remaining exposed to them, we may get sunburnt and even suffer sunstroke. But that is not the fault of the sun, but of our own stupidity.

## **Radiation and Magnetic Attraction and their Redemptive Effect**

Radiation and magnetism appear at first to be contradictory. Radiance, however, evokes magnetism, its effect is magnetic and the recipient of radiation is attracted towards the radiating centre or source. A clear example of this is the response of a plant to sunlight; the sun radiates light to the plant, which is attracted and reaches up towards the sun. The radiation of the sun is thus magnetic.

The same is true of the light of the Soul or Self playing upon the personality; the Soul radiates its light and the right reaction of the personality is a yearning towards this source of light; it is its response to the magnetic attractor of the Soul. But the personality does not always react in this positive way; sometimes it is not aware of or repels the Soul's influence.

Magnetic attraction also takes place in inter-persona relationships; if a person radiates light and love toward: other human beings, they are attracted. The normal effect of radiation, therefore, is attraction-magnetism it attracts towards the source of radiation.

## **Spiritual Radiation**

Spiritual Radiation is a redemptive process, producing what might be called almost a "chemical change" in the substance of humanity and of the planet. Each of us is contributing to it all the time, and the *group contribution* - the radiation of groups gathered for specific purposes is a growing factor in life on earth today.

As we progress, we become increasingly radiatory and magnetic and we have to respond to those who are attracted by this magnetism. It is inspiring to realise that each step we take upward changes, heightens and intensifies our spiritual emanation.

The conscious projection of thoughts and the active radiatory work of *blessing* are *specific* types of radiation. To be effective, this radiation must flow from the soul-infused personality - at least soul-infused to a certain extent.

A blessing or benediction might be regarded as "*a transfer of spiritual energy*." This illuminates the concept of radiation. When someone with spiritual power blesses another, and the blessing is not formal or perfunctory, it is a transmission of energy, a form of radiation.

Blessing and *healing* are also linked and a real blessing can have a healing effect. This is not necessarily physical, but can be psychologically and spiritually beneficial. Also in healing, however, there is need for caution. For instance, concentrating the attention on the patient's illness, or on the parts of the body affected, might have undesirable effects.

Under the Law of Cause and Effect the release of divine energies emerges as radiation, and the *redemptive* process of evolution is thus carried out. So blessing becomes part of the redemptive process of evolution.

When radiation has a spiritual quality, when it emanates from a man who has achieved a high point of Self-realisation, its effects are potent. A modern

psychologist, A. H. Maslow of Brandeis University, has recognised the reality of such radiation and has describe it as follows:

" ... in self-actualising, creativeness is 'emitted,' like radioactivity, and hits all of life, regardless of problems, just as a cheerful person' emits' cheerfulness without purpose or design or even consciousness. It is emitted like sunshine; it spreads all over the place; it make things grow (which are growable)."

(*Creativity in Self-Actualising People*, p. 12,)

Keyserling has stated the same truth in a strong way " ... the mere existence of a saint is a blessing -the mere existence of a hero gives strength and courage; the mere existence of a great believer creates faith; and that of one who greatly trusts generates confidence. More over, it is the silent effortless *radiance* of deep being: which ensures the most powerful action at a distance. This has proved itself true thousands of times, in space as well as in time." (Hermann Keyserling

*From Suffering to Fulfilment*, p. 90.)

From the angle of human evolution, it might be stated that only when the soul aspect is dominant does the response apparatus (the form nature of man) fulfil its destiny, and only then does true radiation and the pure shining forth of light become possible.

The *creative* faculty works by means of radiation and magnetism. These bring to its possessor the material for creation and a magnetic capacity which arranges in due form and beauty that which radiation has evoked. Creativity is a consequence of a particular state of mind and a specific state of being; it signifies a point in evolution wherein the person is definitely "radioactive."

Radiation and magnetism are an expression of the energetic or dynamic aspect of love, and our attempts to realise spiritual love may be helped by the recognition that it is a magnetic energy.

Each of us can and should be a "centre of radiation," affecting other centres and lives and in this way fulfilling our part in the redemption of the planet. We each have our sphere of radiation; it is our area of responsibility, and within that sphere-which is larger than we think-we can serve in an effective way the Purpose of Divinity.

