

Mighty Fine, Mighty Fine Indeed

You, the teacher, ask me why I am depressed?
Me, a youth in the prime of my life.
I will tell you and don't you forget.

Every day I come to your classes
I follow the rules and play the games
But, you do not see me.

I stand in your lines
Check out your books,
But nobody, nobody knows me inside.

In the hall we talk sometimes, you and I
Of tasks to be done by your prescription
And the respect you require.

All for your letter-grade judgment of me.
I would rather you see through my imperfections
See and affirm, that yes, I am mighty fine.

I feel valuable only for my scores on the state test.
What my potential can do for your ego.
Or, Coach, is it how many games I help you win?

Exploitation. Why not confess?
Hear me. Hear me loud and clear.
Do not ask for my body and mind without honoring my soul.

All day long I am on your turf,
Subject to your scrutiny, but not your respect.
I am starved for a knowing glance.

Some form of recognition of who I really am,
Who I always have been and will always be.
A hidden core wanting only to be understood.

I feel like a struggling creature trapped in a block of ice.
Dependent totally on the warmth of your Presence.
Yet you do not see me -- only my cool defense.

Do you truly believe I am some stone for you to carve?
Or clay to be molded by your limited vision of me?
Are you the God of me?

Stop and learn.
I am a masterpiece in process,
A flower blooming.

Guide me with your own light.
The Light that can be seen
When two souls meet.

All I need from you is a connection of authenticity.
An acceptance that we are both, you and I, mighty fine.
Let us both trade the control for Presence.

And, if you want me to live up to my potential,
If you want me to be a shining star,
Promise me a galaxy.

A galaxy of others known deep to their core.
Of others unfolding before your eyes.
A galaxy glowing through the dark night.

*Sharon Kelsay, Teacher of Gifted & Talented
March 1990*



AAP News

The Newsletter of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

August

2008

Review of Roberto Assagioli's *Psychosynthesis in Education*

By Sharon K. Mandt

One of the major areas of concentration in the initial development of the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation (PRF) was education. With that in mind it is not surprising to note one of the first PRF publications (1959) was a booklet, *Psychosynthesis in Education*.

Frank Hilton, PRF Administrator, stated in one of his annual reports that this was one of their most popular booklets. He received requests for additional copies as well as positive comments from educators who were inspired by the challenge which the small, seven-page booklet presents.

Imagine being an educator in 1959 and reading these questions: "By what token have we assumed the development of the rational 'mind' was of more value to the process of maturation than the education of the feelings and emotions, and of the senses?" "Is it true that 'too much criticism and analysis are apt to paralyze and even kill our emotions and feelings'?" or "Wherein does a presently standard curriculum reach up to the Self and its integration with the other aspects of the personality?"

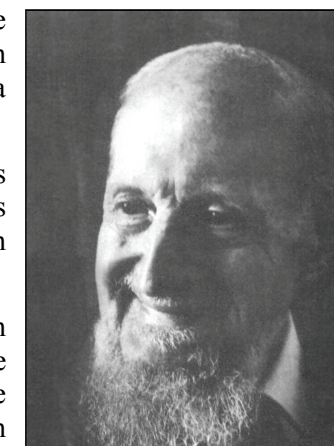
Those same questions might be asked today. Nine objectives paraphrased below help the reader better understand this wider vision:

- I Development of all aspects of the human being and an organic synthesis toward Self-consciousness
- II Active methods of learning and expressive techniques based on the pupil's own personality, capacity, and inner life; and specific pupils' various psychological types
- III Physical education not only to balance mental and imaginative activities but also to integrate rhythmic movements and well-regulated games
- IV Active use and control of the mind through well-graduated exercises of concentration, reflection, and meditation
- V Emphasis on education of the imagination and the pupil's feeling nature
- VI Promotion of self-discipline and development of the different aspects of the will: deliberation, decision, planning and action
- VII Affirmation of the spiritual nature in each pupil and recognition of that nature in every human being
- VIII Application of this spiritual nature in human relations within the family, among peers, and eventually toward society

As I conclude the review of this PRF booklet, I am flooded with feelings of gratitude for witnessing moments that have fulfilled some of this challenge and a deeper sadness for what seems to be a movement by public schools in the opposite direction.

Recently I toured a Waldorf School with hopes that my pre-school-age grandson might attend. If not, I am more aware of what I need to do to supplement his education in the time we have together.

As a retired educator I am haunted by a nagging phrase that still replays in my mind when I read this type of challenging material: "The children are waiting."



If you are not a member of AAP, this is a complimentary copy! Please consider joining and supporting AAP's work.



