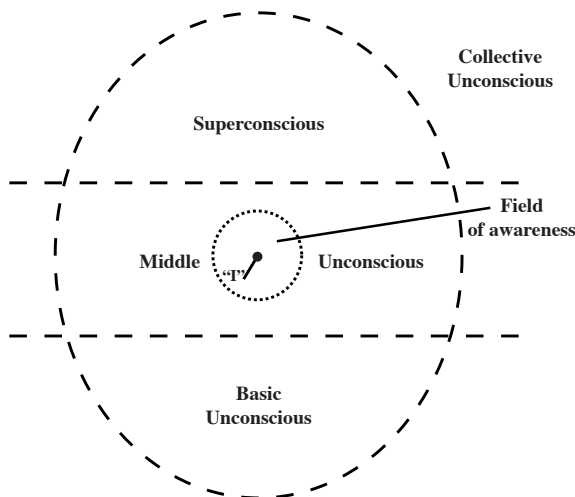
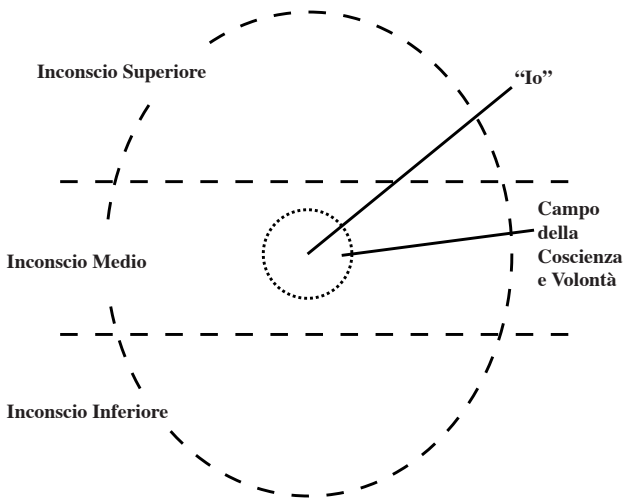


DEBATE MEETING ON THE SELF

On March 27, as announced in the previous issue of this Magazine, at the Institute of Florence took place the “Debate - Meeting on the Self” to reflect together on the choice made by some parts of the international psychosynthetic culture to remove the symbol of the Self by the Egg Diagram of Assagioli. We considered necessary to reason together to culturally attentive answer to an issue which we feel is important, both from a theoretical and symbolic level. The debate was extensive and thorough and, in the following pages, we publish the 6 ** opening reports. The next step will be to prepare one or more reports

to be delivered at the 2016 International Congress that will be held in Taormina. To this purpose we intend to keep the debate open to all who wish to participate, by sending to the Headquarters of the Magazine their thoughts on the topic outlined, as a comment or response to the findings in the published reports. Before the Congress in Taormina we would give shape to a small but important dossier on the subject, containing both the relations and all comments, thoughts, opinions that we will receive. Thanking you for your attention, we look forward to your valuable response.

By A. Alberti - G. Y. Dattilo - C. Fani - P. Ferrucci
F. Leoni - P. Marinelli - L. Ramorino - M. Rosselli
S. Guarino - G. Russo - A. Bocconi



THE EVOLUTIONARY CRITERION

(Translation by Achille Cattaneo)

*“We are in an imperfect universe,
on an imperfect planet,
in an imperfect humanity.”*

Roberto Assagioli

The aforementioned statement by Assagioli, which states that imperfection is the basic situation of existence, deserves close analysis. It implies a *perfectibility of the human condition, a dramatic vision of life, and an evolutionary criterion.*

Life is a constant struggle between multiplicity and unity, whose final project is the composition of multiplicity into a harmonious unity. This goal is pursued through a journey undertaken from separateness to union, from part to whole, from disharmony to harmony, from chaos to synthesis, from hate to love.

This *movement towards synthesis*, Assagioli writes, concerns not only the individual, but all forms of life,

and unity is not a starting point but a goal, and therefore a conquest: “Universal life itself appears as a struggle between multiplicity and unity, as labor and aspiration towards union.”

“Unity [...] is the high prize of a long work: hard work, but magnificent, varied, fascinating, fruitful for us and for others, even before it is completed.”

Thus it is hard work, but at the same time beautiful and fascinating, to whose fulfillment and implementation all forms of existence (willingly or unwillingly) participate: from the individual to humanity, to the whole planet, the solar system, galaxies, the universe, the entire cosmos.

The Self is both the ideal point of arrival (*total ideal Self*) and, at the same time, the level of realization reached (“almost” *total real Self* or *incomplete Self*). This real Self can be considered as consisting of two sides or aspects: one side (universal) situated and belonging to the dimension of *being*, whose characteristics are stability, immobility, permanence, infinity and eternity (*transcendent Self*); and another (individual) that has the task of projecting and immersing itself in the dimension of *becoming*, in the energetic multiplicity of personality, whose characteristics are relativity and transience, mutability and transformation (*immanent Self*).

The cosmic drama must be considered as incomplete and unfinished and therefore still in progress: the ideal design of unity, union, harmony, synthesis, totality is yet to be completed. The Self sends his reflection, a particle of his into the field of existence (drawing it from an incomplete and unfinished part of himself) to gain experience in matter, in order precisely to become complete.

The particle of being (father-spirit) joins with a particle of becoming (mother-matter) and like a seed sown into the ground fertilizes it and gives rise to a *new life* (child-consciousness-feeling). This new life is nothing but a *particle of soul recovered* into the field of existence: this is the *immanent soul*, caught at the point of synthesis between spirit and matter, being and becoming.

The immanent soul is not something abstract, distant and unattainable, but the direct experience of a living

soul-moment, animated and vital which occurs in magical moments of *enchantment*, of *poetry* and *emotion* in daily experience.

This happens any time there is an *encounter* between an I and a Thou; when there is an experience of *beauty*, which can be caught in a face, in a shape, in a work of art, in nature; when we experience *joy*, *love*, *compassion*; whenever there is a *dialogue of intimate life* between people; when there is *inspiration* and *creativity*; when we believe in an *ideal* and try to pursue it; whenever *feelings* flow freely and are freely *shared*; when what Maeterlinck called “*invisible goodness*” manifests itself and an “*embrace of souls*” occurs.

WHERE IS THE SELF?

“If we really want to know what the Self is, We should go and meet it in its home. “

Roberto Assagioli

“His presence is undeniable and I feel it in every flower, in every ear to the wind. “

J. O. Wallin

It must be said first of all that a diagram, a symbol is not the truth, not reality, but a way of analogically representing a part of it.

Assagioli represents the Self as a star and places it high on top of the ovoid, to indicate and represent an aspect of it: the *evolutionary dimension*. He uses the metaphor of top and bottom, of lower and upper, precisely to indicate a path of growth and maturity, similar to that which occurs in a human being (child, adolescent, adult).

However it is important to bear in mind that high and low are only symbols, analogies, to make concepts understandable to us, that we are immersed in the dimension of personality and of human existence.

In fact *in the inner dimension space and distances do not exist*, there are no places as we know them in the physical plane. The evolution of consciousness follows a *circular and global path*, and has *totality* as its goal.

Moreover, to represent the evolutionary process, Assagioli does not only use the analogy of high. He makes use of as many as *15 groups of dynamic symbols of the Self and the super-conscious*, of which only one is the *ascent*, the process of climbing to the summit of being (symbol of the mountain).

He also uses the symbol of the *descent* or *depth*, that is descending to the bottom of ourselves, to the roots of being (symbol of the *bottom*, of the *roots*). Similarly *Mère* spoke of the soul as something sweet and still, which you can perceive by descending into depth.

Besides Assagioli always indicates and describes the analogy of *getting to the interior*, namely, going from the periphery to the center of ourselves, from the outside to the inside, to the *center of being* (symbol of the *sphere*).

He uses then also the opposite symbol of *enlargement*, *expansion*, the movement from the inside to the outside, from inside to outside, from the I towards the Thou, the others, the world.

Therefore, if we try to know the Self and to know where it is, looking at it with the eyes of our personality and from our existential condition, we can grasp only a part, a facet, at a time. That is we can view it as placed on top, but also at the bottom, or even within the center, or yet in the width, horizontally, in the meeting point with others.

But, as Assagioli says, the key thing is to be able to enter the home of the Self, into its habitat, in order to know it really. And what is the home of the Self? We can consider the home of the Self as a *space-time of silence*. The Self is *wherever there is silence*. Thus it is *ubiquitous*: it can be seen, felt, read, when all that the Self is not becomes silent.

However it is good to keep in mind that even the *non-Self*, even serious illnesses such as *psychosis*, can take root and manifest themselves in silence. This can happen when we are dealing with a *dead silence*, lifeless and inanimate, when silence is only emptiness, non-being, abyss, the abyss of nothingness.

The home of the self is *living silence*, present, animated, inhabited by the “spirit of silence”. Assagioli tells us that silence is a *living entity*, which has its own voice, its own vital breath. The living silence is a *sacred breath*, a breath of life and love. This living habitat of the Self can be realized, composed, at any time or any place, any time there is harmony with all that is life, when there is dialogue and encounter of souls, when the relationship is alive and vital, when there is intimacy and free sharing of feelings.

HOW DOES THE SELF MANIFEST ITSELF IN EXISTENCE? THEORY OF THE INCOMPLETENESS OR UNFINISHEDNESS OF THE SOUL

“(We can only vaguely guess) the supreme purpose of the great cosmic drama [...] imagining great spiritual centers able to extend their conscience indefinitely, without losing the sense and powers of their own individuality.”

Roberto Assagioli

The Self is pursuing a project. Each *Self-project* is a project of individualization and wholeness. This applies to the cosmos as well as to each individual. The goal is the achievement of harmony, in which every particle of life does not merge into the whole, but remains, retains its individuality, and participates in the composition of the whole.

Psychosynthesis adopts an *evolutionary criterion*, which means that every living or non-living thing is following a path of growth and maturation; it also

means recognizing that the *omega point* has not yet been reached. The totality is not complete and individualization has not been fully recognized. Therefore, not only the human, but also the cosmic project should be considered as unfinished projects, which need to be completed.

At the human level, the “almost” *total Self* (i. e. still incomplete and not yet fully individualized) sends into existence a ray or reflection - *its small individual Avatar* - to recover particles of soul that are lost or still missing, that have remained in unfinished form and in a potential state in the material dimension.

Starting from these considerations, we can hypothesize what might be called the *theory of the incompleteness or unfinishedness of the soul*. According to this hypothesis, the Self has not yet reached its full maturity. The Self is not total, but “almost complete”. Each reflection or individual ray has within itself a *spiritual-genetic blueprint*. It has a *task*, a *mission*, a *vocation*. The task of each individual is to recover a part of the soul, to complete the *puzzle of one’s total self*.

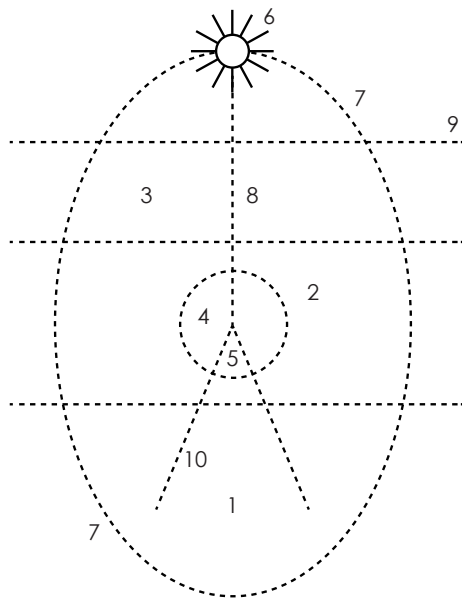
In the *temple of silence* we can find or find again the Self or soul: the duty of each individual human being is, like a good shepherd, to go and look for that part of the lost soul which has lost its way, recognizing it in all *soul-moments* of existence.

Pieces of soul are looked for, collecting them gradually over the course of the experiences of our individual existences. Every time we make *silence*, a *possible home of the Self* may be formed, within which *sacred moments* of contact with one’s own soul and encounters between souls, may occur.

In *Self-moments* we can experience the soul, recognizing it as the *center* of ourselves (*I*), as the *summit* and top, as *bottom* or *roots*, or as the *meeting point with the others* (*I-Thou*).

These sacred moments of contact with one’s own soul - and with all that is soul around us - dot the human path of life and will enlighten the path, creating real reference points, which help us to not lose ourselves.

To indicate graphically the soul in its dimension of immanence it seems more appropriate to represent it not as a single star at the top, but as a *constellation*, made of mixed and varied sparkles, which illuminate



1. Basic Unconscious
2. Middle Unconscious
3. Higher Unconscious or Superconscious
4. Field of awarenessness
5. I (centrality: courage)
6. Transpersonal Self (individual and universal) (joy)
7. Collective Unconscious
8. Connecting line I-Self: vertical arm of humility
9. Connecting line I-Others: horizontal arm of love
10. Lines of projection into the Basic Unconscious: root (trust)

Fig. 1

the various stretches that can be travelled in daily experience. 12

Thus the soul appears to us as a path, a *thread of relations*, a *network*, a true *canvas of human individual existence*, which is not static, but alive, vital and dynamic: it deepens and takes root, it is focused, It widens towards others and the world, it rises to the top, it reaches out to universal life (Fig. 1).

