

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS QUARTERLY

The Digital Magazine of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

Volume 6 Number 1

March 2017

ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI: THE SCIENTIST OF THE SPIRIT—A New Film

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS AND THE REDUCTION OF SUFFERING IN MEDICAL PATIENTS *by Richard and Bonney Schaub*

EATING WITH ASSAGIOLI *by Jan Kuniholm*

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS: A FOUNDATIONAL BRIDGE BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY
by Catherine Ann Lombard

HOW I TAUGHT SELF-IDENTIFICATION TO YOUNG ADULTS
by Isabelle C. Küng

A SPONTANEOUS OBSERVATION OF DESCENDENCE *by Amber Sofia*

AN OPEN LETTER TO AGENTS OF CHANGE *by Barbara Veale Smith*

CAT AND MOUSE *by Jill Becker*

In Memoriam Mary Ondov and Betty Bosdell

**Meetings and Psychosynthesis Training Events
in the USA and Europe**

AAP's first interactive Webinar

Poetry by Stephanie Sorrell and Bonney Kuniholm

And MORE . . .

Psychosynthesis Quarterly

Editor: Jan Kuniholm

Assistant Editors: Audrey McMorro, Walter Polt, and Douglas Russell

Design and Production:

Jan Kuniholm, Walter Polt

Psychosynthesis Quarterly is published by AAP four times a year in March, June, September and December. Submission deadlines are February 7, May 7, August 7, and November 7.

Send Announcements, Ideas, Reviews of Books and Events, Articles, Poetry, Art, Exercises, Photos, and Letters: Tell us what has helped your life and work, what can help others, and examples of psychosynthesis theory in action. Notice of **Events** should be **1500** words or less, and **articles** should usually be **4500** words or less. We accept psychosynthesis-related advertising from members. Non-members who wish to run psychosynthesis-related advertising are requested to make a donation to AAP. Send submittals to: newsletter@aap-psychosynthesis.org

The Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis:

Founded in 1995, AAP is a Massachusetts nonprofit corporation with tax exemption in the United States. It is dedicated to advocating on behalf of psychosynthesis and conducting psychosynthesis educational programs. Membership and donations are tax deductible in the United States.

AAP membership supports this publication and the other educational activities of AAP: \$75 (US) per year, with a sliding-scale fee of \$45 to \$75 for those who need it. Click [Here](#), or contact us at (413) 743-1703 or info@aap-psychosynthesis.org

If you are NOT a member we invite you to join AAP and support psychosynthesis in North America and the world.

Views expressed in *Psychosynthesis Quarterly* are not necessarily those of the editors or of AAP. AAP makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of what appears in the Quarterly but accepts no liability for errors or omissions. We may edit submissions for grammar, syntax, and length.

Psychosynthesis Quarterly is sent to all current AAP members and to others who are interested in our work. Our membership list is never sold.

© Copyright 2017 by AAP
61 East Main Street
Cheshire, MA 01225-9627
All Rights Reserved

www.aap-psychosynthesis.org

contents

ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI: THE SCIENTIST OF THE SPIRIT	3
PLEASE WRITE! - DIDI FIRMAN	4
PSYCHOSYNTHESIS AND THE REDUCTION OF SUFFERING IN MEDICAL PATIENTS - RICHARD AND BONNEY SCHAUB	5
CAT AND MOUSE - JILL BECKER	15
A SPONTANEOUS OBSERVATION OF DESCENDENCE: AEON'S STORY - AMBER SOFIA	16
MILESTONES - MARY ONDOV	21
THE SONG OF LIFE - ISABELLE C. KÜNG	22
HERE I WALK - STEPHANIE SORRELL	23
THE FUTURE OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS - BETTY BOSDELL	24
THE PREVAILER - BONNEY KUNIHOLM	25
AAP'S FIRST INTERACTIVE WEBINAR TRAINING: HOLDING THE SACRED CIRCLE OF WOMEN'S VOICES	26
TOWARDS SYNTHESIS - SEVENTH INT'L MEETING AT CASA ASSAGIOLI	27
TRAINING: TRANSFORMATIONAL LIFE COACHING EATING WITH ASSAGIOLI - JAN KUNIHOLM	29
TRAINING: TRANSFORMATIONAL LIFE COACHING IN ITALY	38
PSYCHOSYNTHESIS: A FOUNDATIONAL BRIDGE BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY - CATHERINE ANN LOMBARD	39
TRAINING: THE EFPP SUMMER SCHOOL AN OPEN LETTER TO AGENTS OF CHANGE - JANUARY 19, 2017 - BARBARA VEALE SMITH	48
MILESTONES - BETTY JANE BOSDELL	51
HOW I TAUGHT SELF-IDENTIFICATION TO YOUNG ADULTS - ISABELLE C. KÜNG	55

Notes from the Editor

There is a new film out in Italy about Roberto Assagioli, soon to be available in DVD format in the US. See page 3.

This issue holds a broad spectrum—from helping patients who suffer; to finding new channels for art to emerge from personal openings; to reflections on how the psychosynthesis process is engaged and taught.

In the US, we have entered a new era, and this is reflected in some writing in this issue. Some lovely poetry and original art, and memories of loved colleagues—so read on, and enjoy!



Jan Kuniholm

FEZ FILM

in collaborazione con PAOLA BUTALI, VANNI LANDI, MARIA GIOVANNA CLEMENTE
presenta

ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI

LO SCIENZIATO DELLO SPIRITO
THE SCIENTIST OF THE SPIRIT

Un film documentario di Maria Erica Pacileo e Fernando Maraghini

Our apologies for the blurry image—it was the best we could obtain—Ed.

This film will be available on DVD. Click here to see the [trailer](#), and there is also a second [trailer](#), both on YouTube.

Please go to
<http://www.robortoassagiolthemovie.com/>
for more information.



WWW.ROBERTOASSAGIOLTHEMOVIE.COM

Please Write!

Didi Firman, The Synthesis Center

**This is my appeal
to every member and friend of AAP:
Please write about psychosynthesis!**



We have some authors amongst us and that's good, but every one of us has something to say, and every one of us very likely has a place to say it.

And my deep hope is that when you write, you write about psychosynthesis—in some way, using some of the concepts—using the name *psychosynthesis*, somewhere in your writing.

If you have the Call to do so, write a book about psychosynthesis: your version of psychosynthesis, your experience, your use of it, how it has served you, teaching something to others about psychosynthesis. That would be great. But writing books is difficult. At least it always has been for me. Getting books published is even more difficult. Please, if you do write a book, don't expect to make a lot of money. But maybe one of these days, a book on psychosynthesis will make it big! Who knows? Follow Your Call.

Books aside, though—write articles, for journals, in scholarly ways; for local magazines in non-scholarly ways; for blogs; on social media; in your local newspaper; in on-line publications; in an email to your mom...