PO Box 414
Somerset KY 42502

Explore This Issue:

- **2009 REGIONAL GATHERINGS**
- **PSYCHOSYNTHESIS IN EDUCATION**
- **AAP'S 2008 CONFERENCE REPORT**
- **GOINGS ON AT PSYCHOSYNTHESIS CENTERS & WEBSITES . . .**

. . . AND MUCH MORE . . .

AAP News

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Yes, Send Ideas, Art, Photos, and Letters

Send ideas helpful in your life and work, your poems, book reviews, art work, articles—especially about your use of psychosynthesis.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the editors or of AAP. We may edit submissions for grammar, syntax, and size.

Help Your Editors Edit

We're volunteers, so if possible please make your submissions "camera-ready," **Goings On** notes 75 words or less, and **articles** 500 words or less.

Submission Deadlines

Mar. 15, June 15, Sept. 15, Dec. 15

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The Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

Founded in 1995, AAP is a nonprofit association with tax exemption in the United States. It is dedicated to advancing and advocating on behalf of synthesis and conducting psychosynthesis educational programs. Donations are welcome.

COCHAIRS' REPORT: New Ideas, New Steering Committee, New Initiatives

Dear Members,

The joy of seeing so many of you at the conference in Brattleboro continues. Your input was so valuable in the deliberations of the Steering Committee, which met after the conference. One of the outcomes is that in 2009 there will be smaller gatherings across the country, instead of one big conference. Many of you supported this. We can now begin to think about a conference in 2010. It's possible we will continue with this rhythm of a conference every two years and varying programs the other year. We welcome your ideas for and participation in planning these regional gatherings.

Buoyed by the energy of the conference, we move ahead as we adjust to the changes on the SC. We thank Carla Peterson for her service as cochair this past year and are grateful to have her continue her last year on other projects. We will miss Karen Pesavento, membership chair, and Jan Kuniholm, newsletter editor and 2009 conference chair. Thank you both for the outstanding service you provided. We welcome Cynthia Bost, Gwin Stewart, and Rick Martin. They already have taken on a full work load and are ready to begin this new cycle. Janet Messer is the new cochair and joins Hedi Weiler, who continues into the second year as cochair.



Current AAP cochairs Janet Messer and Hedwig Weiler with founding cochairs Didi Firman and Jean Guenther.

As discussed at the membership meeting, this past year has been one of a long list of accomplishments. We build on the work of all who came before us and want to pass on a solid infrastructure to those who come after us. We are working on a number of new initiatives and will continue to invite your participation in all projects that interest you. We are always glad to hear from you as we work toward our common goal of advancing psychosynthesis. We are committed to this way of making a difference at this demanding time on the planet.

In Light and Love,

Janet Messer and Hedwig Weiler
Cochairs, Association for the
Advancement of Psychosynthesis
cochairs@aap-psychosynthesis.org

Announcing 2009 Regional Gatherings

Look for regional gatherings in 2009 instead of a national conference.

If you are interested in offering an event in your region, let us know. Visit our Website and click on "aap cochairs" or mail us at AAP PO Box 414 Somerset KY 42502. Website is www.aap-psychosynthesis.org.

Education

Psychosynthesis International: Blended Education, Distance Learning and Psychosynthesis

By Mary Kelso and Betty Bosdell

Blended Education combines text-based, online technology with face-to-face learning. The Psychosynthesis International (PSI) Distance Education program developed in 1984 uses this model as a low-cost, effective way to transmit knowledge globally. A teacher or mentor facilitates the learning, helping organize the learning space and materials. Each student has a personal learning plan and proceeds at an individual pace, utilizing current technologies. The program encourages students to support each other, creating a community experience that facilitates the integration of learning into life. This seems to be an ideal model for making psychosynthesis available to a global community.

PSI evolved from the standard three-year program used at the High Point Foundation in Pasadena, CA, a center founded by Edith Stauffer, PhD. She turned that program over to High Point's board of directors and Vivian King in 1981. Many thought Edith would be retiring, but Edith said, "I can't stop teaching now; there are so many more people that need to learn about psychosynthesis." For three weeks of every month she corresponded with students about their lessons and reading; during the remaining week she traveled to remote locations to hold workshops with her students.

Students came from Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, and South America. New tutors were added to manage the growing number of students, and these tutors came together once a year to support and assist each other.

A conference in 1993 brought all the Pacific Rim students together in Oakland, CA. The learning community that developed was responsible for the psychosynthesis centers that now exist in Australia, New Zealand, and Western Canada.