This “canvas of the soul” is based on the *feeling of freedom*, and it is dotted with spiritual sentiments, which by their own nature are free and seek to be freely shared. *Humility* is perhaps the quintessential human feeling: it makes us feel “human”, in our own place in the world, it gives us a sense of right proportions, it makes us accept both our limitations and our potential, and opens the door to all the *feelings of the soul* (innocence, hope, faith, courage, love, compassion, joy, beauty).

In my opinion this is the right way of understanding the transpersonal dimension, that is like taking a step *beyond the personal dimension* in different ways and directions: *upwards*, towards the *bottom*, towards the *center*, towards the *others* and towards the *world*.

In Conclusion: *the human soul is imperfect or still*

unfinished. It sends its beam, its reflection into individual existence, to make experiences in life, to capture soul-moments and then bring them back up to the “almost” total Self, with the purpose of its gradual enrichment and completion.

I want to end this relationship by formulating and leaving some open questions. Might it not be that right in this *eternal incompleteness* is hidden and revealed the mystery of the Self or soul? Might it not be that right at the point of suspension and at the same time of vital tension between what limits us and holds us back, but also delineates us, and what stretches over to the infinite and the eternal, but also disperses us, in short in this “being perpetually unfinished”, we can grasp the vibration of the feeling of the soul? Might it not be that *the real purpose* could not nor should not be the fulfillment, that would be *the end of everything*? Might it not be that the Self or soul is living Life, therefore continuous movement and transformation, constant dialectic between being and becoming?

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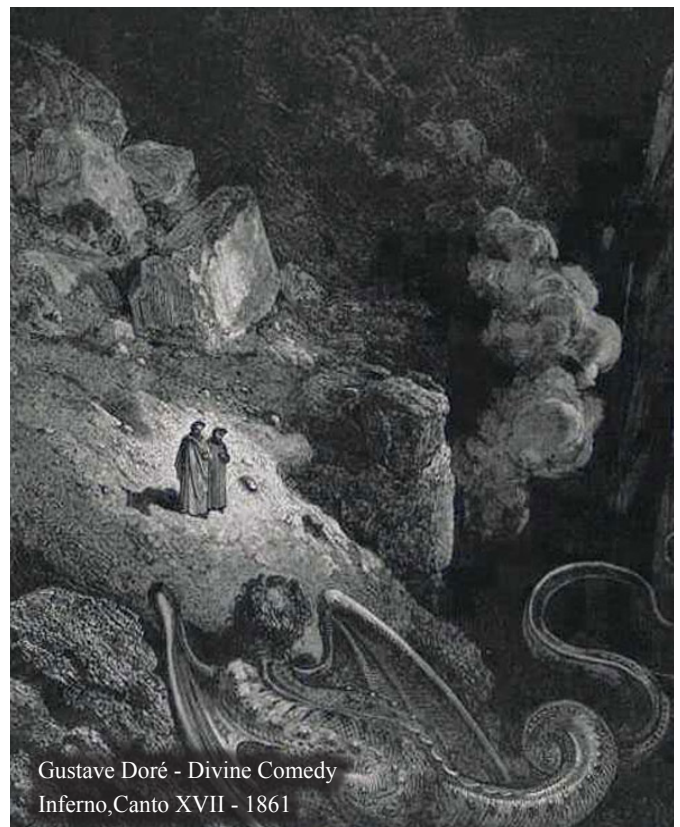
HEIGHTS AND DEPTHS OF SELF

(Translation by Gianni Y. Dattilo)

1. Self between Psyche and Spirit

In Psychosynthesis a clear distinction between personal psychosynthesis and transpersonal (or spiritual) psychosynthesis is traditionally emphasized. An integrated personality is the basic ground for any further psycho-spiritual development but, in my personal and professional experience, the light of Self sometimes shines even in the darkest times and places. We may recall how Assagioli appreciated the mystical expression "dark night of the soul", and I much resonate with Tom Yeomans' reflections on "The Soul's Dark Light".

11



Gustave Doré - Divine Comedy
Inferno, Canto XVII - 1861

Assagioli, who from the very beginning of his research carefully explored “Self-realization and Psychological Disturbances”, distinguishing between merely clinical disorders and spirituality-related disorders, was mostly interested in the heights of the psyche; using his terminology, he was more inclined to supra-version than to sub-version.

Though the shadow is not often directly addressed in Psychosynthesis (see Chris Robertson’s work on Revision’s website) we are very aware that sometimes the “descent into hell” is a necessary step.

According to a famous Chassidic saying, “descending is for the sake of ascending” (“yeridà tzorech aliyà” in Hebrew), and we find a similar idea in several traditions, Dante’s Divine Comedy for instance, according to Assagioli, could be compared to the psychosynthesis journey, and Bonnie and Richard Schaub beautifully explored Dante’s Path. Tom Yeomans points out the importance of the “principle of descendance” and

explains that without darkness “we remain mere light, without depth and dimension, we deny the destructive aspects of darkness which are within us, and we fail to own the creative aspects that are needed for a full life on earth”.

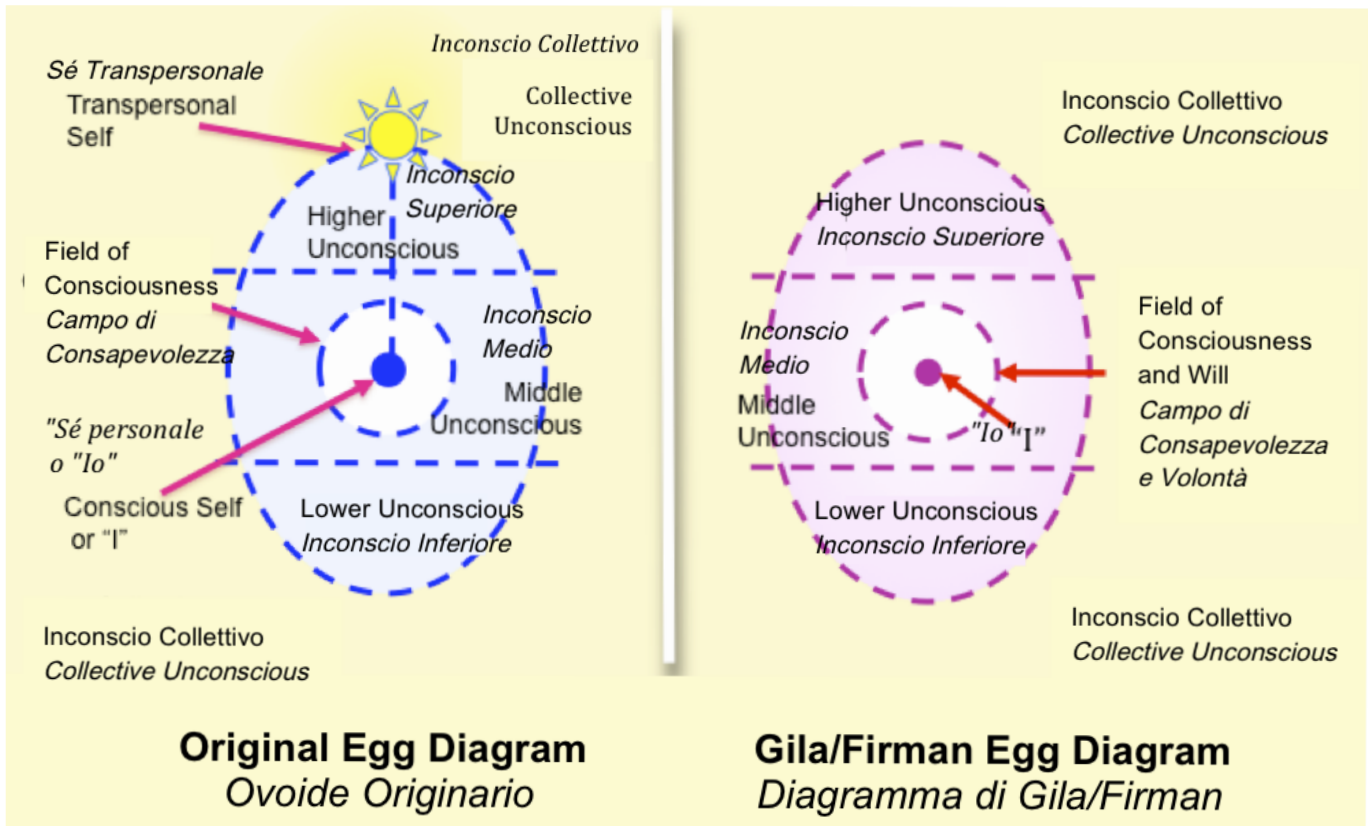
An interesting perspective on the distinction between ascending and descending currents within transpersonal psychology approaches can be found in Daniels, *Shadow, Self, Spirit*, though this author seems to completely disregard the descending dimension in psychosynthesis, as he simply writes that “Assagioli talks about the higher unconscious and the higher Self” overlooking in this respect the multidimensional complexity of psychosynthesis, and Assagioli’s view of psychoanalysis as a “first and necessary stage” of psychosynthesis.

Assagioli was overtly concerned with the heights of the psyche; his announced forthcoming book, unfortunately never published, had a very unambiguous title, *Height Psychology and the Self*. In the Introduction, quoted by Besner in an interview in April 1974, Assagioli explains the common resistances towards the words “high” and “heights”, and the often-attached inappropriate moralistic attitude. His emphasis on height psychology is, as in Maslow, to counterbalance depth psychology and its excessive focus on pathology and on the way downward. But times have changed and currently even Freudian psychoanalysis discovered the spiritual dimension. An interesting book by Michael Eigen, *The Psychoanalytic Mystic*, explores spirituality and mysticism within psychoanalysis (see also Symington, *Emotion and Spirit*; and Gargiulo, *Psyche, Self and Soul: Rethinking Psychoanalysis, Self and Spirituality* (2004)) and even the traditional neglecting and pathologizing psychoanalytic attitude towards religion has deeply changed, as we can appreciate in a publication edited by David M. Black, *Psychoanalysis and Religion in the 21st Century*, London 2006.

But psyche and spirit evoke connection and conflict at the same time. Probably some of us might have experienced in therapy that patients on a spiritual path, are very suspicious towards psychology and psychotherapy, fearing that psychotherapy could interfere with their spiritual practices and lead them astray.



Gustave Doré - Divine Comedy
Paradiso, Canto XXXI - 1861



We are currently facing a spiritual “revolution”; spirit cannot any longer be confined in institutional religions or in popular new-age organizations and groups, humanity search for spirit is all-pervasive and we perceive it in all walks of life, even in science. An Australian Jungian analyst, David Tacey, wrote a passionate book on this phenomenon, *The Spirituality Revolution* (2004), and in a more recent book, *The Darkening Spirit, Jung, Spirituality, Religion* (2013), Tacey explores the subject from a more specific psychological perspective, but unfortunately doesn’t seem to be aware of the existence of psychosynthesis