"The sense of the earth opening and exploding upwards into God; and the sense of God taking root and finding nourishment downwards into earth. A personal, **transcendent** God and an evolving Universe no longer forming two hostile centres of attraction, but entering into hierarchical conjunction to raise the human mass on a single tide. Such is the sublime transformation which we may with justice foresee, and which in fact is beginning to have its effect upon a growing number of minds, freethinkers as well as believers: the idea of the spiritual evolution of the Universe. The very transformation we have been seeking."

*(Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in The Future of Man.)*

## **Part II**

### **Techniques of Blessing**

A problem continually facing us is *what use to make* of the energies aroused or received through **meditation**, prayer, affirmation and invocation. These energies must be used for two reasons:

1. To avoid congestion and overstimulation in ourselves.
2. Because they are most valuable, and it is our duty and privilege to utilise them for the benefit of mankind.

It is possible to emanate or radiate these energies on spiritual, mental and emotional levels. The reality of such a radiation has always been acknowledged, except perhaps in the modern, materialistic cultural interlude from which we are beginning to emerge.

Modern physical processes and technical achievements help us to realise both the possibility and the procedure of radiation. Two examples are the phenomena of spontaneous radioactivity, like that of radium, and of induced radioactivity through bombardment of atoms in cyclotrons. Radio and television also demonstrate the possibility of transmitting sound and images on the ether without any material means in the sense of visible matter.

If these things are possible on etheric levels and with etheric energies, it is not surprising that they occur on more subtle levels, in the psychological and spiritual worlds or realms. Here we find the phenomena of spontaneous telepathy which so frequently occurs, and also the experimental telepathy

which has been scientifically studied in recent years and its validity sufficiently ascertained for few to have reason to doubt it.

## **Blessing Through Meditation**

An important fact that should be realised is that the Soul or Self is endeavouring to infuse the personality all the time. We do not have to "storm" the Soul; it is ever reaching out towards the personality. This infusion can be considered the blessing of the personality by the Soul.

"The thinking, loving soul, which tightens its hold over its response apparatus, avails itself upon every possible occasion of every advance made by the form, and employs every influence for the perfecting of its great work. ... Soul infusion produces joy."

Meditation is obviously the great means of transmitting the radiation or blessing of the soul and the spiritual realms. Various forms of blessing are given on the following pages, and these suggest the many different directions in which blessing may be sent.

We cannot, of course, carry out all of them every day, but it will add to our power to bless if we learn to practise the different techniques, and to develop a habit of blessing is to put ourselves directly in the line of its "divine descent."

In meditation the aim is to pass quickly through the stages of concentration (using the will), through rapid alignment of the quieted physical, emotional and lower mind, to soul levels; this can be visualised as an upward moving to the Soul. Then we should remain poised in a receptive attitude.

We should not look for conscious results, but do the work daily with confidence. Sensitivity to the Soul has to be cultivated; so many earthly energies clamour for attention that we are not aware of the energy of the Soul but if we persist, just "keep on keeping on," Soul infusion will be attained. Every technique has to be consistently practised to attain efficiency. Witness our great musicians, artists, scientists, athletes and all who attain success on the material level.

Every potent blessing requires the use of the will. Its first use is to eliminate obstacles; this can be expressed as "making room" in time and consciousness.

"Making room in time" means consecrating regularly a certain span of time to blessing meditation, protecting it from all the "pulls" and claims which try to induce us to outer activity.

"Making room in consciousness" means pushing out of the field of consciousness all that normally occupies it or tries to invade it: sensations, emotions, images, thought, anticipations, memories, etc.

Much will is needed for concentrating on active blessing, avoiding a negative, dreamy condition.

Above all, let us seek an enlightened fusion of our individual will with the divine Will, and this for the greater good of the Whole-for all humanity.

### **Blessing the Lower Kingdoms**

This blessing is based, first of all, on recognition of the gifts of the lower kingdoms to us and is an expression of the gratitude we owe to them. In a wider sense, from a universal point of view, it is prompted by the realisation that they are all part of Divine manifestation, that they are unconsciously proceeding on the way of evolution, and that the function of humanity is to help them on that way, and finally to redeem them. An effective means towards this is *blessing*.

