

OPENING ADDRESS TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PSYCHOSYNTHESIS
Val Morin, Quebec, August 1973

by Roberto Assagioli
(delivered by Fred Rosenzveig)

It is gratifying and encouraging to see so many gathered here under the wings of psychosynthesis. A gathering of this kind can have special meaning and usefulness, and presents a great opportunity. Dr. Assagioli regrets not being able to join with us here in person; but he sends a warm welcome to all of you, and his best wishes for the success of the Conference.

He has asked me to convey to you some suggestions concerning the best way to carry on meetings such as this one, based on his extensive experience in attending international conferences. First, he thinks that it would be well to reduce to a minimum the exposition and discussion of theories; instead, giving the maximum of time and attention to the exploration and clarification of common goals, methods, and policies, and to establishing plans of co-operation for the further diffusion and the more extended application of psychosynthesis. Concerning theory, he would like to remind you, as a warning, of the sad fate of that word. In Greek, theoria means to behold, to contemplate, and this means to have a direct perception of some truth. Instead, now the word theory is used to signify a mental concept or construct about something. And this is an obstacle to the direct, intuitive perception! What really matters is ascertaining, through experiment, what are the most apt ways or approaches toward the safe achievement of the expansion of consciousness.

He has asked me to mention another point, also based upon his long experience. He has found that often the most effective method in dealing both with patients who are not too ill and with students is that of short interviews, giving definite homework--such as writing a diary, free drawing, various exercises--to be done between sessions. He regards these as training, not teaching. Most teaching consists of giving information, which is a waste of time and of energy, because information can be got by people themselves. There are all kinds of means for getting it--even too many! Our role in this respect is to give a guide to selected information. If patients and students are in earnest, they can find it and, from what they read they can prepare questions related to their problems to be dealt with in later sessions. This gives us the opportunity to find out which are the specific needs of each person at the present moment, and consequently to give the required help through the inter-personal relationship and through training in the use of appropriate techniques.

And last, but not least, Dr. Assagioli thinks it would be well to make the utmost use of the opportunity offered by the Conference for establishing friendly human relations among ourselves with the purpose of mutual understanding and increasing co-operation in meeting the great need of humanity for psychological and spiritual help.