As Edith focused on other areas, the board of directors of PSI became more active. In 1996, it organized the International Psychosynthesis Conference in San Diego. Betty Bosdell, Mary Kelso, and Bob Anderson have updated the teaching materials and techniques, and the program is being refined continuously.

In 2004 the current blended learning style emerged as a strong response to a request for psychosynthesis training to support the Foundation for Human Development programs in Trinidad & Tobago. Each student worked one-on-one with a primary tutor for the first two years. The student responds to 21 sequential lessons, each including 8 to 15 topics. For each lesson, the tutor dialogues with the student through email and occasional telephone contacts. The focus is on the tenets of psychosynthesis and its application to the student's life. A variety of psychosynthesis books and other materials—written, audio, and visual—are used. Additionally, students attend an intensive workshop each year. Individually paced, this process takes from two to four years. Two tutors traveled to Trinidad to work with the group and meet with individuals there.

In addition to the on-line lessons, each student completes a major project in his or her third year. Students in the same country meet together in a weekly or monthly support group. Students use psychosynthesis in their life and in their work settings. Throughout the program students do their own personal growth work with a counselor/therapist. Supervision is provided for students consistent with their work settings.

Through this program, Psychosynthesis International has been privileged to bring psychosynthesis to new geographic areas.



Art by Bonney Kuniholm

From Fear to Harmony with Psychosynthesis

How a school administrator used psychosynthesis to prepare for and perform a new, demanding job as vice principal during a difficult transition in leadership.

By Anthony

This academic year I accepted my biggest challenge. In spite of physical signs of stress, internal chaos, and discomfort, I agreed to act as the vice principal when my principal retired, in order to facilitate the ensuing transition process. I had a long, difficult history with the vice principal—who was to become principal—caused by her deep insecurity and her distrust, especially of my close relationship with the outgoing principal. I used psychosynthesis to prepare myself for the challenge.

At first, I disidentified from the new role completely. I approached the post with no expectations, confident of my intrinsic worth. Whenever people congratulated me on my promotion, I just smiled. Only I knew the fear this promotion generated in the pit of my stomach. Those closest to me were upset at what they termed my negative approach to the position, but the disidentification exercises helped me tremendously in this initial stage.

Secondly, I practiced exercises of the will. I went through the process of clarifying my purpose: to give the two young women on staff, who hoped to be the future school leaders, time to gain the qualifications required by the Ministry of Education. Once I focused on my purpose, everything fell in line. My love for the two young women and my confidence in the purity of their motives gave me the strength to shift the focus from me to the task. I decided I would bring nothing to the role but a willingness to serve the school. I would be happy to do whatever duties the principal gave me. I also decided not to discuss the school with my friend, the retired principal. Furthermore, I decided to support the present principal by not encouraging any negative talk with the staff and always focusing on her positive actions.

Thirdly, I kept certain transpersonal words always in the forefront of my mind as affirmations to avoid slipping into any negative talk with self or others. I used words such as harmony, wonder, understanding, and peace.

Finally, I tried to walk in her shoes. That reduced my negative feelings, and I was able to work more consciously to calm her fear of me as a threat. I always deferred to her, phrased my suggestions as questions to give her the power, and always directed teachers and staff to speak to her first.

In all of this, my daily meditation helped me to stay centered. After a while, I noticed that the energies shifted and things began to change for the better. Now at the end of the academic year, I can say my principal is less distrustful, more open and confident. She has even expressed her gratitude that I accepted the post. She asks my advice and takes heed of what I say. I actually enjoy working with her. We now work as a team, both of us using our skills for the betterment of the school and I have had a year of deepening my experience with psychosynthesis.

"After the Russians' presentation on Saturday night of the conference, Tom Yeomans led us in singing Tom Chapin's "This Pretty Planet" in a round. The singing was one of the high points of the conference for me."

Janet Messer



Abby Seixas on the guitar, Jon Schottland, Molly Young Brown, Anne Yeomans, Lenore Lefer, Marcel Rheault, and Sasha Badkhen at the Conference

You're Invited: Submit a Proposal FOR THE NEXT CONVERSATIONS

Judith Broadus and Gwin Stewart

The 2010 issue of *Conversations* will be titled "Psychosynthesis Exploration of Trauma." We intend to include articles examining research, theory, practice, and personal experiences of trauma. Also considered will be original artwork and nontraditional writings, such as poetry. If you would like to submit a proposal for inclusion in the publication, please contact Gwin at Drgwin@hotmail.com for details. Deadline for the 300-word description of your proposal is October 1, 2008. We look forward to a broad and rich representation of the topic. Editors: Judith Broadus and Gwin Stewart.