Our closest relationship with the other kingdoms of nature is- that created by our using them as food. In this way they give us a needed service for which we should be grateful. On our part we transmute them by incorporating them into ourselves. This is the basis (even if unrecognised) of the old custom or ritual of blessing food and saying grace. At present food is generally taken in a hurried, absent-minded way, but eating and drinking with gratitude and appreciation would bring added benefit to us.

There are many forms for the blessing of food, but here is one which incorporates gratitude to the lower kingdoms:

The food of which we are going to partake

is your gift, O God,

and the fruit of the labour of many beings. We are grateful for it and bless it.

May it give us strength, health, joy



and may it increase our love.

## **The Blessing of Money**

This blessing has a special significance, purpose and usefulness owing to the peculiar nature of its object.

Money can be regarded as materialised or condensed Divine energy. In its essence it is therefore something good and pure. But in the course of its use money becomes polluted by the evil passions, the low desires, the worries and fears, the selfish attachment of all to whom it temporarily belongs.

This is not merely a symbolical or psychological connection. Evil forces become attached to money and, possessions. This is one of the chief causes of the trouble individual and collective strife, and maladjustment an unjust distribution connected with material goods, and particularly with money. If this cause has a subjective character, the true solution, the effective remedy, should be of the same kind: primarily subjective, psychological; and spiritual. In fact, the right use of money depends on *right motivation*, which is a subjective, psychological urge, determining *right choices*.

But there is a more specific way of counteracting what can be considered the "curse" attached to money (This "curse" forms the central theme and the deep meaning of Wagner's series of musical dramas, "The Ring of the Nibelung.") The spiritual purification and redemption of money can be achieved by the conscious use of our spiritual and psychological energies. It can be accomplished by the use of concentrated thought animated by right feeling (or emotional force) and projected by will, through the use of affirmation formulated in words.

If we subjected all money which passes through our hands to such a "treatment," and if an increasingly large number of people deliberately did so, many problems which find no external and technical solution would be done away with. This may seem surprising, so little are we accustomed in this materialistic civilisation to give true practical consideration to the reality and the power of subjective forces. Yet it is so, and if we are consistent in our spiritual convictions, we cannot but admit it.

It is in reality an act of blessing. Any apt formulation of it can be effective. The following, which is being used by many groups as well as individuals, is suggested:

May this money be blessed.

It is a symbol of divine substance and energy.

May it be redeemed from every impure influence,

From every attachment and craving.

I appreciate it and keep it as a divine gift.

I will use it only for good, right, appropriate purposes.

In using it, again I bless it and give thanks for it.

This blessing can be extended to all material possessions and objects. A blessing can also be addressed to those who give money or other possessions for spiritual purposes and uses; this may also include future, unknown "givers".

## **The Blessing of Obstacles**

This might seem to be the most difficult kind of blessing.

Our first natural reaction to obstacles is generally one of rebellion or resentment. According to psychological type, it manifests as irritation or self-pity. Yet there are good reasons, first for graciously accepting obstacles, and then for blessing them.

The first reason is that negative reactions increase the difficulty and have bad effects on our psychological and physical health. A recommended consideration lies in the recognition of the universality of, and men's totality of, obstacles. Alfred Adler, the well-known psychotherapist, has expressed it - "I am in a world full of difficulties and my difficulties belong to me. Why should I quarrel with them?" His biographer, Phyllis Bottome, in quoting this statement, comments: "This belief in Life as a beneficent colleague, gave him the extraordinary ease and strength that characterised him." (Alfred Adler, p. 3.)

It has been said that the purpose of obstacles is to draw upon the latent will. "Blessed be the obstacles, they teach us unity and resistance" we read in the book *Heart* (Agni Yoga Series).

The positive function of obstacles is often unconsciously recognised, particularly by the young; they resent the easy life and look for adventure and risk, with their accompanying hardships. In a more general way we might say that in sport and games people create obstacles for the satisfaction of overcoming them.

Moreover, the willing acceptance of obstacles and the recognition of their usefulness helps to overcome or destroy them, sometimes in a surprising way.