Write about psychosynthesis and _____ (fill in the blank). Have you written on your FB page about politics lately? Next time let your psychosynthesis come through, as well. Do you blog on anything? Salads? Love? Parenting? Get psychosynthesis in there.

That's my invite, my request, my rant. If we don't get the word *psychosynthesis* into the world, who will? If we don't name the concepts and principles and exercises and experiences, how will other people know?

Finally (and a big one on my bucket list), I am editing a book with *psychosynthesis* in the title. Yay. Makes me smile.

Thanks for listening.

“The times are never so bad that a good person cannot live in them.”
— adapted from Sir Thomas More (1478-1535)

Psychosynthesis and the Reduction of Suffering in Medical Patients

Richard Schaub, PhD

Bonney Gulino Schaub, RN, MS, PMHCNS-BC, NC-BC

Introduction

Each of us without exception is vulnerable to change and loss. This normal state of vulnerability is aggravated when we become ill. The 1994 inclusion of physical illness as a potential traumatic stressor in the fourth Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) has led to studies of PTSD in medical patients (see, for example, Swartzman, Booth, Munro, & Sani, 2016).

Loizzo, Charlson and Peterson (2009) point out, however, that the viewpoint which classifies the traumatic reaction to illness as a disorder demonstrates a bias: "...the bias cognitive-behavioral and psychodynamic therapies share with our medical system as a whole. That is, the failure to acknowledge illness, aging and death as existential features of the human condition, rather than...intrusions to be eliminated, avoided, or denied" (p. 127). To address the existential anxiety aspect of illness, Loizzo et al offer a contemplative program based on "Indo-Tibetan" practices to help cancer patients to feel "...empowered to face the enormity of the challenge" (p. 127).

Loizzo, Charlson and Peterson's work extends earlier blends of Eastern spiritual practices with Western healthcare. Examples include: the neurologist and psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli's integration (psychosynthesis) of Buddhist insight meditation and visualization meditation with psychotherapy (Assagioli, 1965); the cardiologist Herbert Benson's distillation of Indian mantra meditation (Transcendental Meditation) to evoke the parasympathetic "relaxation response" (Benson, 1975; Chang, Casey, Dusek & Benson, 2010); the microbiologist Jon Kabat-Zinn's focusing of Buddhist mindfulness meditation on pain management and stress reduction, now referred to as MBSR—mindfulness-based stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). These pioneers have been instrumental in encouraging further uses of Eastern spiritual practices in Western healthcare (see, for example, Black, 2016).

This article builds on these medical-spiritual integrations. It covers four areas for the health professional's consideration:

- 1) Greater awareness of the existential anxiety present in each patient's experience - which we term vulnerability (Schaub & Schaub, 1997);
- 2) The use of specific transpersonal practices (Schaub & Schaub, 2013) derived from Assagioli's psychosynthesis for alleviating the degree of a patient's vulnerability-anxiety as he or she goes through treatment and recovery;
- 3) Case studies that illustrate the effects of these practices;
- 4) The need for a psychosynthesis-trained specialist on every treatment team (Schaub, 2011).

Greater Awareness of Vulnerability

Health professionals are consulted everyday by patients hoping to heal the crisis of illness. In addition to the anxiety of a sudden change in health, struggling with symptoms, going through diagnostic testing, deciding on the best treatment, dealing with the side effects of treatment, and the course of post-treatment recovery, the patient has anxiety about an uncertain future that may include pain, disability, dying, and the end of hope. Compassionate professional responses to a patient include reassurance, cautious optimism for a good treatment outcome, possible referral to a hospital social worker or chaplain and, if necessary, anti-anxiety medication.

This article adds the reality of an existential aspect to the patient's clinical picture: illness forces us to face the fact that change and loss are an inevitable part of life. This fact of vulnerability is an underlying source of anxiety (Schaub & Schaub, 1997, 2009) which is typically ignored in the treatment of illness (Loizzo et al., 2009). Referred to by

(Continued on [page 6](#))

(Continued from page 5)

philosophers East and West as the “human condition” or the “truth of impermanence,” vulnerability-anxiety is ultimately linked to the awareness that our life is temporary, a fact we try to deny (Becker, 1973). Serious illness breaks down this denial and exposes us to our underlying vulnerability-anxiety.

Bruce, Schreiber, Petrovskaya and Boston (2011) chose the term “groundlessness” as a way to summarize the vulnerability-anxiety statements from patients at their medical center. Bruce et al. further reported that a severe form of groundlessness can occur in patients who thought they had a religious faith but lost it when they became seriously ill. Loss of confidence in religion (Gallup, 2012) and loss of religious affiliation (Pew, 2012) are now extending into 25% of the United States population, particularly among young adults, and this loss of religious support adds to the vulnerability-anxiety struggles in our patients.

This article advocates that we include this deeper anxiety/suffering in our assessment of a patient’s experience and learn how to respond to it to enhance recovery. The outlook and skills of psychosynthesis give us one proven way to respond.

Transpersonal Resources

The ego-based personality has no answer for “the human condition” and the “truth of impermanence,” since the ego-based personality itself is impermanent. The vulnerability-anxiety aspect of the medical crisis calls upon us to focus attention *beyond our personality* (i.e. transpersonally) and to awaken our transpersonal resources of peace, wisdom, purpose and oneness (Schaub & Schaub, 2013). Though we haven’t been educated about these transpersonal resources, they objectively exist in dormancy in each person without exception. As is demonstrated in the case studies, these resources can be awakened within a single meeting with a patient.

Recent publicity reported on the profound effects of the hallucinogenic drug, psilocybin, *to reduce anxiety by increasing transpersonal experiences* in patients with cancer at the NYU Medical Center (Ross, Bossis, Guss et al. (2016). This article reinforces the importance of such experiences but focuses on non-drug interventions - psychosynthesis skills - that guide patients into their transpersonal nature.

The First Step: Moving from Fear to Choice.

Insights from neuroscience (Hoelzel, Carmody, Vangel et al., 2011) and Assagioli (1965, 1991) indicate that there is an observing aspect of the brain-mind which notices and is conscious of thoughts, feelings and body sensations but is distinct from those thoughts, feelings and sensations. Hanson (2009) refers to this observing consciousness as *the executive center of the brain*, and Assagioli refers to it as *the observing self* or “I.”

Hanson describes this observing consciousness as in the brain. Assagioli believes our brain participates in this consciousness and utilizes it but that its source is universal. In either case, this observing consciousness, in its executive brain function, is capable of both 1) noticing thoughts, feelings and sensations, and then 2) deciding if it will engage with any of them—or not engage. Assagioli referred to this as *identifying with* (engaging) or *disidentifying from* (not engaging) with an inner experience (1965). The act of not engaging (disidentification) appears to be the most therapeutic effect of mindfulness practice (Lacaille, Ly, Zacchia et al., 2014). The repetitive act of noticing thoughts, feelings and sensations and choosing to disidentify from them actually grows new neurons in the executive center of our brain (Hoelzel, Carmody, Vangel et al., 2011), which in turn makes our brain more capable of managing the productions of our fear center (Hoelzel, Hoge, Greve et al., 2013). A practice of disidentification is described in the case study in this section.