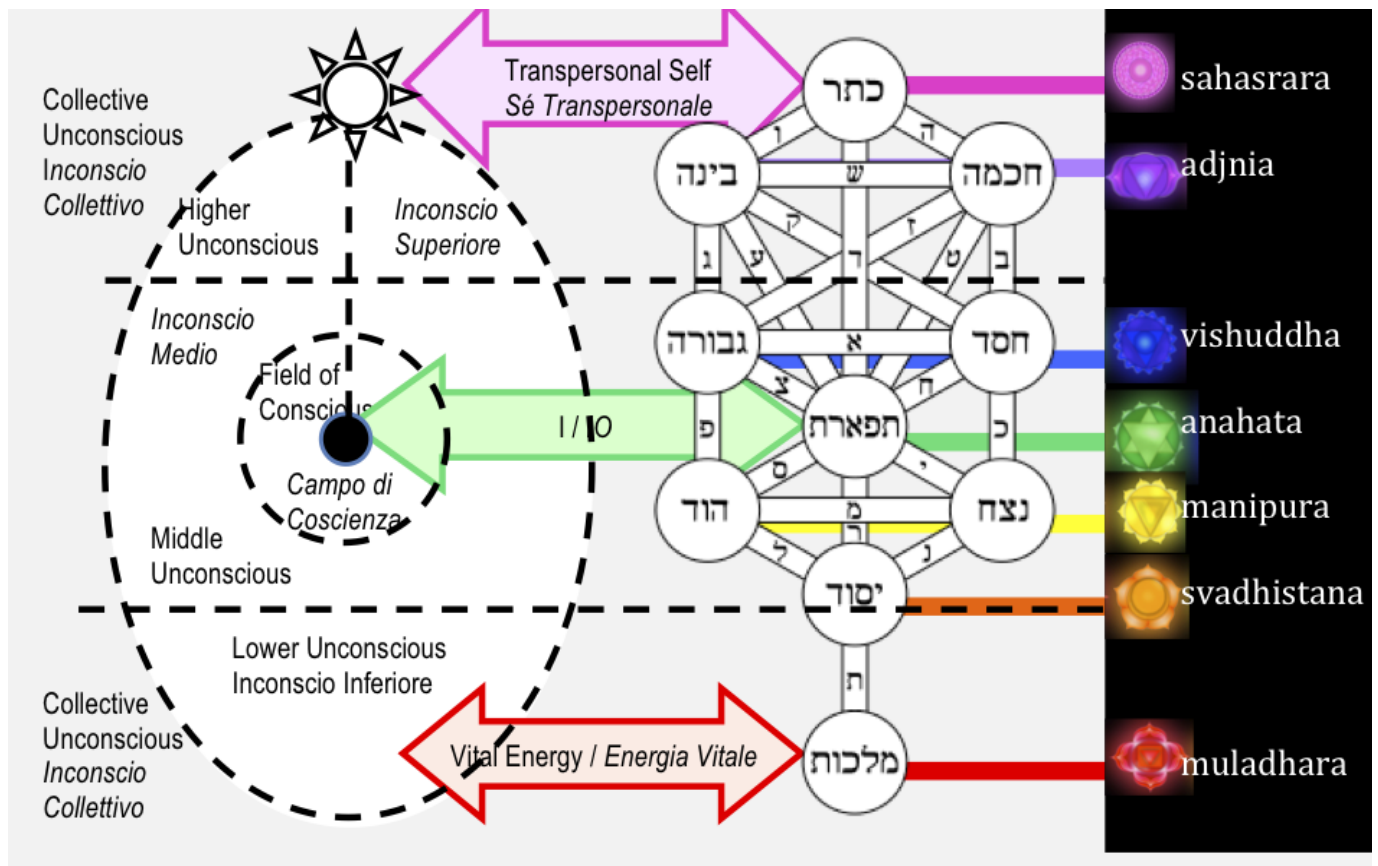
Psychosynthesis has been defined (Gila and Firman) “a psychology of the spirit”, or “a psychology with soul”(Jean Hardy), according to Assagioli also “transpersonal” means spiritual, but psychosynthesis itself is certainly not a spiritual path but a neutral, healthy way to it.

Richard and Bonnie Schaub, in *Transpersonal*

Development (2013), explain the difference between the two terms, and consider “transpersonal” more grounded in our actual nature and the inherent capacities of our mind. In fact going beyond of our normal understanding of “who we are”, at the same time, “we become more of who we are”. Nevertheless Richard and Bonnie despite these distinctions choose to use the terms spiritual and transpersonal interchangeably.

Molly Brown, in *Growing Whole* (2009) p.36, encourages the reader to get deeper into the terms Soul, Self, and Spirit, also considering Plotkin’s reflections on Nature and the Human Soul (2008) and we could actually consider integrating in psychosynthesis a more soul-centered attitude towards nature.

From a different perspective, in *Peaks and Vales: The Soul/Spirit Distinction as Basis for the Differences between Psychotherapy and Spiritual Discipline*, (Senex and Puer, CW, 2013), James Hillman points out the strong conflict between the two, clearly from the point



of view of the soul at war with spirit; he even expresses his gratitude to Maslow “for having reintroduced pneuma (spirit) into psychology” but blames him for confusing spirit with psyche. Reading Hillman is for me often amazingly “homeopathic”; it is simultaneously fascinating and disturbing, he drags me down into the vales, but eventually, beyond his intentions, lifts me up to the peaks of spirit more than most of the simplistic, new age, self-help, edifying literature.

Actually psychology is having a hard time rediscovering the soul in the most acceptable and largest meaning, consequently including spirit within its frame it is not an easy task.

Besides the term “self” is pivotal in this respect, sociologist of religions Paul Heelas in his book on *The New Age Movement, The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (1996) mentions the “religion of the Self”, and Christopher Lash in his

popular *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) explores “the banality of pseudo Self-Awareness”.

On the one hand, psychologists, and even Freudian psychoanalysts, and neuroscientists show appreciation for the term “self”, on the other hand there are areas of research where the same word can be also perceived as controversial.

Certainly the spiritual dimension has entered the “forbidden” zone of psychology through William James, Jung, Maslow, Frankl, Fromm, May, Wilber, Assagioli and several others, but in this context psychosynthesis has a unique role and mission to accomplish, as I will soon try to point out.

Carl Gustav Jung theorizes the Self as an archetype, striving for wholeness; it is at the core of the process of individuation. “The Self is not only the center, but also the whole circumference which embraces the conscious

and the unconscious”; it is expressed by numinous symbols representing often a God-image. In *Aion, Researches Into The Phenomenology of the Self*, (1951), Jung deeply explores the image of Christ as symbol of the Self, but he is adamant in distinguishing psychology from metaphysics, insisting that his psychological view is only phenomenological, and has nothing to do with the truths of theology and religion.

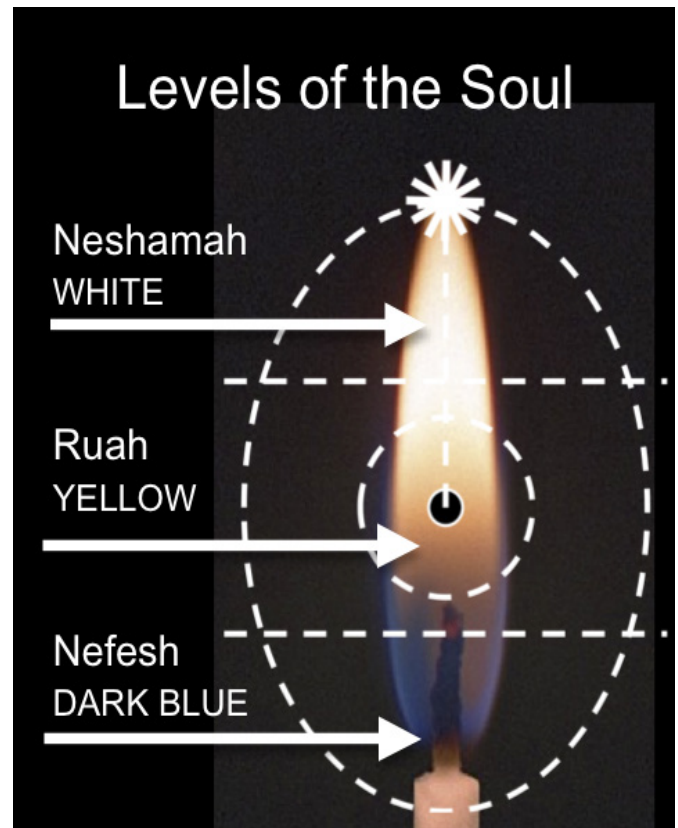
Assagioli considers “Jung the closest and most akin to the conception and practice of psychosynthesis”(Jung and Psychosynthesis) and in three lectures examines the analogies and differences between the two approaches. Recently Rosselli and Vanni in *Roberto Assagioli and Carl Gustav Jung* (2014), explore in depth the relationships between the two authors both historically and theoretically.

But what I find really unique in psychosynthesis is the explicit introduction of the spiritual dimension in harmonic relation and continuity to the merely psychological dimension through the notion of Self, the Higher Self, Transpersonal Self, whatever term we may prefer, as an **ontological entity**, and not just as a psychological reality. The recognition of a Spiritual Self is a basic assumption that informs the whole psychosynthesis theory and practice.

Assagioli doesn't argue what spirit in its essence may be. He specifically states, “we consider that the spiritual is as basic as the material part of man.... We accept the idea that spiritual drives or spiritual urges are as real, as basic and fundamental as sexual and aggressive drives.” (Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, 1965, p.171). Assagioli is not actually forcing upon psychology a metaphysical or theological theory, and emphasizes his neutrality towards spiritual and religious choices, but clearly introduces in the life of the psyche facts related to spirit. He was also envisioning a “Science of the Self”, of its energies and manifestations.

In *Talks on The Self*, a conversation with English-speaking students, he clearly speaks of Self as an ontological entity, comparing it to Aristotle's “Immovable Mover” or “Unmoved Mover”.

According to Aristotle “there must be an immortal, unchanging being, ultimately responsible for all wholeness and orderliness in the sensible world”



(Metaphysics Book 12).

Assagioli insists that we are subjective beings, even our spiritual experiences are transient, are living processes, belong to the world of becoming, while Self is stable, firm, permanent, it is “Pure Being”, but paradoxically acts and radiates.

In my opinion this is an explicit philosophical basic assumption, which is inevitable in science, and is epistemologically correct. Even the most materialistic, empiric approaches are based sometimes on opposite explicit theoretical postulates. What I am worried most about are implicit, non-declared, and sometimes-unconscious premises of the researchers.

A major topic in the psychosynthesis community at present is the” geographical” location of the Higher Self in the egg diagram, but Assagioli's idea of a coexisting immanence and transcendence of Self, deepened by Gila and Firman, may also be found in Jung and in several philosophers.

As we know, Gila and Firman and others have revised the egg-diagram, not representing Self on the apex, and Self as an absent presence is so more emphasized and all pervasive.

Though in my view, this location is symbolically and theoretically very significant, especially if compared to traditional diagrams like the Kabbalistic tree of life, or the different levels of the soul, “nefesh, ruach and neshamah” in Judaism, or the maps of Chakras. On the relationship of the Tree of Life and the Egg-Diagram, see Will Parfitt, *Psychosynthesis, The Elements and Beyond*, 2003 p. 160 ff., Tresenfeld, *Psychosynthesis and Kabbalah in Opening Inner Gates* (edited by Hoffman), Kramer, *Hidden Faces of the Soul*, 2000.

I personally had great conversations with John and Ann, in total agreement with the reasons that motivated the egg-diagram ‘s revision, but always maintained the original diagram as a psychosynthesis mandala.

2. The Ubiquity of Self

Clinically and experientially I perceive Self everywhere, what changes is the frequency of the energy vibration, depending on the level of its action and expression. Consequently Self has not the same vibration when radiating in the darkest areas of the lower unconscious, and when it radiates on different higher levels, but it is always there radiating, manifesting itself as “pure being” through the dense clouds of pain and crises and the joy of creativity. Thus I agree with Tom Yeomans and others on the complementarity of both directions downward and upward, they are both part of the evolutionary journey.

If we want to get deeper into psychosynthesis we shouldn’t overlook the variegated roots of Assagioli’s experience including eastern and western philosophies and psychologies within the spirit of synthesis that animated all his research from the very beginning.

*Seeing everything with an equal eye,
He sees the Self in all creatures
And all creatures in the Self.
Bhagavad-Gita (VI, 28)*

*Realizing the Self in all
And all in the Self
Free from egoism
And free from the sense of mine,
Be happy.
Astavakra Samhita (XV, 6)*

We may notice continuity between personal self, Transpersonal Self and Universal Self, being the Living Self an aspect of the Universal Self, (see Assagioli, *The Act of Will*, 1973 p. 89)

Assagioli, in his mentioned *Talks On the Self*, invites us to proclaim and celebrate the Self,

And paradoxically states “essentially we cannot celebrate the Self except being the Self”,

Only from the personal self, the personality, we may celebrate the Higher Self, which in my experience is also a Deeper Self.

Again Higher Self is never attained avoiding the depth of the psyche, severing the roots of the unconscious to fly high, that would never work. I would say “the higher the deeper, the deeper the higher”. After more than thirty years of psychotherapeutic practice I learn everyday that actual transformation is always attained underneath the surface, “deeper the roots higher the tree”.

My view on the ubiquity of Self is based on the clear perception of its silent presence in the overall human experience, including nature, beauty and arts, mysticism and philosophy, depression and psychological symptoms, health and illness, even beyond strict subjectivity, and paraphrasing Joanna Macy, we may see the *World as Lover, and the World as Self*.

According to Assagioli we don’t have a Self, but Self has us, and on the transpersonal dimension there is no such a thing as “my-self”, or “your-self”, but just Self.

Self needs to be grounded, embodied in what I call the “me-stage”, possibly in my “true self”, a Self-infused, integrated personality which is the basic channel for Self, thus for authentic interpersonal relationships and solidarity and joyous service.

The Ubiquitous Self I am suggesting can hold together both the Higher and the Deeper Self in the psychosynthesis process as a dynamic personal and

transpersonal integration, through Self as Pure Being and Unity. Personal and transpersonal psychosynthesis become part of an integrated whole in their interplay, a receptivity to Self is essential from the very beginning of the work, of course with the awareness of the different vibrational levels we may face and address.

*Knowing the Self beyond understanding,
Sustain the Self with the Self.*
Bhagavad-Gita (III, 42)

Consequently I wouldn't emphasize the experience of Self, as an object, which would be an experience of duality, but the vital experience of Self through Self, as an Erlebnis, using a German word for subjective, lived, immanent experience. The term Erlebnis was mostly explored by philosophers such as Husserl, Dilthey and Gadamer, and in psychopathology by Jaspers, but unfortunately less and less used in current spoken language, as far as I know.

Self is everywhere as a living subject, or even as "a-subjective consciousness", it is "consciousness without an object", quoting Franklin Merrell-Wolf (1887-1985) an Assagioli contemporary, outstanding American philosopher, whose book *Experience and Philosophy* (1994) I would highly recommend to psychologists.