Are You Ready to be Part of the Steering Committee? CALL AND TALK

The AAP Nominating Committee is searching for members who would be an asset to the AAP by serving as members of the Steering Committee. Your cooperation in this process is most needed, as is your discernment. The persons elected will serve a three-year term beginning in mid-2009.

Qualifications include: (1) AAP membership, (2) training and experience in psychosynthesis, (3) an enthusiasm for group process, and (4) a desire to provide leadership in the advancement of psychosynthesis.

If you would like to suggest someone or if you yourself are interested in serving, please contact the Nominating Committee chair, Sharon Mandt, at sharonmandt@gmail.com or mail the information to

AAP
PO BOX 414
SOMERSET, KY 42502
The deadline for nominations is
December 1, 2008.

Endorsement of Empowering Dialogues Within

By John Parks

Kate Posey's new book, *Empowering Dialogues Within*, reaches out to mental health clinicians representing many schools of psychotherapy in an effort to build on the skills they already possess. While doing so it leads these clinicians toward a deeper understanding of the key role the Higher Self plays in bringing together and guiding the maturation of less mature parts of the personality.

This guiding process, described in detail by the author, continuously reaffirms the primacy of the Higher Self as the starting point for therapy. The Higher Self is also an essential catalyst for an effective, ongoing psychotherapeutic process. This book has detailed case examples with excellent descriptions of many possible dialogue scenarios.

I believe this book is a must read for all therapists who wish to understand more fully the process of integration of the personality through inner guidance made possible by carefully constructed dialogue experiences.

Book info: Cohen-Posey, Kate. 2008. *Empowering Dialogues Within: A Workbook for Helping Professionals and Their Clients*. John Wiley and Sons: Hoboken, NJ (Paperback).

"Good teachers are specialists in opening small packages."
Jonathan Kozol

Beauty as a Spiritual Path

The Psychosynthesis Center of Wisconsin and the Center for Awakening will hold a retreat, "Beauty as a Spiritual Path," September 25 to 28, 2008, near Baraboo, WI for the Psychosynthesis community and like-minded people. Along with periods of discourse, meditation, chanting, and times of silence, participants will experience the beauty of nature, laughter, and the joy of companionship. Facilitators are Hedwig Weiler and CaSandra May. For details see www.Psychosynthesiswis.org.

Following the retreat, at 2:00 p.m. September 28, the Psychosynthesis community and friends are invited to a potluck at the rural home of Sue and Nick Clapp to experience friendship and beauty at their rural home near Plain, WI. Contact Marilyn Wedberg at mwed@chorus.net for details.

Tell About Your Ideas and Your Experiences with AAP

Thanks to all members who provided feedback at the annual AAP conference in Vermont! Members made many helpful suggestions and comments, and the Steering Committee has heard your voice. If you were not able to attend the conference or you have additional suggestions you would like to make, please feel free to forward those to me, Gwin Stewart, at your convenience. As chair of the Membership Committee, I am especially interested in hearing how your experience as an AAP member could be better. If you have ideas, I'm eager to hear them; if you have concerns, I want to hear them. Email Drgwin@hotmail.com or call 314/724-0503.

AAP's 2008 Conference

AAP'S 2008 Conference and TDP a Rousing Success

By Jan Kuniholm, Conference Chair

The setting was a lovely red barn with a silo set against a field of green which houses the Union Institute & University's Brattleboro Academic Center (UIU). UIU hosted AAP for four days at the end of June: two days for the Trainer Development Program and two days for the Conference. Members of the UIU faculty joined in the presentations, while nearly 40 UIU students attended workshops. AAP Steering Committee members and faculty of UIU all agreed that this conference was a fruitful interchange between AAP and the school, and may lead to further cross-pollination.



Molly Brown with Saturday night Russian Keynote Speakers Sasha Badkhen and Mark Pevzner

Over 150 people from the US and Puerto Rico, Canada, Sweden, Russia, Portugal, and Japan were at the conference in addition to the UIU students and faculty. The most common comment was that the conference was too short. Others said it was just wonderful, and most wanted to find a way to attend everything and see everyone! Many felt that this was AAP's "best conference ever."

Abby Seixas opened the conference Friday night with a keynote presentation, *The Deep River Within: Reflections on Spiritual Life in a Speed-Obsessed World*. Other highlights of the weekend included a presentation on Healing Trauma in Russia by Sasha Badkhen and Mark Pevzner of the Harmony Institute and a variety of workshops presented by 40 psychosynthesis practitioners and UIU faculty members.

Superb food from the Riverview Café in Brattleboro was served under a big-top tent behind one of the barns.