In teaching disidentification to patients, it is important for the health professional to appreciate that it does not mean the suppression of vulnerability-anxiety thoughts, feelings and sensations. Instead, acceptance of the fact of vulnerability is encouraged and can be reinforced by two neuroscientific insights: 1) We all have a healthy, normal

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from [page 6](#))

and active fear center in our brain which is trying to help us to survive and sends signals of anxiety when it perceives threat (Shin & Liberzon, 2010); and 2) Our normal brain is *biased in favor of paying attention to anything negative* in order to survive (Hanson, 2009). These insights normalize our vulnerability-anxiety as a natural emotion.

Disidentification, rather than suppression, is the act of 1) first turning toward our thoughts, feelings and sensations, 2) noting the nature of them (e.g. worry), and then 3) consciously and deliberately deciding to turn attention away from them. This distinction matters greatly because identification with thoughts, feelings and sensations gives them more energy: disidentifying from them reduces their energy. It is a subject for another paper, but for now consider that at the heart of the action of disidentification (and mindfulness) is the management of consciousness which is energy.

Case Study in Disidentification: Larry.

Larry, a 35-year-old with a diagnosis of HIV positive, was referred by his physician to the Psychosynthesis Institute because of displays of extreme fear and anger in the hospital clinic. He had refused medication for his fearful and angry episodes, rightly asserting that he was having extreme feelings because of the extreme situation he was in.

He was first trained to follow his breathing and to say out loud anything that was coming into his awareness from moment to moment (The full steps of this practice, *Stream of Consciousness*, are in Schaub & Schaub, 2013, p. 60). After several minutes of this, he was instructed to verbalize internally whatever he was noticing. The technique was then shortened to (1) following his breathing, (2) noting internally with a single word whatever he was experiencing, and (3) returning to his breathing. He was taught to (1) consider his breath as his center, (2) to be interested in whatever thought or image or feeling or sensation pulled him away from his breath, away from his center, (3) to keep his attention long enough on the off-center experience to know what it was, e.g., worrying, (4) to mentally note, “Worry,” (5) to then return his attention to his breath, to his center.

The point of this training was to strengthen his observing self. The movement from center to off-center and back to center was taught as the normal flow of attention. No attempt was made to stay fixedly focused on the center. In this way, Larry was establishing a base of relaxation in his breathing and at the same time not denying whatever experiences were present.

As mentioned earlier, the central understanding in disidentification and mindfulness is that thoughts, feelings and sensations are, at one level, just coming and going, *if* we do not engage with them. Larry noticed, in meditation, an array of experiences—some pleasant, some unpleasant, some new, some depressingly familiar, all coming and going, coming and going. He could either engage with them or let them go.

Letting his thoughts, feelings and sensations come and go did not magically make them disappear, but his act of disidentifying from them took some energy out of them. In time, the ability to choose whether to identify with or disidentify from a thought, feeling or sensation became stronger.

The gains made by Larry were bringing him to the threshold of inner peace. At times, he felt completely at ease, his mind quiet. No thoughts or feelings or body sensations distracted him. The sense of time blurred, even disappeared. Assagioli called this the state of “consciousness without content” (Assagioli, undated notes), and Lee (2016) refers to it as the *void*. After such a meditation, Larry would experience a light pervading joy. Everything seemed brighter, more vibrant.

The experiences themselves were intriguing, but even more important was the sense of inner freedom that was developing in him. He was no longer at the mercy of his fear or anger. He had new possibilities for coping with his illness. He could choose to go into the fear and anger, or he could keep cultivating his new found peace. Larry understood he had a choice.

(Continued on [page 8](#))

(Continued from [page 7](#))

Assagioli, who pioneered the skill of disidentification in psychotherapy decades before mindfulness was recognized in Western psychology, knew first-hand about the need to cultivate the freedom of inner choice under painful conditions. Arrested and placed in solitary confinement by the Italian Fascist government at the start of World War Two, Assagioli said this about inner choice:

“I realized I was free to take one or another attitude toward the situation...I could rebel, I could submit passively, vegetating. Or I could indulge in the pleasure of self-pity and assume the martyr’s role. Or I could take the situation with a sense of humor, or I could make it a rest cure, or I could submit myself to psychological experiments on myself. Or, finally, I could make it a spiritual retreat—at last away from the world. There was no doubt in my mind—I was responsible,” (Schaub & Schaub, 1996).

In order to capitalize on disidentification practice, patients are taught a second step: how to cultivate a replacement thought, feeling or sensation to turn toward. For the religious person, turning toward prayer and prayerful thoughts and feelings would be the replacement. For the secular patient, and for the increasing percentage of patients with no connection to religion (Gallup, 2012), the transpersonal practices of inner peace and inner wisdom can be the replacement.

Accessing the Transpersonal Resources of Peace and Wisdom

“Transpersonal,” meaning *beyond the personality*, refers to the deeper resources in human nature beyond the habitual patterns of the personality ((Lajoie & Shapiro 1992; Schaub & Schaub, 2013). The transpersonal resources featured in this article are inner peace and inner wisdom. First used in 1905 by the “father” of American psychology, William James (Vich, 1988), the term *transpersonal* gives health professionals a neutral way to refer to the higher and deeper resources in human nature without resorting to spiritual and/or religious language. The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung and Assagioli both used “spiritual” and “transpersonal” interchangeably (Rosselli, 2014).

With an understanding of the objective existence of the transpersonal resources in each person, the health professional can help patients to 1) disidentify from vulnerability-anxiety thoughts, feelings and sensations (as in Larry’s case), and 2) learn how to directly experience their innate transpersonal resources. Simple, safe, effective practices can accomplish this, and the three case studies in this section give examples of practices and outcomes.

Case Study in Inner Wisdom: Clyde

One of the first author’s (Richard’s) early clinical experiences with the profound transpersonal resources of peace and wisdom took place during the initial onset of the HIV-AIDS epidemic. A patient named Clyde called our Psychosynthesis Institute to say that he was diagnosed with AIDS, was already extremely ill and was struggling terribly with fear and anxiety. This case study describes a single home visit and transpersonal session that took place in Clyde’s apartment.

When the author arrived, Clyde could barely manage to come to the door and then quickly retreated to bed. He was under the covers, shaking, when the session began. He said he had been searching desperately for some way to calm himself, but nothing was helping. He’d given up on anti-anxiety medication because it made him feel worse once the medication wore off.

Clyde was asked if he had any religious or spiritual belief. He said he had rejected his childhood religion because it rejected him due to his homosexuality. He said he wondered about reincarnation but didn’t believe in it, basing his interest only on the feeling that he had “been here before.” The author used this as a starting point for an inner wisdom practice. (For a full discussion and the steps of this practice, see Schaub & Schaub, 2013, pp. 82-101).