"Consciousness without an object is", these few simple words summarize the permanence and stable sense of pure being of the I-Self-Consciousness in its dynamic interplay with the ever-changing contents, the transient objects of consciousness.

THE EGG DIAGRAM AND THE SELF

(Translation by Achille Cattaneo)

I will try to outline some points, seven to be exact, where I stopped to think for our meeting.

First point: the Presence, today, here.

It is a precious opportunity that today makes us encounter. We are here together for a dialogue about the meaning, the significance of the current psychosynthetic map of the Egg diagram and the changes that have been made to it by psycho-synthetic friends from overseas.

I want to emphasize the importance of this being together to talk in depth and openness of heart about a theme dear to us that allows us to touch the delicate relationship between the Ego and the Self, between multiplicity, Duality and Unity.

Second point: the Dialogue, as a key to understanding and not to opposing even the free expression of diversity.

Our intent is to attend a meeting that does not want to be the clash of different positions, but rather an opportunity to understand the origin and the reasons that led to modify the diagram of Assagioli.

Certainly behind the cancellation of the star of the Self from the Egg Diagram there cannot be the idea of "abolishing the Self", but more likely to propose a Self everywhere in our psychic and conscientious structure, a Self that is everywhere, ontologically omnipresent. Maybe it is not the graphic signor where we draw it that really matters, but how we interpret that sign and in what relation we set ourselves.

How many times a man for the sake of that Self, confused love with lust or with the presumption to know the only way to Self and, priding himself, turned away from it, losing dialogue and interpersonal skills?

Numerous times.

Yes, because in the name of that Self, in the conviction to act in its name and for excesses of idealism, the man has proclaimed himself as “guru”, hierarch of a personal hierarchy, not realizing to acting through a Sub-personalities, convinced to be in the Self and unfortunately becoming agent of a false Self.

I remember when Krishnamurti, intolerant of the messianic label assigned by others to him, upsets a project of years made on him by the Theosophical Society and talks about the great value of inner freedom. So it is not a look at the surface that helps us to grasp the meaning of this “surgery” made on the Egg diagram, but a look that goes to its “deep” motivations “, that can help us to understand, and then to meet at a different level of consciousness.

Therefore, mutual understanding and not opposition.

The contrast generates opposition, separateness and isolation-loneliness-anger.

Here then is that loving is understanding each others, create and foster the relationship so we can meet with the joy but also with the pain of the other.

Third point: the Depth

The Self is not an idol.

Usually the idols stand on a pedestal, a little above, in the distance.

Drawing the star of the Self at the top of the Egg diagram does not indicate a formal hierarchy, but give a direction graphically expressed as the ‘High. The star of the Self is not detached from the Egg diagram but in close contact with it, radiant toward the psychic and human structure, open to the collective, and similarly radiant toward the Cosmos or Universal Principle.

If I tip the map of the Egg diagram perhaps it is no longer true?

If I tip the classic map of the psycho-synthetic Egg diagram I take a new dimension: the pro-depth, or “pro” (= in favor) of what we go to see, to explore in the depth. “Both high and low” is an expression that fits well with this gesture to turn the map and grasp new meanings.

There can not be “vertical” growth, that is to the contents of the super-conscious, which hugs the horizontality,

that is our own fellows, but not only, the other kingdoms of nature.

I remember a person with a beautiful voice used at the professional level who was supervised by a famous opera singer who one day said that it was useless that he ventured out upon the voice trying to distort the true nature of baritone, and that even if he had been a tenor would not make sense to push the sound up without having experienced and known the depths. “Impossible, my friend - said the famous singer - both dimensions have to be explored” So much high as low.

Fourth point: the Harmony

Going to the Depth of ourselves, of the motivations that drive us toward or against something or someone allows us to see the many kaleidoscopic pieces of a possible unity.

In search of that Unity, we proceed to progressive synthesis, performing an inside job that leads to harmony.

So harmony is a dynamic process, a continuous creation driven by will, or by a will that moves from one willing point , that wants.

The human being who aspires to live and give harmony has to make a revolution from inner and not from outside.

Fifth point: the Self that wants

I try to summarize the steps undertaken so far: I have moved away from Myself, perhaps due to a sub-personality that was believed the Self or False Self.

I have suffered and I may have created suffering.

I do not want to live separate further on, I want to find the seeds of a lost relationship. Reconcile myself.

So I choose the dialogue, beginning with my inner parts, not in opposition.

The pain gets me in the deep, forces me to look inside, where I meet many scattered fragments of me, just like the pot of the traditional wisdom that, eager to fill with light water, is shattered.

I recompose the fragments of the “pot-myself” in a wonderful work of harmonization, as in the beautiful Japanese art of Raku. That is with the blood of my pain and with the gold of the light of the Soul I recompose a Unity. My, our unity.

Where did I find strength, energy, love to meet again blood and light? Spirit and matter?

I found them in a small point of myself, a point where I perceive and I live whole and free, the personal Ego.

Where I live and feel the pulse of sincere life.

We know that that point, our Ego, grows in awareness, it is love.

We acquire knowledge not only with our rational mind, but because we live, we make experience. If I personal

Ego has the opportunity to grow in awareness, it has a dynamic propulsion, so it is not always equal to itself. Something feeds it, helps it in that growth. So I sense that myself - as personal identity - am not yet in my transpersonal Self, of which I perceive the reflected light.

We are a point of pure awareness and that purity from age to age becomes more clear, allowing you to recognize ourselves, humbly and joyfully, in a greater Self.

Sixth point: the Self

In this profound recognition there joy because the whole process is kept in the Heart.

A wise Master wrote:

“There is just one Aristocracy, that of the Heart, one Democracy, the Agreement, one new order, that of Sharing, one Culture, that can reveal the Beauty of Synthesis”

Seventh point: the relationship care

We can certainly change the graphic scheme of the map of The Egg diagram, why not?

However, if we refer to Psycho-synthesis as the original model of Assagioli we can maintain the Egg diagram as Assagioli drew and not through a formal homage to the Master, but because we share the profound meaning.

On the other hand we understand by heart the reasons that have led other psycho-synthetists from overseas to modify that map and to them, because we are at the point of the heart, we do not oppose.

A simple reflection:

An Egg diagram with at the center the EGO without other references can contribute to confuse me to stray.

If the EGO has an intrinsic mutability, representing a state of consciousness that changes, grows, expands, in a map with just this point in the center, I am brought to recognize myself in this mutability and perhaps also to mistake again the personal Ego with the Self. Deceiving myself and then to suffer more because of it.

But if I recognize to the Synthetic and Universal Principle the sovereignty of emanations, including me of course, I feel and I live like a bridge between the particular and therefore the personal EGO to the Universal this bridge is a function and not a scope.

Because of this I can rejoice and maintain a look of wonder and amazement that I risk loose if I confuse the Ego with the Self.

I think that in respect of different choices, keeping the graphic sign that shows the relationship, possible if we leave the Ego at the center and the star of the Self at the top with the dashed line that unites them and indicate the dialogue, relationship, we give sign and substance to a symbol of care and love

Carla Fani

YOU'RE A ZERO

(Translation by Piero Ferrucci)

At the beginning of last century Roberto Assagioli formulated the system of self-realization and psychotherapy known as psychosynthesis. He based it entirely on the principle that at the center of our being is a point without dimensions - the silence of the mind. Our true Self, “individual and universal at once”, is formless self-awareness beyond time. The nucleus of our being is empty. Dig deep, and you will ultimately find you are zero.

It is not only Assagioli who came to this surprising conclusion. Utterly respectable people and traditions, in both the East and the West did so too. Assagioli reaffirmed this model and imported it to contemporary psychology.

The Self is a reality of which we are seldom conscious. Our consciousness, far from being in its pure state, is usually lost among millions of contents – like the Greek god Proteus, capable of taking on all possible forms. From one moment to another our consciousness can become the wish for the latest model Smartphone, the annoyance of neck pain, the feeling of euphoria, the idea of Weierstrass’s theorem, the joy of hearing a Mozart Fantasy, or the craving for a cream doughnut. The essential point is that we are not any of these or any trillion other experiences, but we are who has these experiences. The gradual realization of this basic fact can revolutionize our life.

The road that leads to the Self starts with a reorganization of our viewpoint, called in psychosynthesis “dis-identification”. An Eastern story illustrates this process: several robbers sneak one night into the garden of a plush mansion. Suddenly they see in the dark what appears to them a man. Because it is dark, they do not see it clearly. The boldest of them goes closer to it, and sees that the man is really a scarecrow – nothing to fear. So he calls the others, who are not at all convinced and

still afraid. However, they soon realize their perception had been wrong and they too are.

According to Vedanta philosophy, we are like those robbers: we allow ourselves to be frightened or bossed around by illusory entities. It is a great waste of energy. And if we examined them more carefully, we would not allow ourselves to be duped. There is really nothing to fear.

That is what dis-identification is all about. It means watching emotions, thoughts, desires and roles in a new, more objective way. It means not letting our experience and actions be determined by these elements, but creating distance, and placing ourselves at a calmer and more objective observation point. **This vantage point is the Self. In this essay I shall use the term “Self” to mean both the transpersonal Self and the personal self, or “I”.** According to Assagioli there is only one Self. At certain moments in our life we are able to have a dim awareness of it (personal self), which becomes ever stronger and clearer (transpersonal Self).

The Self is pure consciousness, empty of content: thus it is beyond culture. It is what we are, once we are stripped of all attributes and forms. As Zen says: it is our face before we were born. The superconscious, on the other hand, is full of contents. Whenever we have (for instance) a flash of intuition, the sensation of being at one with nature, the ecstasy of listening to music, communion with another person, the perception of “the love that moves the sun and the other stars”, or many other experiences that enrich our life with joy and meaning, and which take us out of our individual sphere, we have the experience of the superconscious.

The superconscious is not the Self. We could consider its emanation. The Self is empty, silent, zero. The superconscious is form, content, action. The superconscious is more or less influenced by the culture from which it is generated: the Self is outside of culture. The superconscious is a door that opens and shuts: the Self is the motionless hinge upon which the door swings. While Assagioli puts the Self at the top of the egg, in a position clearly superior to the rest of the human personality, some of his students suggested taking it off its throne and instead imagining it to be present in the

whole diagram. A premise is necessary in this regard: the map is not the territory. Any graphic representation of our inner complexity is in principle incomplete and may be misleading. Furthermore, we must not forget the autobiographical factor. Every diagram reflects the life of the one who created it. Assagioli was a mountain lover. As a child he was frail, and his father often took him for long Alpine walks. For him the climb was an act of will and symbol of self-conquest: an overcoming of his own weaknesses. Verticality was a basic theme in his life and thought. John Firman, like others among us, belonged to a generation that viewed hierarchies with suspicion. For this reason the location of the Self at the top of the Egg did not convince him. He wanted a more democratic and egalitarian Self, one more in line with modernity; immanent in the body and in human affairs. I shall add that good reasons exist for representing the Self at the high point: first, because it is lighter. Once we drop the weight of all we believed we are, we are freer and lighter, and we rise, like Dante, who, after climbing the mount of Purgatory and freeing himself of memories and blocks that had weighed him down, feels ready to climb to the stars and finds himself at once in Heaven, because that is his and our true nature. Moreover, from up high you have a wider and more serene perspective. You see farther, with greater detachment and serenity, thus with greater wisdom. Finally, the peak is the place of command. Not all the elements of a harmonious personality have the same executive power. In short, the Self is chief. The Self is will. It is not a dictator. It is not an unreasonable boss. It is a skilful orchestra conductor with a wide ranging vision of the piece to be played. For all these reasons I am more favourable to the idea of leaving the Self at the apex, yet I would remain open to alternative depictions that remind us of other possible views.

To end: a methodological difficulty arises in all this. The Self, according to Assagioli’s definition, “exists in a reality different from the realities contained in the flow of psychic phenomena or organic life”. The Self influences the personality, but the personality does not influence the Self. It is like the difference between the screen and the images projected onto it: whether the

images be cheerful or sad, beautiful or ugly, interesting or trite, the screen remains the same, because it has another nature with respect to the images. So how can we insert into the map an element that is heterogeneous with respect to the other elements? It is as if I were to draw a map of Florence and wonder: where do I put the beauty of Florence on this map? Do I put it with the hills, or the Duomo, or the Uffizi? Clearly “beauty” is of a different order to the topographical elements.

This is the reason why at the end of all our discussion we reach a paradox. Words, diagrams, all kinds of system, are the finger pointing at the moon - they are not the moon. The Self by its nature is ineffable. It is right and useful to talk about it: but everything we say of it is false.

Piero Ferrucci

DEBATE MEETING ON THE SELF

(Translation by Donatella Randazzo)

The topic of this meeting is well known to everyone: some international theoreticians of Psychosynthesis such as J. Firman, A. Gila and, more recently, M.Y. Brown, have removed the graphic representation of Higher Self from Assagioli's egg diagram. They have not questioned the presence and role of Higher Self, but its location and visibility at the intersection between Higher unconscious and Collective unconscious, along the I's vertical line.