Therefore we can well say, when confronted by difficulties: "Blessed be Obstacles."

General blessing has been called "the radiation of a rainbow of blessings to the world." Here is a form used daily by many:

### **Morning Blessing**

May all things and all beings

with whom I am, or shall come in contact today, be blessed - now and forever.

Another short form of *Morning Blessing* is:

Blessed be this day

towards the perfect consummation

of the Divine Plan.

### **Blessing Meditation for the World**

#### *1. Alignment*

This requires quieting the personality so that there is no obstruction to Soul union, for it is the Soul, the Self, that blesses. Its three stages are:

1. The body sits relaxed.

2. The emotions are stilled, so that they do not interfere ("quiet as a mountain lake").

3. Then we observe the “monkey” mind (as it has been called because it jumps around). This, too, must be quieted and, if it leaps away, be brought back to stillness, to face the Soul.

## *II. Meditation*

So aligned, we raise our centre of consciousness towards the Soul and endeavour to enter into communion through a chosen seed-thought or consideration of a spiritual quality, such as goodwill, joy, peace, or the realisation of world need.

## *III. Radiation*

“Breathe out” the ideas as formulated thoughtforms into the great stream of mental substance which is ever playing upon the human consciousness.

## **Visualisation and Use of the Hands in Blessing**

Visualisation is of particular value in blessing. It not only aids concentration, but brings to the blessing we are seeking to bestow the power of creative imagination and the positive factor of "seeing" the blessing we are sending out reaching the recipient. The following exercise is an example of this:

Visualise a sphere of golden light and place yourself within it. From that centre, holding your consciousness as high and steady as possible, say:

"I stand in spiritual Being and, as a Soul, I serve.

I stand within the Light, and as the Light shines through my form, I radiate that Light.

I stand within the Love of God, and as that love streams through and from my heart, I bless all whom I seek to aid."

Visualise this blessing going out to:

(a) Your immediate circle of family and friends. (b) All those with whom you come in contact.

(b) Those in places of responsibility all over the world. (d) Humanity as a whole.

See this beneficent light and blessing streaming forth as you hold your hands, palms outwards, in blessing.

The hands can play a most potent part in transmitting "spiritual energy, and one that is little understood. The "laying on of hands" is no idle phrase, nor is it confined solely to the operations of the episcopate of any faith.

Gestures help to concentrate the mind, focus the attention and direct currents of energy. Physical movements help to give a sense of reality; but their value is chiefly symbolic and when it is not possible to make the movements, they can be performed in imagination, that is, visualised. They are effective in this way, owing to the creative power of imagination.

## **Five Gestures for Use in Blessing**

### *1. Recollection-Concentration*

After the arms have been opened horizontally, they are folded in front of the chest, at heart level, and the hands are joined with the fingers interlaced. This gesture and position represents the phase of recollection and concentration. The consciousness, dispersed and distracted by a multitude of sensations, emotions and mental activities, is focussed into the centre where the personal "I," ego or self, dwells (pure individual self-consciousness).



### *2. Elevation and Communion*

The second gesture is performed by extending the arms upwards with the hands joined as they are usually held while praying. It symbolises the raising of the personal centre of consciousness, propelled by aspiration, towards superconscious levels, the realm of Light, Joy, Love and Power, where the Spiritual Self, the Soul, ever dwells. There, as "living, loving, willing Souls," we joyously realise our communion with other Souls (Group consciousness). "The Souls of men are one and I am one with them," in the One Soul (Unanimity).



### *3. Invocation-Evocation-Reception*

The hands are opened with the wrists joined and the fingers forming a cup (the "Grail Cup"). In this position we invoke, with faith, joy and gratitude, the blessing descent of the divine energies (Light-Love-Power) and remain in an inner attitude of reverent, silent receptivity.



#### *4. Descent-Infusion*

The arms and hands are lowered and brought back to the starting position, with the fingers interlaced in front of the chest. This movement and attitude represent the conscious bringing down of the Light, Love and Power into the personality, which is thus being infused and pervaded by them.



#### *5. Radiation-Blessing*

The arms are extended horizontally with palms outspread forward. In this position we perform the actual blessing, made powerful by the preparation and recharging of the preceding phases. We radiate the divine energies telepathically in all directions, towards all living beings.