With Clyde lying prone on his bed and the author in a chair by the bedside, Clyde was guided to follow his breathing.

(Continued on [page 9](#))

(Continued from page 8)

Then, utilizing the reincarnation metaphor, Clyde was asked to imagine another man in another time and place who was also following his breathing just as Clyde was doing now. Clyde's breathing began to slow down and his eyelids were fluttering, a physical sign that vivid inner imagery was taking place in his imagination and causing rapid eye movement (REM). Nothing else was said to Clyde.

Usually, an imagery meditation practice such as this lasts a few minutes at most. Clyde remained still for twenty minutes. There was a palpable feeling of peace in the room. Clyde then slowly opened his eyes and began to relate what he had experienced:

“I felt my body sink deep in the bed. I felt a great heaviness and peace. The itching from the medication went away, and it's still gone. I saw an image of a young man. I saw him become ill. I saw his flesh begin to fall off him, until a skeleton was all that was left. Then his flesh reappeared, and his life force returned. He was the same healthy young man I first saw. But soon, the flesh began to come off him again, his life force left him, and he became a skeleton again. At that point, I saw an old man behind him, and I realized that as the old man moved his hand to the left, the flesh came off the young man; and as the old man moved his hand to the right, the life came back to the young man. I watched this with great feelings of peace. I felt that I was being taught something very important. I can't even say the peace was in me, because by the time I was watching this I had absolutely no sense of my body at all. My body was gone. My body had dropped away. I was free. I was floating free. I had no fear at all. I was free.”

In psychosynthesis imagery practices, the images that are generated in the patient's mind are considered to be uniquely personal; it is unnecessary for the health professional to interpret them. It was clear that Clyde had connected with an inner wisdom which was advising him to let go as a way of reducing his suffering and increasing his peace.

Clyde told his closest friends about his wisdom experience and made them promise to guide him to his “wise old man” when he was dying. As his illness progressed, Clyde was hospitalized. After a few days as an in-patient, he stopped communicating. Although he was not in a coma, he remained unresponsive to visitors who assumed that this was a neurological or emotional consequence of his approaching death.

One night, as his friend Paul was leaving Clyde's hospital room, the nurse told him that she didn't think Clyde would live through the night. Remembering his promise, Paul returned to his friend's bedside and began to guide the unresponsive Clyde to his inner wisdom. As Paul finished and sat back crying, Clyde spoke up and said, “Don't worry. Clyde is already gone.”

He died peacefully thirty minutes later.

Case Study in Inner Wisdom: Hilda

Hilda was a 77 year-old Holocaust survivor who was being treated for a recurrence of lymphoma. Six years before, when she was first treated, her husband had been there to support her. But he had since died, and now Hilda did not think she would have the strength to go through it again on her own.

Hilda said that the emptiness she felt in herself had become frightening to her. “I have no strong feelings, no delights, no disappointments,” she said. “Nothing matters. That is not life; that is a terrible stagnation. A sleep condition. I have to get out of this, but how?”

She then went on to talk about herself as a young woman before she left Germany. She would face her problems by cutting herself off from the world, going off by herself “to a lonely place in the heather” to contemplate and find solutions to whatever was bothering her.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

She was guided to close her eyes, relax, and go back to the heather. This is how she later described the experience in a letter:

“I transported myself mentally to a suburban train heading to the heather. It’s a beautiful summer day. The passing landscape is hazy, impressionistic. I get off at the heather station and walk down a long, gray, wide, very dusty road with deep ruts created by heavy wagons. There are no cars on this squalid road.

“There are hardly any people. A few old fenced-in farmhouses to the right and left. Maybe no one lives in them. I walk on and see a little side path leading directly to the heather. I take the path and after a while even that ends. I go on, slowing down because of the thickness of the heather, and continue through this unlimited, unending heather field broken by only a few birch trees. This is real wilderness without man’s interference.

“Finally I sit down near some trees. How wonderful.

“I decide to lie down and look at the cloudless, silky, pale blue sky, draped like a dome over the horizon. A very gentle wind caresses me and makes the little gray-greenish leaves of the birches move slightly, maybe talking together about the intruder—me—who lies so motionless. A few butterflies flutter around, busy bees hum and collect the nectar from the flowers of the heather and move gracefully with the wind. Everything is peaceful and disconnected from the daily crazy world. What a glorious day!

“But I did not come here for adoration. I came to find my purpose, to feel better. I have to start searching. I fall into a deep sleep. I become a turtle, a little gray, insignificant, unnoticeable turtle, head inside under an impenetrable shell. Cut off from the lovely outer world.

“I have to go down a chute, deep into the uncontrolled conflicts within me, past the vanity and finding excuses for everything I do, past the lies I tell myself, until I come to my own core, bare and naked, where my innermost soul begins. I sink deeper into sleep.

“What is my problem? Is it the relationship between me and my family? Is it the relationship between friends and myself? Why do I suffer so much defeat despite wanting success? What is the destructive chemistry inside me?

“I believe these are questions without easy answers. But to put the questions into words is already a cleansing.

“Slowly I begin to wake up from this kind of trance. My hair sticks to my face. I smell the strong, good, earthy soil on which I lie and I love it. The sun is high in the sky now. Somehow I feel sweaty but good about myself, and I start walking again. Far away I see a herd of sheep with a shepherd. When I pass him, we greet one another.

“Moving over this lovely, purplish, unending carpet of heather, I suddenly come to a big swimming pool filled with clear green water in the middle of nowhere. At the edge stands a short, white-haired, dark-skinned man who says, “hello.” We talk a bit and he invites me to swim in his pool. I tell him I am a poor swimmer. I lose my breath easily from fear and would never let go of the ground beneath me.

“He finally persuades me to swim across by promising to jump in immediately if I lose my breath or get panicky. Somehow I trust him and slowly submerge myself in the crystal clear water.”

“Swim,” he orders me. It is a command. I have to follow. I swim across, making sure he is still standing on the edge. I come to the far side of the pool and decide to stop.

“Turn and swim back—swim, swim. You can do it.” I listen to him and do the exercise several times without stopping. I never did such a long swim before in my life and I didn’t have any breathing problems.

“Finally I get out of the water and can hardly believe it was me who accomplished all this swimming. What kind of man was he to give me all this unexpected power and confidence? I don’t know. I never see him again.”

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from [page 10](#))

“This achievement on that day gave me such an immense, beyond-any-words feeling of happiness that I will and never could forget it. I finish my trip by picking a huge bunch of heather for my grandmother, who preserves it for a year by pouring boiling water over it and keeping it dry in a vase. When I open my eyes I really feel at peace. What a beautiful day!”