The graphic and symbolic representation of Self inside the egg diagram could seem a minor issue but, on the contrary, I believe this matter to be crucially important as its absence threatens to hide – and even suppress – one of the most characteristic and, in my opinion, progressive aspects shown by Psychosynthesis, compared with other contemporary psychological theories.

In Psychosynthesis, in fact, at the centre of human beings' complexity lies a mysterious, yet characteristic

and propulsive aspect, known as Spirituality, even though this word through time has changed meaning depending on the phase Humans reached regarding increasing awareness of themselves and the surrounding world. The evolution phases can be connected with four different ways of thinking: magical, mythical, religious, scientific thinking.

In this framework Higher Self represents an extremely complex concept, which has been investigated in both western (from Jung to Maslow and Khouf) and eastern psychologies (Self exists in Hinduism, but not in Buddhism). At present, this very topic is being discussed all over the Psychosynthesis world.

In Sweden, the December 2014 issue of *Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis* has been devoted to the “Dialogue between I and Self”; in Montreal, Canada, an international congress will soon take place, from August 5 to 9, on “Be your true Self”. The aim of the conference is to ponder on the potential action of Self “in clinical, educational, economic and ecological applications” and evaluate its impact both inside the work group and in the individual interrelations between “Personality and Self”. Some work – it is said – is to be carried out in the framework of “Spirituality but not Religion”.

The discussion on Self, therefore, is open and alive within the context of international Psychosynthesis.

Getting back to the subject of our meeting, I wish to highlight the fact that, besides the graphic presence or absence of Self in the egg diagram, what really matters are the reasons which induce us to state that Self “must” or “must not” be represented, because the value and meaning we are willing to recognize and affirm in Psychosynthesis, derive from those reasons.

Today's meeting and the debate which will follow have been organized to enable us to consider together this value and meaning.

To help the comparison among the various theoretical stands, the following three questions have been posed:

1° - Where is Self ?

2° - How does Self manifest and comes across life?

3° - Does Self derive from deep neurological processes or is it pre-existing and independent of them?

These three questions are closely linked to one another and point to a fourth question, to which no one is able to give a definitive answer: is Self immanent to Human Being or is it a Transpersonal quality? or even further, is the presence of Self in human a Transcendent quality?

This question can be debated, based on our personal and inter-individual experience but no analysis, even a very detailed one, can ultimately solve this dilemma, as the answer is not a technical issue on Self and it is not limited to this aspect, but derives from the meaning we give to our existence in this strange world.

To affirm that Self is Immanent, Transpersonal or Transcendent does not depend on our reasoning but on the cultural interpretation we choose to accept as reason for our being in the world.

If we have faith, belief without need of proof, in God or in some cosmic Energy, our answer will reflect this. If we have no faith, our answer will be the opposite.

My vision of life is strictly immanent, it does not ask for a particular purpose or reason, beyond those that the scientific community, with a lengthy and strenuous effort, is able to provide through its partial and never definitive answers.

All withstanding, I meet Self – or what we call Self – in the course of my daily life, at times of both ordinary and extraordinary existence.

As many of you already know, I am an architect and I value myself as a good developer, an acceptable designer and a terrible painter but, in all cases, my action takes place in the field on non-verbal language, that is the landscape of metaphoric affirmations, from which self-organized interpretative codes are derived.

In other words, I am engaged in the use of the creative capacity, held by human beings and which makes them different from the other animals and, during my career, I have learnt that the protagonist of my creativity cannot and must not be the I, able to give rise only to belittling and egotistic occurrences but a deeper space inside me, which is the true innovative and creative engine: a centre of profound elaboration which, in the era of magics, was attributed to spirits, at the time of greek myth originated from the singing of the Muses and later, in religions, is interpreted as being direct divine inspiration.

Whatever its name, this Centre of Profound Elaboration is my street companion, without whom I would continually get lost.

I meet It during meditation, in the morning when I wake up, realizing that during my sleep It has found a solution for the creative problem I was not able to solve while awake: I meet It in the silence and peace which sometimes I need and find by taking some distance from the world's pressure and requests.

It's this, precisely this, the wonders of Psychosynthesis: its being a psychology, able to locate the human being inside a Duopoly, into some Dialectics which is both easy and difficult, silent and talkative ... between a rationalizing I and a creative Self.

A Duopoly in which the two acting parts bear equal importance and efficacy and neither of them can live by itself, otherwise the entire system will become fragile and collapse. An intimate and never ending relationship I care very much about because I do not wish to lead a life dominated by the I, nor do I want to isolate myself from the world in order to have Self take care of my life. The only life I am interested in is that where the energy of Self incarnates in the I and its capacity to act in the world, and the I find its reasons and objective in the creative force of Self.

To do without Self in the egg diagram means destroying the visible representation of the dialectic relationship between two processing centres, thus annihilating what I consider to be the most important message conveyed by Psychosynthesis, i.e. that within ourselves there exist two diverse processing centres, highly specialized and strictly complementary. One of the two is in charge of recognizing and interacting with the empirical world, whereas the other one connects us with the subtle level of intangible relationships.

For this reason, once again I admire R. Assagioli's intuition which has led him to locate the I in a place where it can be in relation with the lower and pliable unconscious of our daily relationship with the world, and Self, at the crossroad of volatile and supra-individual realities such as the collective Unconscious

and the Higher Unconscious, that is in a symbolically transpersonal perceiving place.

This theoretical picture seems to be confirmed by recent neurological studies. It has long been known that the active brain uses a molecule made of oxygen and glucose (Adenosine tri-phosphate), although only recently the amount consumed during the various cerebral activities has been measured.

The surprising result out of these measurements is that when resting, the brain consumes an amount of Adenosine tri-phosphate which is 20-fold the quantity used when it is engaged in something specific such as perceiving a ringing bell, holding a glass, uttering something.

This means that in the absence of external stimuli, some cerebral areas are activated in a neuronal network which has been called “Default Mode Network”, i.e. network “in the absence”.

This reminds us quite closely of what happens during meditation when, by reducing as much as possible any connection with external stimuli, we activate processes which can lead us to intuition, insights and, in any case, the perception of higher levels of awareness and synthesis. The first studies on DMN have been carried out at the Maharishi University of Management in Iowa (USA), and DMN is defined as “the activity linking various cerebral areas” which, in this way, can turn out to be “not some chaotic independent systems, but the union of interdependent systems”.

These studies also state that “there is no proof that DMN is the site of self-consciousness, although many clues seem to lead to this direction”.

In this framework a totally immanent explanation for the Self can be found, which shifts the human being from a strictly animal world, to some perceptive, interpretative and creative world in which he is able to make complex syntheses, and is endowed with supra-sensorial perception, transpersonal and empathic sensitivity.

These qualities differentiate us from the other animals, as Sergio Givone quite nicely states, on a philosophical level:

“Man, like all animals, in his daily effort looks downward, on the things which hinder and attract him (...) but suddenly – for no apparent reason – differently from the other animals, he looks upwards and is able to see beyond his context of everyday life, and it is that brief rising of his chin, those eyes staring the horizon and finding a direction, that separate him from the other animals and allow him to become a full human being”.

That very head movement and the rising of our look, lead us into that complex and deep landscape known as

Spirituality, which Psychosynthesis is able to interpret masterfully, in a way which protects us from an excess of negationist materialism.

I wish to just present a last point, perhaps one of the most crucial: the idea that with increasing frequency Spirituality can become the destination and the centre of some “learned and deep secularism”, able to recognize the role of that fine and intangible processing which has always been acting on world transformation, pushed by evolutionary forces which are slow, at times equivocal, though always relentlessly progressive.

That processing centre is able to realize increasing complex syntheses which, in Assagioli’s egg diagram are symbolically and masterfully represented by Self, which is located on the crossroad between Higher and Collective Unconscious.

What I mean is that I am not interested in bringing back the egg diagram to a “biological” or “ecological” dimension of existence, as respectively seem to do Firman, Gila and M. Brown, but in affirming the role played by Human Spirituality as a driving force throughout the entire history of our presence on this planet. This Spirituality could definitively become secular, without losing in intensity and strength.

For all these reasons, I believe that the psychosynthetic theory should reaffirm the role and importance of the symbolic presence of Self in the egg diagram, and be able to present itself as some cultural reference to a Spirituality which is individual and supra-individual at the same time, a transpersonal bridge among the multitudes of human beings.

Psychosynthesis, in this way, is the symbolic and operative banner of our right to be Spiritual.

THE SELF AS A PARADOX

(Translation by Paola Marinelli)

Although it may not seem very engaging, I must start my contribution by underlining the limits of such a debate on the Higher Self, limits which dwell both in the necessity of a debate itself to be done through the rational mind and, at the same time, in its own impossibility to be done through it.

What this means for me is this:

- necessity: we build mind maps using the rational mind, and they help us to have a inner orientation, as to have the hypothesis of something empowers the possibilities to experience it. But also, in doing this, we run the risk to build a kind of “parallel reality” in our own mind, and we know it quite well...

- impossibility: just because we believe the Higher Self a phenomenon “apart”, belonging to a different dimension of reality which is beyond the concrete mind, every step we take in its direction can only be to try to get nearer, to overshadow cognitively it, but we will never be able to give a definition of it. And precisely on such an impossibility of definition we are apparently unanimous!

Another important point about the Self is that, coherently with all our existential and psychic experience, it belongs and is inherent to the field of life, life flowing, constantly changing, always elusive, never to be stopped.

For when we try to say something about the Self, we are “fixing” a portion of reality which is of the same substance but which represents a part, never the whole... Anything we can say of the Self is like a stop-motion of a film, what we catch in that precise moment, the portion of an hologram.

And indeed to deal with the issue of the Self means also to deal with the vision or the perception of a reality underlying (or overlying?) which is so different from the one we experience in daily life, that all the words dedicated to it we feel as completely inadequate, often contradictory to each other (see esotericism towards

religions, religions among them, any kind of spiritual path...).

This testifies how such reality, even when authentically contacted, can be contacted only partially or in a limited way, as the whole is too far beyond our human capacity of comprehension, of containing such complexity, width and otherness which is its substance...

A hologram so complex and fascinating, so difficult, maybe impossible to be wholly comprehended.

But this doesn't impede us: we speak and debate, aware of all the limitations of such passionate activity!

I think that today, aware as we are about the history of spiritual thought and of all the contradictions in it, we have the possibility and the duty to evoke a peculiar human capacity: that of containing, comprehending, embracing complexity, the capacity to stay with what is undefined, even contradictory, without succumbing to the compulsion to cut one of the edges or to create an artificial harmony too quickly. It is the capacity of containing the difference of shapes because we can distinguish them from their substantial though sometimes less defined quality.

It is a question we must ask ourselves if we don't want to be taken in by the temptation to reduce any debate about the Self to a “right, correct” definition. Because of this I think that the meaning of such debate as ours lies in bringing attention to the theme itself, in a kind of laic celebration, a further way to bring the Self in our field of consciousness and therefore empower our relation with such a dimension. (I was going to write “with it”: easy temptation to make the Self become “something”!)

Such capacity to stand in a higher, middle position, which in psychosynthesis is one of the characteristics of a mature I (that is the capacity of containing opposites, capacity to stay with what is beyond fears or desires...), is the one which allows us to conceive and experience the transpersonal Self as a paradox.

Paradox as co-presence of different aspects, of opposite elements which usually can't coexist. In such situation the rational mind is usually bound to opt for one or the other part, and also our emotions are not easily able to hold the opposites, as we know very well.

But there is a state of conscience (and not of the rational mind, nor of emotions) in which it is possible to admit the coexistence, sometimes even the absolute coincidence of opposites which remain, at the same time, opposites. Such as the experience of joy coexisting with pain, often told by Assagioli, such as being/or becoming, spirit/matter, immanent/transcendent, to be on the path/to be the path...

Only on these bases I can say something about the Self. Because my contribution to the debate is about paradoxical aspect of the Self: immanent and

transcendent, personal and universal, concrete and abstract, shapeless and shape giver, unintelligible and conceivable, in the deepest of us and above us... any attribution of the Self contemplate also its opposite, as we change our point of view we find ourselves easily on the opposite side. That's why I deeply believe that to give up defining can be a true (and literally) revolutionary act.

By this I don't mean that everything is good, that we can say anything because there is no contradiction, so that this way we find ourselves in an absolute relativism which makes us lose any sense of limit and flattens everything, making it a nonsense.

On the contrary: by joining such kind of principle of non-contradiction, it seems we allow our inner space to become more complex and articulate, becoming this way wider and more inclusive. We keep going on to be aware of the coexistence of opposites or of contradiction, and we even see clearly the meaning of each of the poles, we can even stand for one of the two, but at the same time we understand (if it is possible to say so) that they can coexist: maybe because we put them in different positions or conditions (in time or level...), or because we realize that it is an issue of point of view (as in conflicts, in which reasons of the parts coexist), or still because we understand deeply that to try to define the phenomenon means to reduce it...

Accepting the paradox dismantles our sense of safe and our mental rigidity, those cages which so many spiritual teachings show as the main obstacle to our direct perception of the spiritual reality. Accepting not to define means to proceed in the direction of disidentification from our own opinions, that kind of "crust" of the mind that contradicts its own function: instead of being useful in order to analyze the data given by senses, as a co-worker of the will, the mind takes the place of our conscience, making even having opinions as having an identity.