### **The Great Buddhist Blessing of the Four Divine States**

1. LOVE TO ALL BEINGS - North-South-East- West-Above-Below Love to all beings.

(Silence)

2. COMPASSION TO ALL BEINGS - North-South-East- West-Above-Below Compassion to all beings.

(Silence)

3. JOY TO ALL BEINGS - North-South-East- West-Above-Below Joy to all beings.

(Silence)

4. SERENITY TO ALL BEINGS North-South-East- West-Above-Below Serenity to all beings.

(Silence)

## **Mantrams which can be used in Blessing**

### **The Mantram of Unification**

The sons of men are one and I am one with them.

I seek to love, not hate;

I seek to serve and not exact due service;

I seek to heal, not hurt.

Let pain bring due reward of light and love.

Let the soul control the outer form,

And life and all events,

And bring to light the love

Which underlies the happenings of the time.

Let vision come and insight.

Let the future stand revealed.

Let inner union demonstrate and outer cleavages be gone.

Let love prevail.



Let all men love.

## **Benediction of the Soul**

"Down from the mountain top I come, bringing the light of Life, the life of Light. Into the chalice of the form I pour that light which life confers, this life which light sustains. I see this golden light transform the darkness into day. I see the blue of life divine pour through the form, healing and soothing. Thus is the task performed. Thus is a man of earth transformed into a son of God."

*(Discipleship in the New Age, Volume 1, by Alice A. Bailey, page 460.)*

## **The Great Invocation**

From the point of Light within the mind of God

Let light stream forth into human minds

Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God

Let love stream forth into human hearts

May the Coming One return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known

Let purpose guide all little human wills

The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the human race

Let the Plan of Love and Light work out

And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

# *Unity School of Christianity*

(Incorporated)

Lee's Summit, Missouri

## *Correspondence School Department*

To whom it may concern Greeting:

The Unity School of Christianity hereby certifies that

*Philippe De Coster*

has completed the course of instruction required by the Unity School of Christianity in its Correspondence School Department and has passed all tests.

This course of study has been of a spiritual character. It covers fundamental principles in the teachings of Unity and their application in redeeming the mind and healing the body. We are satisfied that this student has an understanding of the Unity teaching.

In witness whereof we have herewith set our hands and the seal of said School this 15th day of May AD. 19 70

*Unity School of Christianity*

*Lowell Fillmore* President

*Vera Dawson Tait* Director

Distance learning – 10 years



## Examination Certificate

This is to certify that

PHILLIPPE LAURENT DE COSTER

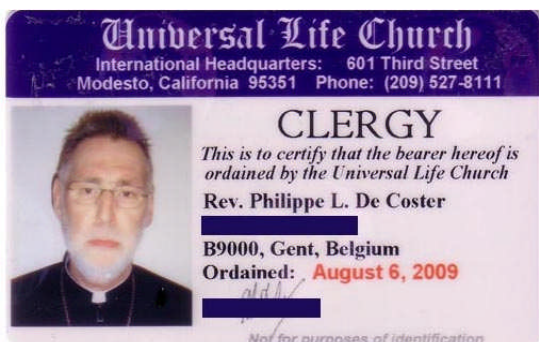
has taken the College Course on

PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY

and in a written examination has secured a CREDIT

Date November 1981

Principal



This is to certify that the bearer of this credential, whose name appears on the face of this card, is a legally ordained minister of the Universal Life Church, and is authorized to perform all ministerial services, such as baptisms, marriages, funerals, to preach and conduct church meetings, and to ordain new ministers into the church. This certificate of ordination is granted for life, and entitles the holder to all privileges and considerations customarily granted a minister. The minister must comply with local laws when performing marriages. The Universal Life Church assumes no responsibility for any actions by the holder hereof, for use of this credential for any purpose other than that for which issued.

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This is to certify that

*Philippe Laurent De Coster*

having satisfied the

Examiners in the requisite  
subjects of the curriculum

is awarded the

Correspondence Course  
Diploma  
*With Credit*

---



President *Eric Richardson*

Principal *Michael Griffiths*

Date *NOVEMBER 1984*

**Distance Learning**

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