The conference was preceded by two days of AAP's Trainer Development Program, which focused on considerations of theory. Facilitated by Molly Young Brown and Vincent Dummer, the TDP of about 36 people split into three groups, each of which meditated, discussed, and experienced issues related to three central areas of Psychosynthesis theory: Self, The Unconscious, and Will. On the last day, the groups presented responses ranging from group hugs to charts to verbal expositions. Some of the overall group's responses to these areas were presented in a public forum at the end of the second day. Many conference attendees arrived early to join in this meeting, and hopefully some of the results of the proceedings will find their way into print in the future.

The conference included a sad note with the news of the passing of John Firman only days before the conference opened. Many people gathered to meditate on and celebrate his life and work, which was, and is, a major part of psychosynthesis in North America.

The conference closed with hugs and singing on Sunday afternoon, as Tom Yeomans led the group in several songs, ending with "Amazing Grace."

All photos taken by Janet Messer.

"Ending the war inside yourself means bringing the conflict among all your sub-personalities to an end."
Veronica Fisher *THE WAY of THE WIZARD*



Jan Kuniholm, Conference Chair

Letters & More

JOHN FIRMAN, 1945 TO 2008

By Ann Gila

John was born in White Plains, New York, in 1945, while his father was serving in Italy during World War II. After his father returned from the war, the family moved several times as his father pursued graduate degrees. They ended up in Palo Alto, CA when John was five. John lived in Palo Alto three times in his life, for two years as a child, for several years as a young adult, and then for the past 18 years. He died there, in his home, on June 23, 2008, of pancreatic cancer.

John lived most of his childhood in Claremont, CA and then attended the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he received his bachelor's degree in English Literature. During the Viet Nam war he served as a conscientious objector at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Unit where he was licensed as a psychiatric technician. It was during this time that he had a peak experience which led him on a quest to find a psychology which spoke of such experiences. He found psychosynthesis which became his passion for the rest of his life. In 1973, he spent two months in Italy studying with Roberto Assagioli.

John received a master's degree from Goddard College and became a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in CA. Together with his wife, Ann Gila, he taught at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, wrote two books (*The Primal Wound* and *Psychosynthesis: A Psychology of the Spirit*), and is under contract with SUNY Press for the publication of their third book: *Psychosynthesis Therapy: A Psychotherapy of Love, Power and Spirit*. John was dedicated to furthering the thought of Assagioli and to exploring the relationship of psychosynthesis theory to other theoretical orientations. He was an avid reader and writer and often sat, early in the morning, writing at his computer with his little dog, Molly, on his lap.

In addition to psychosynthesis, John's passions included riding his Harley motorcycle and playing his guitars. He was part of a blues band called the Bornia Boys and loved this group of guys. He was last able to play four weeks before he died. There were tears in his eyes and in theirs.

John related to others with respect and love and this is what he taught his students. This is what he cared about so deeply. This was his Practice.

John Firman can be seen at his best on this 2005 video: <http://www.aap-psychosynthesis.org/resources/videos/firman.html>.

AAP Communications

By Carla Peterson

There are three communication venues for AAP. One is this newsletter which is published four times a year. The editor is Joann Anderson, assisted by a number of copy editors, including Abbie Loomis, Walter Polt, and Marilyn Wedberg. Susan Hanley does the layout. Readers are encouraged to submit articles and notices. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find information about how to submit material to be considered for publication.

The AAP Website, www.aap-psychosynthesis.org, is a second communication venue. It was begun by Ted Slawski and later maintained by Dirk Kelder. In 2006-2007 responsibility for maintaining and adding to the Website transitioned to Susan Hanley. Vincent Dummer also makes available Psychosynthesis Resources material on the AAP Website which is found under the heading, "Resources." Vincent also set up a separate Website, www.psychosynthesisresources.com which is linked to the AAP Website. Please send suggestions for enhancements or changes to the AAP Website to Carla Peterson by emailing info@aap-psychosynthesis.org.

David Shirley started the third venue, the e-news, *Goings On*, in 2006. He sends out e-news approximately once a month. Our list is growing steadily, so AAP is able to keep in contact with an increasing number of people who have expressed interest in psychosynthesis and its community. If you wish to have an event, news item, or notice of general interest to the psychosynthesis community highlighted, send an email to event@aap-psychosynthesis.org.

Memorial gifts for John Firman can be made out to AAP and mailed to:

AAP

P.O. Box 414

Somerset, KY 42502 USA

In the subject line on the check, indicate "Assagioli Library Fund." Funds will be bundled and sent to Italy by AAP.