I find the value of the conscious acceptance of the paradox extremely important, as a widening of the I, as disidentification from one own visions and conceptions, even from ideals. When we are able to be detached from our issues, even to the ones we see as superior, and to admit that what we can perceive is partial and insufficient we are stepping towards the direction of releasing us from the fixed patterns of our mind, patterns that we usually perceive – even from the strongest centering – as a substitute of our conscience. What the conscience can welcome, perceive and conceive, often the mind cannot, we know very well.

Clearing such confusion between contents which are in the conscience – often conveyed by the mind, sometimes by emotions – and the perception of conscience itself is

the disidentification path proposed by psychosynthesis, which is to go from the partial state of consciousness of subpersonalities to the more inclusive but still limited one of the I to the one of the Self, which is the widest, we could say the emptiest of contents.

Such a position also brings some benefits: it removes the necessity of "agreeing" or not, therefore to be obliged to be taken into endless and fruitless discussions (often important only for our ego); it allows us to open to each other, with genuine curiosity, to other visions, perceptions, giving us more opportunities to contact our own Self; it encourages us to search for an internal posture which, though firm, is not rigid and excluding of the different, this way empowering our direct experience of the Self.

Firman and Gila's contribution

As our discussion on the Self and on its position in the Psychosynthesis Egg comes from John Firman and Ann Gila contribution, who proposed (and acted) to take off its symbol from the top of it, I feel I want to give a recognition to their research and to such proposal, though I don't agree with it. I will not say more about my disagreement, as I agree with the friends who expressed such opinions very well, though I find it interesting to underline the value of their idea.

Firman and Gila maintain that "it is not necessary" to show the Self in the egg as it is present in every part, in every aspect and in every dynamic of the human psyche. Being generated by that Self, nothing in us is stranger to it, we could say. The importance of this statement is in its not allowing any interpretation by which there would be fields "enlightened by the light of the Self", such as the upper unconscious, and others which get less light or even don't get any (middle and lower unconscious). For Firman and Gila such separation doesn't exist, to distinguish (levels, experiences...) does not mean to separate, and every human experience, anywhere we put it in the egg, contains for them the Self at some degree.

Therefore, to avoid wrong, maybe unconscious, interpretations (let's think about the evocative power of

images!), better not to represent it in the diagram.⁽¹⁾

Such a vision of the Self, as immanent/transcendent, makes things a little more complicated for us, preventing us from falling into the all too human temptation to divide reality between good and bad, but we have to admit that it opens our inner world to a accepting complexity which seems nearer to reality itself. No need to say that our human history is so full of examples of our failures in setting what is good and what is bad, that we could take the opportunity to start to learn how to overcome such temptations...

I find another contribution to the post-Assagioli research about a language useful to express the complexity of the Higher Self interesting: some French psychosynthesis practitioners speak of the "I-Self" (Je-Soi in French), underlining in this way the fundamental identity of these two dimensions, which are for us often separate realities (a perception, as Firman and Gila suggest, supported also by their distance in the egg diagram?) and so to empower the awareness of their identity.

This opens the hypothesis that the image of the egg itself and its inherent power as image, in which the I and the Self are identified in two different positions quite far away from each other, may produce in us, actually, the feeling that things are that way. Or at least, if it does not produce it, that it may empower our wrong feeling of being separate from our spiritual origin, so that we need to make a long tour to come back. Here also we find a paradox: we are actually already our Self but we must also "arrive" to it...

At this point we can recognize a contribution coming from our seeing the Self as a paradox: we can disidentify from the need of having opinions about the issue, not because they are not needed, in time and space, but because we can open ourselves to the fundamental aspect, which is the Self as experience. A totally subjective experience but which, strangely, reveals a surprising univocity when shared.

I close by saying where I stand regarding representing the Self in the egg diagram: I find that small star at the top to be fundamental.

As a trainer of the Istituto, or while introducing psychosynthesis in the first courses in the Istituto Centers, too many times have I seen that flicker in the eye, have I heard an alteration in breathing when, explaining the egg diagram, when I arrived to that point, where the star is. It's as if a silent "at last!" is released, which could not be expressed in words: the recognition of their (our) soul, that unexpressed need, which seem to have so little home in paths which are not openly religious. In that moment I perceive how that need of recognition of existence and dignity of a part of ourselves which is denied by common culture to bring people to the Institute Centers.

Even if only for that flicker in the eyes, for that sigh, the symbol of the Self is fundamental for me in the star diagram.

"...Placing Self in the higher unconscious indicates a splitting of higher and lower unconscious in psychosynthesis thought and practice, with a strong propensity to give much less attention to the lower conscious. ...But the portrayal of Self as remote from the lower unconscious confuses transcendence with "far away". Self is thought of as "transcendent" in the sense of "It's way up there in the higher unconscious." ...Such images support the idea that Self-realization is a journey into the superconscious, when in fact it may be -even more so -a journey into the brokenness of childhood and the lower unconscious. This notion of Self-realization can thus become tantamount to dualistic denia".

Pag. 169: No Need for "Higher Self"

"... I believe there is no need in psychosynthesis theory for the notion of a Higher or Transpersonal Self which experiences individuality and universality.

On one hand, "Higher Self" refers to an experience of universal consciousness in which individual I-amness is not lost, it simply indicates a particular state of consciousness not living, willing Being at all. Thus "Higher Self" is an inaccurate usage, and should be dropped. ...the older usage seemed to imply that the Higher Self was close to us, meeting us deep within, while the Universal self was further away, "out there" in the universe somewhere. But if "Self" is understood as universally transcendent-immanent, it follows tha Self can be present to all individuals, meeing them in the most interior intimacy of their inner beings; as well as oresent and active in the outer relationships and events of their lives; as well as conscious and willing throughout the entire universe. ..."

1) John Firman, "I" And Self, Re-Visioning Psychosynthesis, 1991 Palo Alto, CA (USA)
Pag.83: The Broken Egg

More informations at:

<http://www.psychosynthesisispaloalto.com>

EHYEH - ASHER – EHYEH I AM - THAT - I AM

(Translation by Mike Malagrecia)

First, it is important to stress that we are discussing some interpretive and applicative models. These are born from our psychosynthesis experiences, from our inner journeys, relationships, life, study, and professional life. They are all acceptable models, but they might not sound the same note in the individual conscience of each one of us. While we have all embraced the psychosynthesis model, I think that we might experience it, or *live* it, in different ways through its different aspects; these are not to be placed in opposition to each other but, if we succeed in our task, we should be able to integrate them progressively, keeping a synthetic point of tension.

Models are not the reality – which is elusive – but rather maps that let us tread a path by giving us a sense of orientation. Thus, what I have to say here and in my discussion is also part of an interpretive, subjective model with which I resonate. We know that even singular words have a certain connotation and a denotation, functions that condition the communication, both when we utter words and when we listen to words.

The model we choose or elaborate on has an effect on our experience, and gives support to it. Then this experience resonates with the model, and the model makes the experience interpretable. All this happens at a subjective level.

The validity of a model can be deduced from the effects it produces in those who adopt the model.

Therefore, everyone in this room is talking in the first person: we are sharing theory, talking about ourselves and our experience, and thinking about the Self. Our human typology plays a part in what we say as well, for each typology has a particular way of experiencing the Self. We use our own language and current polarization (mental, emotional, intuitive...) at the evolutionary stage of awareness in which we are, and we have our own

viewpoints that originate in our identifications and identity. These are all unique elements that belong to us and make our meeting an occasion of great human and psychological value because of the rich exchange that we can generate.

On Models and Evolution

One aspect of the psychosynthetic model that sounded the right note in me from the beginning is the suggestion that we are engaged in a great evolutionary process that we might call *uni-versal*. Within this process, there are different evolutionary stages, although not necessarily systematically or completely predictable.

There are thus great laws that govern us.

There is an underlying, profound reality to this evolutionary process in tension, a fundamental Law of life: the “Law of Evolution.” This Law is active in all processes of nature (e.g. from the stone to a crystal, to the precious gem, to the radioactive mineral... from weeds to a flower, to the colorful flower, perfect in structure, and to the flower with a unique scent... from the wild animal to the pet, the human personality etc.). And of course, this Law is active in the human being as well, where two natures gradually meet: the Personality – of biological origin (the Form) – and the Self (the Essence).

With regard to the human being, this Law gives impulse, step by step, to the path of growth and to the development of self-awareness (self-consciousness) through progressive identifications (experiences), dis-identifications (detachment – processing) and self-identification (self-awareness – identity). These are discontinuous and continuous moments.

The other key aspect is the two diagrams that summarize the whole psychosynthetic conception; these are highly dynamic diagrams where there are represented the movements and stages of the evolutionary process and the interplay between our two natures: the Self and the Personality.

For the purpose of our meeting there are some questions to consider:

What is the nature of the Centre of Self-Awareness?

Self: Being or Becoming/Exist?

The I and the Self – what is as the difference?

Is the Self immanent or transcendent?

The “ovoid” (Egg diagram) and the “functions of consciousness” (Star diagram) are models to work out in our inner world; they are tridimensional instruments that represent us so well that we can almost “feel them,” “put them on” as it were; they help us experience all the dynamism of life and grasp all their implications, both intra-psychological and inter-psychological. They provide a means to find our own answers.

When we exercise dis-identification and self-identification we are able to align and harmonize our three bodies, move from the periphery to a position in the center of the field of consciousness, in direct vertical rapport with the transpersonal Self. We are thus ready to ascend to the heights where the Self lives.

We can locate our own center anywhere we want, in a physical and mental point, upon our vertical axis – represented in the ovoid by the line linking the I and the Self – etc. We can recognize that as we evolve, the center shifts, for we raise and expand our consciousness.

There is a sense of evolving and a sense of permanence. At the center of the diagram we can feel that sense of permanence (being) as we evolve (becoming). However, we might wonder: what is a “center”? The center is always the most intimate place, the essence of the Being that dwells within, the vital point that aggregates and vitalizes everything around it. It is the engine and at the same time a point of observation, synthesis, above the parts; its vision embraces a spherical horizon; it is the “witness” or observer, the point of reference and recollection for all experiences that happens around it. As all living beings, the center pulsates and breathes; it is a dynamic point, present and eternal, it is permanent and it also becoming, and it is *en rapport* with all the other pulsating centers of life. At the center past present and future synthesize, and so do all directions. From the center, all choices are possible. We can experience everything leading us back to our centrality.

“I am the Self, I am an evolving Center of Self-awareness, a Being in Becoming (paradox), I am Will-Love-Awareness-Presence-Quality in action and I manifest all of this through my Personality until it becomes the whole expression of the unique seed I am, thus completing the journey of my individuality.”

For me there is no substantial difference between I and Self, in the sense that the I is that much of the Self that has become immanent, it has actualized in the field of consciousness and it is the point where we can identify and recognize ourselves in a certain “phase” of our evolutionary path.

In this sense, “I am a Center of Self-awareness” is also a progressive transpersonal experience that takes place in successive degrees of elevation, as if we were ascending along the dotted lines that link the I to the Self. At any given level, we experience the corresponding horizon of visibility; we use our star of functions differently, and we are moved by increasing less self-centered and separative motives. The closer we get to our source of Light, Love and Transpersonal Will, the more we shift our polarization upwards.

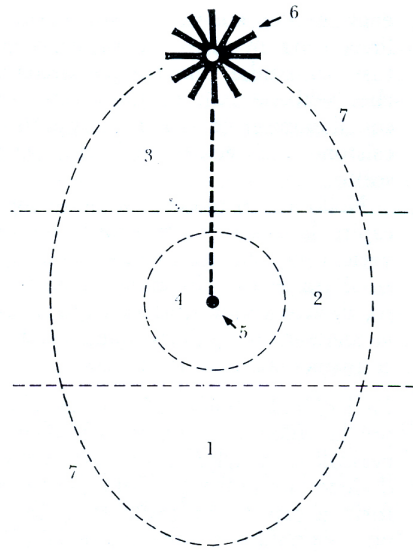
This leads to a growing awareness of our own existence in the world and its meaning, sense and direction, a growing awareness of the Life where we live and have our being, Its laws and our place within It. There is a progressively wider spherical expansion of the field of consciousness, an action ever deeper and more expanded: “I am the I/Self that wants - that loves - that knows.”

Hence the importance of the dotted line that links the I to the Self in the ovoid diagram; it is a path that emerges out of an inherent tension and is trodden in spiral turns (hypothesis) synthesizing the opposites. (The Middle Way).

Let us not forget that in this ascending path, the I/Self is always in contact with the personality, which will gradually manifest the new consciousness within.