Hilda was definitely not someone who would have believed in a natural inner wisdom. Her life experience, in fact, had taught her quite the opposite—that there was very little of positive value to be found in human nature—and she probably could have filled an entire book with her negative opinions of religion and spirituality. And yet, despite her lack of belief, Hilda most assuredly connected with her transpersonal nature that day and derived great benefit from it. Through her experience, she was once more able to connect with a love of life and to believe in her own possibilities. Ultimately, the experience is what gave her the strength to begin her treatment.

Case Study in Inner Wisdom: Catherine

57 years old, Catherine, like Hilda, was referred because of a refusal to seek treatment for a recurrence of cancer. In the assessment, she described herself as a devout Catholic. She said she had too much anxiety to even consider going back for more testing, possible surgery, and follow-up chemotherapy. She felt like the anxiety was ripping her whole sense of self apart. But she was also refusing anti-anxiety medication, saying that she wasn't “crazy” and wouldn't take pills to solve her problems.

Catherine was first trained in mindfulness meditation because of its extensive documentation of effectiveness in reducing stress (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). After several tries, she interpreted the mindfulness process as trying to flatten and deny her emotions, and she wasn't motivated to practice it further. Utilizing the information that Catherine was a devout Catholic, she was next guided into a scene in her imagination in which she met a Catholic sacred figure, the Blessed Mother (Mary), and told the image about her anxiety. She at first softly sobbed but then began to smile, opening her eyes a few moments later with the excited declaration that “the Blessed Mother held me!”

Catherine proceeded with her medical treatment, utilizing this inner image as a source of courage whenever she felt anxious and afraid. In the words of this article, she had found the replacement for her vulnerability-anxiety.

Evidence-based Transpersonal Experiences

The neurologists Newberg & D'Aquili (2001) identified a special brain state, an experience of oneness and bliss, which they called *absolute unitary being* (AUB). The discovery was based on their brain scan research with advanced meditators. They speculated that AUB may actually be the singular goal that very different religious and spiritual traditions cross-culturally are trying to experience.

While evidence for AUB can be linked to neuroscience, we should also be open to the vast “evidence” that exists in the cross-cultural meditative and spiritual descriptions of AUB. One example is the Vedanta tradition in Hinduism, a philosophy and skill set that greatly influenced Assagioli.

In Vedanta, the entire universe is energy which is aware (Vedanta Society, 2016). The direct personal experience of this all-pervading consciousness is called *satchitananda*: *sat* is being, *chit* is knowledge of truth, *ananda* is bliss. The famous chant of OM (or written as AUM) represents the vibration of this universal consciousness.

Other names for absolute unitary being (AUB) are the Tao (Lee, 2016), heaven, paradise, liberation, union with God, *satori*, illumination, unitive consciousness, enlightenment, nondual awareness. Among some modern scientific terms, there is subtle energy (Green, 2013), underlying implicate order (Bohm, 1980), and one mind (Dossey, 2013) also pointing to universal consciousness. In these perspectives, awareness itself is not produced by the brain or body and

(Continued on [page 12](#))

(Continued from page 11)

is not limited to the brain or body. Rather, the view is that our brain-body is participating in an all-pervading, interpenetrating field of universal energy which is aware. Assagioli put it this way: “Spiritual realization is the direct experience of the part of your nature which is identical to the great energy pervading the universe” (Assagioli, undated notes).

Figure 1, below, lists some of the AUB-like experiences and benefits that patients have described.
from (Schaub & Schaub, 2013, pp. 128-129)

just pure awareness, endless, boundless	equanimity
feeling solid like a rock	deep compassion and connection
lightness of being	a "psychic" experience that causes awe
a sense of spaciousness	a deep feeling of gratefulness
serenity and contentment	a clear sense of inner guidance
laughing in a very deep way	awareness of other lives in other places
quiet joy pervading all things	loving all persons in one person
feeling unity with all beings	feeling oneself to be the channel for a stronger force to flow through
having an instantly understood inner vision, an illumination	only bliss everywhere
feeling an extraordinary inner silence	merging with a work of art and the artist's intention
inflows of inspiration	the delight of beauty
a sudden and important creative breakthrough	
liberation from fear	

Commenting on our transpersonal potential, pioneering physician Larry Dossey (in Schaub & Schaub, 2013, p. xv) made this point:

“...it is clear that the transpersonal view is not a philosophical plaything, but a perspective that is required by both widespread human experience and empirical findings, and which has the potential to revolutionize the dismal, modern view of our origins and destiny. This recognition is timely. As part of a larger consciousness, we have access to all possible wisdom and creativity, which we sorely need if we are to confront the many challenges we face as humans on a fragile planet.”

And Schaub & Follman (1996) summarized some of the surprising effects of transpersonal experiences reported by patients:

- “Something of fundamental importance has happened to me.”
- “There are no memories to compare this experience to.”
- “The experience is its own immediate memory.”
- “The experience means more than I can presently understand.”
- “There is a desire to be true to the experience, to affirm it, to protect it.”
- “There is a reticence about telling the experience to anyone who will criticize it.”
- “The experience is difficult to take in because I sense its potential to change me.”

The Role of the Transpersonal Specialist

With the scientific validation of meditation, imagery and spirituality (NCCAM, 2008) as approaches to help patients, the time is right for a new role in healthcare: a specialist who understands the human resources that are being tapped by these practices. In this article, we have referred to these resources as transpersonal, and we recommend that a professional with such knowledge—a psychosynthesis-trained health professional—should be available in every unit of a hospital, in every business wellness service, in every clinic, school, house of worship, and in the private practices of various specialties.

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

There are many health professionals who are drawn to meditation, spirituality, holistic and integrative medicine, visualization, energy practices, religious and mystical study who could train in psychosynthesis and fill this role (Schaub, 2016; Schaub & White, 2016). They would be serving a double purpose—to help patients, and perhaps to help their fellow professionals.

Cautions with Transpersonal Practice

As with any health intervention, objective observation of the intervention's effectiveness is the first responsibility. Does the specific practice reduce the patient's vulnerability-anxiety? This is in the spirit of the three-step process of the scientific method itself: observe phenomena; form a hypothesis about what you observe; test whether the hypothesis is valid or not by means of an experiment. Such thinking guides every approach to healthcare and mental health, and transpersonal practice is no exception.