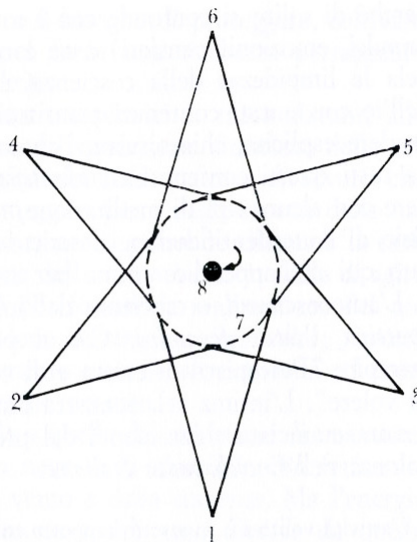
Thus, the Self is both immanent and transcendent. It lives in our individuality even if we might not be aware of it as it is unconscious and lies within the sphere of the Higher Unconscious. It is the core of our life and it animates us. Along the evolutionary process, through the inner action (meditation, spiritual research etc.) we can contact it and gradually make it immanent in the field of consciousness, a pivot point for the harmonization and integration of the personality. Later, it will become completely immanent, it will be fused and pervade the entire personality. At this

1. The Lower Unconscious
2. The Middle Unconscious
3. The Higher Unconscious or Superconscious
4. The Field of Consciousness
5. The Conscious Self or "I"
6. The Higher Self
7. The Collective Unconscious



Psychosynthetic model
 key words:
 Evolution
 Ego – Self (Soul)
 Personality - Subpersonality
 Integration
 Selfconsciousness
 Degrees of selfconsciousness
 Process of the Ego
 Identification
 Disidentification/ Identity

1. Sensation
2. Emotion - Feeling
3. Impulse -Desire
4. Imagination
5. Thought
6. Intuition
7. Will
8. Self



Le big stages of the psychosynthetic process can be resumed in the following way:

- Integral knowledge of our own personality
- Control of the elements that compose it
- Realisation of the Self, or at least discovery
- or creation of a Unifying Center
- Creation or rebuilding of the personality around the new Center

point, as many spiritual traditions suggest, there takes place the inner marriage between our two natures, the complete realization of our individuality.

Our subjective experience depends on our point of identification.

There are different degrees of contact and progressive degrees of expression. While the Self and the personality are substantially different, the Self is never disconnected from the personality because we are incarnated beings – otherwise we would not live in this dimension. Sometimes we can even reach genuine moments of eternity, experience the Self as Pure Being, in its essence. Looking at the representation of the Self in the ovoid, there appear to be basically two aspects of it. One part radiates inward, observes and acts within the individuality; the other part radiates into the higher collective unconscious, implying other kind of experiences that transcend our individuality and make it part of trans-individual dimensions. In this sense, we can say that we can experience the Self as transpersonal and trans-individual, depending where we position ourselves in the endless journey of Identification-Identity-Self-

consciousness. It is our choice how we process these levels of experiences!

This does not mean that the sense of individuality is ever lost, but that there is an access into a universal dimension, in contact with the source of Life that is the Essence-Being of the Self.

The Self encompasses different degrees of realization: individual-social/ human-universal. Thus, there are degrees of the Self. The Self exists. The Self is.

I am-I am that I am.

In other words: Self as Soul (self-awareness in the cycle of becoming)-Self as a spark of pure Spirit (pure being).

At this point, we can attempt to answer the question: where is the Self?

I think that if we place it at the top of the ovoid it is easier to recognize all the dynamism of life we have been discussing, the inner dialogues. At this position, it provides an axis and a direction, even to our physical plane research...

I believe that the representation given by some psychosynthesis colleagues appears “flat” and static, lacking movement. We miss the dynamism and the possibility to recognize the experience described previously.

The “flat” ovoid could represent the fulfillment of the complete fusion between the Self and the personality, but for us this is a point of arrival, and certainly not a fact – or have we achieved illumination?

Some people argue against the use of terms such as elevation, ascending-descending, lower-higher, etc., suggesting they imply a moralistic viewpoint or a value judgment. Actually, these terms express symbolic, archetypal and spatial criteria, not a moralistic perspective. They do not involve a difference in value, but a functional difference. In fact, the value of each part lies in the unique function it plays within the whole. For instance, the function of the feet in the body is to let us walk while the function of the head is to let us think – you cannot think with the feet or walk with your head. Each function, like all human expression, is valuable, but it is important not to confuse them.

It is no coincidence that in all cultures “the higher” bears a certain relevance. For instance, the top of the head has manifold meanings (as symbolized in the crown of the king, the various religious hats, the science of the chakras, etc.) and it plays a part in religious and cultural rituals; all plants and flowers grow up, not “down;” the human being is the animal that stands erected on this planet, etc. Like these, there are many other examples that suggest that there is something “in the higher” that can make us proceed along the evolutionary way...

So if words like higher and lower, to rise, to ascend, etc. generate a certain resistance or even opposition, I think it would be important to discover the roots of such opposition rather than shift the position of the Self in the ovoid.

Generally, such resistance depends on a repressed moralistic conception projected onto others or onto something, in this case a model.

Which subjective experiences?

The Soul is essentially an ineffable experience, but ...

- “I am the Soul. The Presence. Life. The Sound.
I am the Magnet that collects and radiates God’s Will
I am the Human Soul
- I am the Mother and the Son
I am Group consciousness
I am the One Humanity
- I am the Soul, a spark of light of the Divine Intelligence
I am the Co-Creator of God
- I am the Soul. The Divine Intermediary
The Builder of bridges between heaven and earth and
between earth and heaven
- I am the Soul: The process from the individual to the
universal, and I participate in both.
I am the macrocosm in the microcosm
- I am are the Soul: the Wanderer
I am the Soul: the Pilgrim
I am the Soul: the Server of God Transcendent
- I am the Soul, the God immanent
I am the Soul, the hidden God in the matter”

What is the origin of the Self?

We can make many assumptions, but I do not think that we can find the answers by looking into details such as “the weight of the Soul” nor by “dissecting the epiphysis.” The Being/Spirit *is* – It is out of time – It is eternal – It is the Life Principle (the unborn that never dies by definition). For the Being/Spirit there is no beginning and no end. The Self is the Being in the cycle (the Soul) – the Being that actualizes and de-actualizes by entering and exiting the cycle.

In my opinion, as far as we are immersed in a dimension or system that operates with its own methods, it is not possible to demonstrate matters that relate to another, larger dimension or system, in which we are included (e.g. to shift from a quantitative system to a qualitative system). We must make a “quantum leap” through a projection into the larger system and produce the opening of a passage or a door, we need to build a bridge

Assagioli offered us multiple examples of how to do this, both through his own life and with the many suggestions – however challenging they might be – he gave us to move

further in our inner search. We seekers might find help in the following words of an old commentary that describes, poetically, the inner experience between “earth” and “heaven.”

I stand between the Heavens and Earth! I vision God; I see the forms God took. I hate them both. Naught do they mean to me, for one I cannot reach, and for the lower of the two I have no longer any love.

Torn I am. Space and its Life I cannot know, and so I want it not. Time and its myriad forms I know too well. Pendant I hang betwixt the two, desiring neither.

God from high Heaven speaks. There is a change. I hear with ear attentive, and, listening, turn my head. That which is visioned, yet visioning could not reach, is nearer to my heart. Old longings come again, yet die. Old chains with clamour snap. Forward I rush.

Myriads of voices speak and halt me in my tracks. The thunder of the sounds of earth shuts out the voice of God. I turn me on my forward path, and vision once again the long held joys of earth, and flesh and kin. I lose the vision of eternal things. The voice of God dies out.

Torn again am I, but only for a little time. Backward and forward shifts my little self, e'en as a bird soars into heaven and settles back again upon the tree. Yet God, in His high place, outlasts the little bird. Thus do I know that God will victor be and later hold my mind and me in thrall. Hark to the joyous paeon that I chant; the work is done. My ear is deaf to all the calls of earth, except to that small voice of all the hidden souls within the outer forms, for they are as myself; with them I am at-one.

God's voice rings clear and in its tones and overtones the little voices of the little forms dim and fade out. I dwell within a world of unity. I know all souls are one.

Swept am I by the universal Life and as I sweep upon [Page 387] my onward way—the way of God—I see all lesser energies die out. I am the One; I, God. I am the form in which all forms are merged. I am the soul in which all souls are fused. I am the Life, and in that Life, all little lives remain.”

“Ehyeh - Asher - Ehyeh - I am That I am”

DEBATE ON THE SELF: REFLECTIONS

(Translation by Susan Seeley)

In answering the questions raised in this debate, on the basis of my experience in preparing the meeting I was fascinated to reread Roberto Assagioli's interview “Talks on the Self”, given during a gathering with a group of American students. Assagioli describes the Self well with its energies and “home” that enters into the global home of individuality, in the evolution and process of life.

In the past I have spoken of three journeys: those of the Self, the Soul and the personality. Essentially there is only one, but three journeys necessarily include direction and process. The Self is not becoming but being, it is the traveler but also the journey, it is ineffable as immovable; yet it moves too, because it is a point of departure and arrival, bringing to itself in unity that which is temporarily distinct. It is unity that returns to what it already is (Unity as a journey from here to here) through its soulful essence (see second journey). Assagioli tells us, in an interesting and inviting way, that the transpersonal Self can be proclaimed and celebrated by the personal self, the experience of which is more accessible. He invites us implicitly to use the personal self, but this has never been discussed enough. What use do we make of it in the three journeys? As a matter of fact the personal self enters all three in the process of life and can be used consciously, in particular in the psychosynthetic process.

We talk often about the I, making it more individual, but it is synonymous with personal Self. When we touch this dimension, even as closely as possible to the personality, still we touch something ineffable, experientially distinct. For this reason it is extremely important to be mindful about what we do in life with this experience of individuality that is central at different levels. For example in the experience of the transpersonal Self we

always have individuality that brings the universe here and contains it “in a grain of sand” as William Blake says. The experience of the center as identity moves with the energies of the personality (personal self) and is propelled by the energies of the transpersonal: love, strength, wisdom etc. which are the qualities radiated by the Self but are not the transpersonal Self itself. For example, I often speak of “rights of the Soul” referring to the basic needs of the Soul as the rights of a person who in his bio-psycho-spiritual wholeness can meet and express certain qualities in life: the qualities of the Self. Each quality is like a color of the rainbow in which the primordial purest light of the Self differs, as if passing through a prism reflecting the colors. Another passage of the writing on the Self which is interesting for the journey is that in which at a certain point Assagioli speaks of “slowly taking home three essential points”. Which are they?

Firstly, to enter the home of the Self means to return to that welcoming place which totally accepts our true being: from our more particular and personal essence to our universal essence. Being here basically means bringing our being, our essence, in this individuality. The first journey, as stated above, is the journey of the Self that, more than moving, stays, in union with universality (the journey from “here to here”, returning time and time again to the center).

The second journey, (closely connected to the first) is still a journey of the Self but here I refer to it as Soul, with its movement directed toward “animating life”. The Soul has two faces: one looking in the direction of the personality, the other towards the spiritual universal dimension.

The face directed towards the personal dimension, in its process has its own light -and creates a duality also with darkness (of the collective unconscious and the personal dimension). For Assagioli the Self is an ontological reality, a living experiential entity - and this is the major difference for example with Jung. Here Assagioli is directly spiritual. Jung did not go so far: he stopped at the Self as the union of dualities that are a part of the

Self and remain an expression of the archetypal world, without transcending it (the archetype of archetypes). For psychosynthesis the transpersonal experience is essentially unitary, but in its progressive development in life it encounters duality, entering into relationship with it. The duality is not between the I (personal self) and the Self, but between the Self (transpersonal and universal) and the personality. I would like to talk always, when we are in the center also at the level of personality, of “personal self,” because otherwise we confuse the I with the Ego as the “phenomenic I of the personality.” Here we are at a different level and speak of duality, because sometimes the personal dimension dominates and also narcissistically takes possession of the same energies of the Self, which when radiated mix with life, entering into life. And this is where we encounter the third journey: that of the development of the personality.

At the start of life we are small and in the process of our individual development we grow (“grow up”). But when our personalities have developed (grown up) we can expect also to “grow down” in the sense that the qualities of the Self, the transpersonal energies, root in the territories of our life: in our personal space, our body, our relationships, and that is where we will find them. It is, paradoxically, like an “elevation” in the direction of the earth, towards matter, where the material element, with its darkness joins the element of light, then to find light, still, in that same dense, dark element. If we imagine turning Assagioli’s map of the egg upside down, this would be an indicative metaphor for the light of the Self mixing and irradiating with the variegated colors of life. Thus Assagioli’s quote about “slowly bringing three essential points home” means entering into the three homes of the Self that interest us most in life: the transpersonal, personal and group homes.

In reality there are four homes if we consider also the universal Self, but these three points are sufficient for Assagioli indicating graduality, the stages, perhaps the patience along the way of the human journey. The theme of the home also brings up another interesting point: that of boundaries; and with regard to the question about the position of the transpersonal Self in Assagioli’s map of the egg it seems to me that the very sense of boundaries underlines the importance of keeping it where the founder of psychosynthesis placed it. The home of the Self is recognized when there is also a sense of transcendence. The Self then, in the experiences of life, enters as Soul, with its qualities and transpersonal experiences: and this is immanence. But when we talk about the home of the center, that is of the Self, there is instead some transcendence. Along the ways of realization of the Self we cover an immanent path, mixing with all the experiences of life. And when we go to the center it is still important to remember that in that home we have a sense of transcendence; and there is a transpersonal

quality even in the little home of the personal Self.

Piero Ferrucci recalls that the ways to transpersonal realization are many; others (Vittorio Vigliani) speak of the special importance of centredness for reaching the Self, although in my opinion we can also reach the Self (personal and transpersonal) not always from the center first; the center can surprise us offering a sudden glimpse, even from the midst of what is often an intense experience of life. We can recognize if we are in that home of the Self even in the experience of pain, because through the many ways to transpersonal realization it is always fundamental to experience a “centredness in the journey” that acquires a sense of mobility, almost of “ubiquity”. Here the metaphor of the Heart makes sense, because it is exactly through suffering, the passion of life, as through compassion, that we find the Self. Precisely the wounds of the Heart in the sense of the embodied Soul filled with loving relations often makes light pass.

There is a beautiful poem by Leonard Cohen that says “it is the crack that lets the light in”. In this also the pain of the Heart becomes a way to self realization. Going back to the subject of boundaries, we exist really as bounded infinity. This boundary indeed is necessary, as in the map of the egg where it is represented by a dashed line, because it expresses connection and permeability. Consciousness and the energies of life pass through the boundaries and it is through the spaces that also the process and the relations between the parts take place. In this also the dashed line between the transpersonal Self and the personal self is most important. All this in fact expresses the relatedness of the parts and the reality of the Self as relational, in a “borderline” position. In reality in borderline pathology we find strong energies that do not keep within the borders and confound the spaces.

The sense of center is lacking here and the person’s boundaries are poorly structured and perceived, with creation of confusion and typical borderline torment and uncertainty. In health, instead, the challenge of life is represented by the “humble” Self and by looking up towards the universal, to life looking down on the border and offers itself to life towards the individual, belonging to two worlds. It is an intense experiential paradox and very delicate, as delicate are the boundaries in their permeability, plasticity and permanence.

They tell us, distinguishing, that “this is this and that is that”, giving greater strength and affirmation to what is contained within the various boundaries. So we do not create any confusion but enter into relation attributing and comprehending different identities, different states of consciousness with various types of energy. When we go to find the light of the Self and of the transpersonal in the personality, in the body, we discover in particular how the body is the vehicle of vehicles, the terrain of

terrains (mind, emotions, etc.). We find also the large in the small and how with an “onion” we can “peel” the various layers.

For example in the therapeutic and healing process of deep wounds we can find in one layer intense emotions: great anger, pain, suffering; but then going deeper, the bright universal aspect may appear, not verticalized, that does not only stay high, but that belongs to two worlds, to the light and to the dark, as in the Tao symbol. The Self that Assagioli describes in his paper “Talks on the Self” also introduces another important point for the understanding of its function: “it receives light and reflects it.” In fact there are several points of reflection: for example, the transpersonal Self, that receives light and reflects it, sending the transpersonal qualities and its centrality to the personality and is in particular reflected by the other point of reflection that is the personal self, which, in turn, reflects towards the personality. This corresponds to different states of consciousness with their respective instruments for reaching them and rooting them in relation to life and individually in the body. Placing the transpersonal Self in the map of the egg diagram, therefore, does not mean detaching it from existence but making it belong fully, as mentioned before, to two worlds on that boundary.

A question was also asked about the Self and the neurological processes. These biological and neuro-cerebral processes to which present-day neuroscience is providing interesting discoveries, really correspond to any psychic experience; they are the bodily side present alongside the psychic and also the transpersonal dimension that does not causally explain the phenomena but provides, expanding, interesting correlations.

Damasio, one of the most important neuroscientists for his studies on consciousness, for example makes an interesting statement about the latter, when, speaking of consciousness, he refers to the subject, to a self that is not the Self of Assagioli from the point of view of experience, but is seen as a process that posits a subject.

Finally, I would like to reconsider the importance of

the experience of the personal self precisely from the point of view of process. Such experience is in fact very accessible, sometimes even in the initial phase of a therapeutic process, unless there are particular situations such as schizoid defenses or dissociative states.

However, even in these conditions some contact can be made with the sense of subjectivity, without actually doing the “disidentification exercise” but experiencing awareness and will in an intuitive and essential way, without judgment. In this we are in the center, in the self, beyond personality, and in fact in this the personal self is the reflection of the transpersonal Self. So the personal self in turn becomes an important point, sometimes essential for also entering into contact with personal darkness and depths and with the darkness and depths of life. In this sense the self is much closer to everyday life than we can imagine. Referring again to Assagioli’s writing I find an important differentiation between the Self as conscious subject, awareness and the field of consciousness; these are three different territories. The self does not possess knowledge, it expresses itself through one of its two main functions: consciousness; and being a subject of consciousness, precisely in the exercise of self-identification there is a fundamental passage during which, after having said: “I have a body, I have emotions, thoughts etc.”, I ask myself: “Who am I? I am I, a center of consciousness and will.” So I am conscious of being conscious and the self is experienced as awareness of the self; but the experience also of the personal self is the first subjectivity of unitarian consciousness combined with a feeling of “emptiness”, of “empty consciousness”, in which we remain only as the central point.

So in the transpersonal Self or personal self there is an experience of being centered that expands in individual but also universal sphericity as a home that includes the horizontal and vertical plane and gives us the experience of these two existential dimensions. Precisely for this reason I see the importance of placing the Self at the top in Assagioli’s map, above everything, as a point of perspective, an extension of the same vertical and horizontal plane.

From there, as from the top of a mountain, we can be interested, at times, more than in the sky, in the vastness of the horizontal landscape, while our curiosity can be aroused also by looking across the width of the valley below, observing points that have become smaller in the distance at the bottom of the valley (vertical but deep direction).

Finally I conclude, realizing that I have not sufficiently remembered the third point of “slowly bringing three essential points home” (R. Assagioli). This third point is the reflection of the Self in the Self of the group, the Self of others. The third home is the manifestation of the relational Self that reflects both in our selves (relationship with ourselves) and in others (interpersonal and social relation). This relational connection brings to mind the other of Assagioli’s interesting metaphors: the “elastic thread”, as he says in his writing: This is the thread that moves between the transpersonal Self and the personal self and between the Self/self and the Self/self of others where a third is created: the Self of the relationship. Thus unitary moments are formed in which the Self/self is experienced as one, both within the individual and in the interpersonal and group relationship, (the Self of the relationship and Self of the group). In this way an attraction is constituted, an elasticity that allows us to go up and down in the individual person and from the I to the You (from the Self to the Self of the other), but also “zig-zagging” both through the qualities of the Self as well as through the personality. This “zig-zagging” between Self and Self is a very interesting metaphor that connects us to the dynamism of life and to the synthetic union between the permanence of the Self and impermanence of the flow of vital energies.

But to conclude my contribution with these reflections on the Self in its home and at the center of life, I cannot forget the words of a poem by Kabir, the 5th Century Hindu poet. He, as only poets can, expresses the ineffable, and begins with a question that comes from there... “Are you searching for me? I am in the place next to you [...] You will not find me in stupas nor in Indian temples, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals, [...] Nor in legs twisted around your neck, nor in eating nothing but vegetables. When you will really seek me, you will see me immediately – you will find me in the smallest house of time. Kabir says: “Student, tell me, what is God?” “He is the breath inside the breath”.

EVERYONE SAYS THAT THERE IS, NO ONE KNOWS WHERE IT IS

(Translation by Achille Cattaneo)

Premise of general semantics of Korzybski, which Assagioli kept in his studio: the map is not the territory. Imagine if we are in the field of ineffable, which will then also not drawingable.

So much for a kind of naive realism which believes That the Self can be chained in a diagram. This does not mean that the models all go down the drain, or that some are not more useful than others, or not hide symbolic complexity: before talking about the position of the Self perhaps we need to ask why the Ovoid. In the Brera Altarpiece an egg hangs over the Madonna. An egg is the primordial reality of creation in Hinduism, the egg, perfect shape, shows a high tension biased low, for the Latins also means deep. "So at the top as at the bottom, in the unity of all" is written in the emerald table, founding text of the obscurity, attributed to the mythical figure of Hermes Trismegistus. A text that has had great influence on the Neo-Platonic culture and we know that Assagioli was certainly influenced by the reading of Plotinus. Who claims that the Self is everywhere and has to be lifted by the Ovoid says an ancient truth. "Samsara and Nirvana are the same thing ". But this is true for the enlightened.

It is true that the experience of the Self will activate each level of the Ovoid, but this does not mean that there is no difference between a psychotic and an ecstatic state, although it often requires a differential diagnosis for which in the West we are less equipped. Stan Grof, in *Spiritual emergency*, not surprisingly includes the chapter two of Assagioli. I describe the experience of the Self with three distinct models: one to rain, top down: the grace, the satori. One bottom up, the psychological mountaineering: the rise and the asceticism.

The third is a spiral pattern, which extends from the center to any direction, up to cross the border of the Ovoid. This model seems to me also useful in relation to quantum physics, for which we exist as a relation. The interdependence of all phenomena is a fact for science as for the mystics of every tradition.

So I propose EVEN this model, which highlights other aspects.

But I do not just throw away the old Self at the top, because in any case it comes from high experiences, it is called of more and more refined states of consciousness, such as the mountain air. Coexist the quantum and the wave theories, each explain certain phenomena, yet they seem incompatible.

At the moment. But a placeholder for the Self it is useful.

Andrea Bocconi

A REFLECTION ON THE EGG DIAGRAM OF ASSAGIOLI

(Translation by Kylie Drew)

Stimulated by the article of Fulvio Leone that appeared in the October *Psychosynthesis* magazine, in which John Firman, Ann Gila and Molly Young Brown propose to exclude the Self from Assagioli's Ovoid, I have decided to contribute to the debate with this short reflection.

The Ovoid is just a bidimensional image and therefore limited and approximate in respect to what it is trying to illustrate. By excluding the collocation of the Self, will it bring us closer to what Assagioli wanted to signify?

To reply to this question, in my opinion, we have to delve into the cultural roots that allow us to understand the original vision of the founder of Psychosynthesis. In the Ovoid the real *novelties* represented are the Self and the subdivision of the unconscious in superior and inferior. Let's try to put aside the Self for a moment and focalize ourselves on what Assagioli says about the other

two elements: “The Inferior Unconscious is the zone below the ordinary conscious. This consists of psychic activities that preside over organic life, tendencies towards primitive impulses, many psychic complexes with strong emotional tones, remains of near and remote past, individual, hereditary and primordial; dreams and imaginative activity of the elementary and inferior type; various obsessive expressions, certain spontaneous and non-dominated faculties”.

“The Superior Unconscious is the superior sphere of the psyche, a level that is superior to the ordinary one, from where intuitions and superior aspirations, genial creations, ethic imperatives, gestures of altruistic actions, states of illumination, of contemplation, of ecstasy, originate. It is here that the superior energies of the spirit reside”.

So synthetically, the Inferior Unconscious is the unconscious from which derives our physical and psychical automatisms that support and collaborate with our conscious and in practice derive from our evolutionary past, not only individual but also evolution in a wider sense of the word.

Instead, the Superior Unconscious is the seat of possible still latent evolutions, unconsciousness as a potential which drives us towards an ulterior evolution.

These two concepts of Superior and Inferior Unconscious are very similar to the oriental concepts of Karma and Dharma, even though they are expressed in scientific and western terms.

The Kharma is our past that in some way makes us what we are, the Dharma is our evolutionary possibility, the path that we still have to discover so we can realize ourselves.

Assagioli has never hidden the fact that the oriental thought was for him a source of inspiration, his preferred book was the Bhagavad Gita and references to this philosophy appear frequently in his writings.

Taking advantage of this approach, the Superior Unconscious is the source that allows us to gain access to discover *our way* to auto-realization, that is, to the fullness of our being, in other words the path that brings us closer to the Self. Assagioli knew very well that the Self *is behind* the Inferior Unconscious as well as the Superior Unconscious, but the representation of the

Self at the top of the Ovoid does not allude to a major connection with respect to the other, but it suggests an indication towards the development of ourselves that can only happen by giving space to our potentialities, allowing to emerge our hidden parts. Considering all of the above, I believe that the original diagram is one that defines better Assagioli’s message, because one should not read it simply as a *map* of the psyche, but as a symbol which can inspire us in our personal and transpersonal psychosynthesis.

Sergio Guarino

SHORT REFLECTIONS ON THE THEME OF THE MEETING

(Translation by Achille Cattaneo)

As promised, I am sending some brief reflections on the theme of the meeting.

- Eliminate the Self from the Egg Diagram also means eliminating the dotted line from the personal Ego to the Self, thereby eliminating the dynamic-relational process between the center of the personality and the center of the of the Identity
- It thus eliminates any possibility of implementing that process of growth and development which leads the human being to cross the boundaries of individuality to enter the transpersonal dimension, also called “group consciousness”
- The placement of the Self at the top of the Egg Diagram also contains a further element of dynamism (implicit in the diagram, but that would still be lost) because the Self, center / target for the personal Self, once realized becomes, in turn, a pole a new relationship with another larger center (the monadic one)

Gaetano Russo