Summary

The support for synthesizing Eastern spiritual practices with Western healthcare has reached scientific and public acceptance. This article offers a form of medical-spiritual synthesis based on 1) an understanding that a beyond-the-personality (transpersonal) aspect of human nature holds deeper resources, and 2) that simple, effective, time-tested Eastern and Western practices of meditation and imagery, synthesized by Assagioli, can awaken these resources to reduce suffering. The specific suffering discussed in this article is the existential vulnerability-anxiety that is stimulated by serious illness and needs to be attended to in the treatment process. It is recommended that a staff member trained in psychosynthesis should be available to reduce vulnerability-anxiety in our patients by accessing their transpersonal resources. ■

References

- American Psychiatric Association (1984). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th Edition). Washington DC: APA.
- Assagioli, R. (undated notes). Assagioli Archives, Istituto di Psicosintesi, Florence.
- Assagioli, R. (1965). *Psychosynthesis*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Assagioli, R. (1991). *Transpersonal development: The dimension beyond psychosynthesis*. London: Grafton Books.
- Becker, E. (1973). *The denial of death*. New York: The Free Press.
- Benson, H. (1975). *The relaxation response*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Black, D. (2016) Mindfulness research monthly. www.goAMRA.org.
- Bohm, D. (1980). *Wholeness and the implicate order*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bruce, A., Schreiber, R., Petrovskaya, O., Boston, P. (2011). Longing for ground in a ground(less) world: a qualitative inquiry of existential suffering. *BMC Nursing*, 10:2.doi:10.1186/1472-6955-10-2. <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6955/10/2>
- Chang, B-H., Casey, A., Dusek, J. & Benson, H. (2010). Psychological outcomes in cardiac rehabilitation. *Focus on Heart Disease*, V.69 (2), August, pp. 93-100. doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2010.01.007
- Dossey, L. (2013). *One mind: How our individual mind is part of a greater consciousness and why it matters*. Carlsbad CA: Hay House.
- Gallup Poll (2012). Confidence in religion at an all time low. Huffington Post, Nov. 23. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155690/confidence-organized-religion-low-point.aspx>
- Green, E. (2013). Beyond psychophysics. *Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine*, Vol. 0, 4, pp. 359-395.
- Hanson, R. (2009). *Buddha's brain: The practical neuroscience of happiness, love and wisdom*. Oakland CA: New Harbinger.
- Hoelzel, B., Carmody, J., Vangel, M., Congleton, C., Yerramsetti, S.M., Gard, T., & Lazar, S.W. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, 191, 36-43.
- Hoelzel, B., Hoge, E., Greve, D., Gard, T., Creswell, J., Brown, K., Barrett, L., Schwartz, C., Vaitl, D., Lazar, S. (2013). Neural mechanism of symptom improvements in generalized anxiety disorder following mindfulness training. *Neuroimage: Clinical*, pp. 448-458, doi.org/10.1016/j.nicl.2013.03.011
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1991). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face pain, stress and illness*. New York: Bantam Dell.
- Lacaille, J., Ly, J., Zacchia, N., Bourkas, S., Glaser, E., Knauper, B. (2014). The effects of three mindfulness skills on chocolate cravings. *Appetite*, doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.01.072
- Lajoie, D. H. & Shapiro, S. I. Definitions of transpersonal psychology: The first twenty-three years. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 24, 1992
- Lee, C-T. (2016). Personal communication.

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

- Loizzo, J., Charlson, M. & Peterson, J. (2009). A program in contemplative self-healing: *Stress, allostasis, and learning in the Indo-Tibetan tradition*. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 123-147. doi 10.1111/j.1749-6632.2009.04398.x
- NCCAM (2008). *Meditation for health purposes - executive summary*. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Available at: nccam.nih.gov/news/events/meditation08/summary.htm. Accessed August 30, 2010.
- Newberg, A. & D'Aquili, E. (2001). *Why God won't go away: Brain science & the biology of belief*. New York NY: Ballantine.
- Pew Forum (2012). "Nones" on the rise: One-in-five adults have no religious affiliation. <http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx#growth>
- Remen, R. (1997). *Kitchen table wisdom*. New York: Riverhead.
- Ross, S., Bossis, A., Guss, J., Agin-Liebes, G., Malone, T., Cohen, B., Mennenga, S., Belser, A., Kalliontzi, K., Babb, J., Zhe, S., Corby, P. & Schmidt, B. (2016). Rapid and sustained symptom reduction following psilocybin treatment for anxiety and depression in patients with life-threatening cancer: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, December V. 30, 12, 1165-1180. doi: 10.1177/0269881116675512
- Rosselli, M. & Vanni, D. (2014) *Roberto Assagioli and Carl Gustav Jung*. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 46 (1). Pp. 7-34.
- Schaub, B. (2016). Vulnerable and spiritual: Utilizing the process of transpersonal nurse coaching. In Rosa, W. (Ed.) *Nurses as leaders: Evolutionary visions of leadership*. New York: Springer, pp. 377-392.
- Schaub, B. & Schaub, R. (1997). *Healing addictions: The vulnerability model of recovery*. Albany: Delmar.
- Schaub, B. & White, M.B. (2015). Transpersonal coaching. *AHNA Beginnings*, August 2015, Vol. 35, 4, 14-16.
- Schaub, R. (2011). Clinical meditation teacher: A new role for health professionals. *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine*, April, 16:145-148.
- Schaub, R. & Follman, M. (1996). Meditation, adult development, and health: Part III. *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 10, (3): 213-220. DOI:10.1177/153321019600200314
- Schaub, R. & Schaub, B. (1994). Freedom in jail: Assagioli's notes. *Quest Magazine*, 7, (3), Autumn.
- Schaub, R. & Schaub, B. (2009). *The end of fear: A spiritual path for realists*. Carlsbad CA: Hay House, New York.
- Schaub, R. & Schaub, B. (2013). *Transpersonal development: Cultivating the human resources of peace, wisdom, purpose and oneness*. Huntington NY: Florence Press.
- Schaub, R. & Schaub, B. (1994). Freedom in jail: Assagioli's notes. *Quest Magazine*, 7, (3), Autumn.
- Shin, L.M. & Liberzon, I. (2010). The neurocircuitry of fear, stress, and anxiety disorders. *Neuropsychopharmacology*. Jan; 35(1):169-91.
- Swartzman, S., Booth, J., Munro, A., Sani, F. (2016). Posttraumatic stress disorder after cancer diagnosis in adults: A meta-analysis. *Depression and Anxiety*. Jul 28. doi: 10.1002/da.22542.
- Vedanta Society (2016) <https://vedanta.org/what-is-vedanta> Accessed 11/11/16.
- Vich, M.A. (1988) *Some historical sources of the term "transpersonal."* *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 20 (2) 107-110
- Vigilant, L.G. & Williamson, J. (2003). Symbolic immortality and social theory. In [Handbook of Death & Dying](#), Eds. Clifton D. Bryant & Dennis L. Peck, DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412914291>. New York: SAGE Publications, Inc.



Richard Schaub, PhD, has been a mental health professional for 35 years, applying psychosynthesis in hospitals, clinics, drug rehab, adolescent day hospital, private practice and international training of health professionals. He is co-founder of the New York Psychosynthesis Institute.



Bonney Gulino Schaub, MS, RN, is a co-founder of the New York Psychosynthesis Institute and co-director of the Huntington Meditation and Imagery Center. She has trained hundreds of professionals internationally, is a guest faculty member of Assagioli's original institute in Florence, and is co-author of five books on transpersonal development.

The authors can be reached at drrichardschaub@gmail.com
An earlier version of this article appeared in [The Integrative Practitioner](#).



Cat and Mouse

Jill Becker

This morning I awoke to the dulcimer sounds of the cat wading through papers, knocking things over, and generally making a mess. Experience has taught me that he has likely brought in some kind of a "gift" and is now trying to "wrap it."

Anyhow, I came down to the library and saw him poking around behind a basket. At that point I was certain that there was some little creature hiding out, just trying to survive. I took a peek but didn't see anything. Well, I saw a dog leash and I hoped that perhaps our cat, Midnight, was missing our dog, Chloe, who was away—and was trying (apologies to Dr. Skinner) some kind of cat-behavioral therapy. So, I went downstairs, consciously deluding myself, and made some coffee.

A minute or so later I heard the cat knock over the dog's bowl. Now I was certain that this was a dog-missing induced psychosis; perhaps there were some dog abandonment issues seeded deep in the recesses of Midnight's psyche which originated in his earlier days at The Animal Rescue League. Perhaps this was a past-life trauma. I really didn't know.

I brought my coffee up to the library and sat down to check my email. Well, wouldn't you know it? The little traumatizing event revealed itself to be a mouse which was chirping away trying to scare the cat off. Midnight would have none of it. He toyed with the mouse and chased him around the kitchen.

Realizing that I could save this little creature from a trauma of its own, I got a mosaic mold (the first thing I could get my hands on), ran downstairs and, after putting on shoes, caught the little guy (or gal) under the mold.



Now what?

Well, at first I tried to slip a large sheet of card stock under the mold so that I could keep the mold on the mouse and safely escort it outside. But, the little gal (or guy) poked its nose out and I knew that wouldn't work.

Now what?

I decided that I could slowly push the mold (this thing is about 2 inches high and 14 inches in diameter—it looks much like a large cake pan but it's black and made of very hard plastic) along the floor, to the door, and let the gal (or guy) go. The door that required travel over the tile floor was closer, so I chose that one, knowing that there would be much rumbling in the blackness for the mouse. But, if I went slowly, we'd both make it. So, that's what I did. I pushed the mold along the tile floor, just 12 or 14 feet. But, for this little 2 inch long guy (or gal) it must have felt like that awfulness would never end. It also had to be terribly loud, terribly dark and terribly scary. At the end of the difficult journey, I opened the door, lifted the mold and had to nudge the mouse out and to apparent safety.

I started to think; maybe this is what our lives are like. Maybe we are going through our days, doing our best, and some 'cat' pounces on us. Maybe we have to live through our own difficult circumstances, in the deafening darkness of the mold, not knowing what is on the other side. And, maybe we simply can't see the L.L. Bean-jammie-clad body that is guiding us, safely, along the bumpy tile floor in order to get to the wonderful light that is beyond that door.



Or, maybe not. ■

Living in Newton, MA, Jill Becker is a "beyond the box" Medical Doctor who is trained in Gynecology. Jill also has a Master's Degree in Clinical Counseling, with a concentration in Expressive Arts Therapy. Jill had the great good fortune to study Psychosynthesis with Didi Firman and Jon Schottland in Amherst, MA. Jill is also trained in Psychosynthesis Coaching. See jillbeckermd.com to learn more or to get in touch with Jill.

A Spontaneous Observation of Descendence: Aeon's Story Amber Sophia



Figure 1. Aeon (2014)
Original art by author.

This is the story of Aeon, or at least the story of how I first encountered Aeon. Before Aeon, (see figure 1), there were others. Painted ladies that had a story to tell, most of which were rather dark in nature and all of which were my own self-reflections. Before my encounter with Aeon, I had a rather dark pallet to dip my brush in. Very little light touched any canvas unfortunate enough to have a conversation with me. I would later discover that each of my paintings before Aeon fell into the category of sub-personality. I was not familiar with Psychosynthesis...yet. Aeon manifested in my world to light my path towards Assagioli and the door that would begin the new chapter of my life.

I recently stumbled across the work of Thomas Yeomans. Specifically, his writing on Descendence and The Third Awakening ignited a call of Self that would move my 'you are not a writer, you are a painter' sub-personality out of the way long enough for me to type the words you are reading now. In *Descent of the Higher Self*, I found permission to express what I believe Yeomans would categorize as a small "p" psychosynthesis case study of what I would consider my first observation in *Descendence*.

We need to be able to transcend in order to get perspective and to build a stronger and deeper connection to who we, in essence, are, but then we need to descend in order to make ourselves fully realized and known in the world. We need to contact the Higher Self through transcendence and we need to ground and express the Higher Self through descendence. In short, full spiritual maturity is not real until the Higher Self has come fully down to earth, so to speak, and its energies are manifest and functional in daily personal living. Who we most deeply are has to be grounded in our particular personhood, including our bodies, and in our behavior, and in the everyday world.¹

In the following section, I will describe the events that led me to witness one woman's encounter with what she experienced to be her Higher Self, followed by my observation of the process of that energy descending down to earth; and how I proceeded to translate that same energy in a way that would make it possible for it to manifest daily. I have named this process **Proxy Painting**.

How it all began

Before I can get to Aeon, I must start with Paige. I met Paige in April 2014. I was in my room after a long day of training and the bags on the bed next to mine in the hotel room in Dallas had yet to reveal its owner. As I was getting myself ready for bed, there was a loud bang on the door. Apparently, when you have a roommate you cannot bolt the door or they will be unable to get in. Poor Paige had been trying to get in while I was singing in the shower. Little did I know the woman entering that door would change my life as I had known it.

About a month later, Paige asked me to assist her with a project. The project needed to be her own work, but she said she "couldn't draw a stick figure if her life depended on it," and asked if I could help her get creative. I sat on the floor next to her and silently asked myself, "Is it possible that I could paint someone else's creation?"

The answer hit me like lightning and I turned to Paige and asked her if she trusted me. This led to a lunch wherein I interviewed Paige, collecting any and all information that she felt was relevant to her story; family of origin conditioning, childhood memories that she holds dear, current issues and struggles. Most importantly, I asked her a life question: What do you want?

(Continued on [page 17](#))

(Continued from page 16)

I had no idea where I was going with this, but in hindsight, it was pure call of Self, and I was being dragged along for the ride.

A few days later, as I was getting into my car after dropping off my daughter at daycare, the lightning struck once more: Ask her who her favorite princess is.

I tried to fight off the crazy, but I didn't stand a chance. Before I left the parking lot, I stopped and sent the text, urging Paige to take all the time she needed. She responded right away, almost as if she were waiting for someone to ask that very question. *Belle...from Beauty and the Beast.*

Guess what movie I watched that evening after work? As I watched the timeless story of the brainy beauty who tames the beast, it hit me - *the lightning storm*. I grabbed the nearest of the 30-something notebooks I had lying around, and began to draft a journey.

Using all of the data I had collected, this journey pretty much wrote itself. It consisted of three main levels, each level having a challenge at its threshold. These challenges were completely customized for Paige based on the information she had shared with me. Looking back at that notebook now, it is a *perfect* hot mess! Scribbles and scratches as my hand desperately tried to keep up with my mind—arrows pointing here and there as I added new ideas.

The next day I nervously pulled up at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden to meet with Paige. We sat in the middle of a large open grassy area (see figure 2). I set up the tripod for my camera, pulled out my messy notebook, took a deep breath and leaped into the unknown.



Figure 2. Horseshoe at Botanic Gardens Fort Worth, TX.

(Source: <http://www.fwbgo.org/horseshoe/>)

The Journey

We began with some breathing exercises. Basic. I then guided Paige to a special place that she loves, using guided visualization. This place was by the ocean. On the beach, there was an observation of the inner child, playing in the sand—drawing, to be specific. The child led Paige to a door: the first threshold.

I encouraged Paige to create a door.

Paige: It's square, rectangle.

Amber: Does it have a particular color?

Paige: Yeah, it's blue.

Amber: Blue door. Is there anything unique about this door?

Paige: There's no door knob, it's just a hole. There's a hole where the doorknob would have been. To open it I've got to stick my hand through that door.

Amber: What kind of blue? What is the shade?

Paige: It's sky blue...it blends in with the horizon and the beach. Maybe I wouldn't have seen it before if it wasn't for the hole.

Amber: You have the key to open this door, you have earned that key, and it lies within you. There is a magic spell on this door. We can enter this door now, because you are ready. Do you know what the magic words are, Paige? You have earned those words, and they are within you. You have to speak those words now, and the door will open.

Paige: "You are ENOUGH!"

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from [page 17](#))

The door leads us into a damp, dark and cold place. After finding a candle, Paige can now see she is in a castle surrounded by:

...fragments of your life. Pictures of moments hanging on the walls, old artifacts, old toys you remember from your childhood, books, all familiar things that are covered in dust and lifeless now.

Up a giant staircase, past pillars topped where gargoyle

...faces [begin] to morph into the familiar faces of people in your life. People who have TOLD YOU the kind of woman that you are. People in your life that have conditioned you to be what THEY want you to be...

The gargoyles lead us to a long narrow hallway where Paige faces mirrors reflecting the different fragments of how Paige has seen herself. In hindsight, this was a fantastic guided imagery exercise for sub-personalities, but I wouldn't start my Psychosynthesis training until the following year.

After this challenge, Paige finds herself

...in a room with no walls no ceiling, only pure bright white light.

The next five minutes are spent igniting an inner creative spark. Paige begins to use an energy source that is radiating from her fingertips to paint beautiful flowing patterns that swirl and dance around her. She giggles and smiles, eyes closed but so very engaged and alert as she moves her hands around while sitting in the middle of the garden. As the last threshold is crossed, I hold my breath and say a prayer, hoping that she sees something satisfactory on the other side.

I had, up to this point, tried my best to subdue any of my own expectations of an image. In that moment I braced myself to face painting another dreaded ocean scene, like the Bob Ross-style paintings I was forced to create in my early training in oils as a child. I closed my eyes, preparing for the description that would piece together the image in my mind.

I do not know exactly what happened next, as my camera shut off and I had my eyes closed; but her words startled me. Paige could hear the sounds coming from the figure in front of her. My eyes flew open as I desperately tried to find my pen in the grass to write down the descriptors as they came. This is the beginning of what I was able to scribble down:

Sculpture

Metallic

Powerful

Feminine

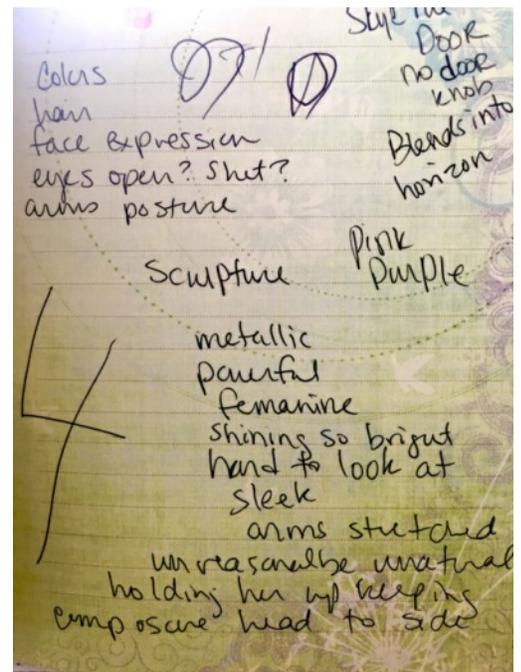
SHINING so BRIGHT

Hard to look [directly] at

SLEEK

Arms stretched | Unreasonable | Unnatural

Holding her up | Keeping composure | Head to side



I continued to listen and to scribble as Paige poured out what she saw. The result was an explosion of descriptors (see figure 3), a cloud of clues describing the essence that was to become Aeon, the first of her kind collaboration between artist and client.

(Continued on [page 19](#))

(Continued from [page 19](#))

I fell beyond the rabbit hole with this one. I fell deep, and when I returned there she was. I am not sure how much time had passed, but I do remember hearing her name: AEON

In Conclusion

It has been almost three years since the first encounter with Aeon, who now resides on a wall in Paige's room where a tall mirror once stood. Replacing the mirror appears to help Paige stay on track, serving as a daily reminder of the experience in the garden and what she felt. The Proxy Painting process has developed beyond that first moment in the gardens with Paige. Every new journey is different and each threshold crossed reveals a unique glimpse into the essence of the Higher Self. I believe this image changes, evolving along with the observer as the 'I' is better able to clearly see the 'Self'. Only time will tell, as I have yet to observe a second journey with Paige, but I feel it on the horizon. ▣



Amber Sophia is an Artist and Psychosynthesis Life Coach who helps women to remember how wonderful they are. She has developed an experiential process called Proxy Painting in which she uses Psychosynthesis techniques to help her clients to peel away layers of conditioning in order to guide

them back to their own inner light. During a customized guided visualization she draws descriptors that she translates into a unique work of art, a painting of the client's higher Self.

References

¹ Yeomans, Thomas, *Descent of the Higher Self* at The Synthesis Center [Website](#)

² Firman, John, and Ann Gila, *The Primal Wound* (1997) and *Psychosynthesis: A Psychology of the Spirit* (2002) both published by SUNY Press, New York

**YOU CAN SUPPORT AAP'S
SCHOLARSHIPS AND OTHER PROGRAMS
(Including the Quarterly)
BY BECOMING A MEMBER OF AAP
OR BY MAKING A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE (In the USA)
DONATION.
CLICK [HERE](#) TO JOIN OR CONTRIBUTE**

milestones



Mary Ondov, 94, passed away on December 31, 2016 in Ukiah, CA, with her daughters by her side. She is survived by three daughters: Kathy Yurista, Paula and Nancy Ondov; three grandchildren, four great grandchildren, sister Ann Tjornholm Leitze and family, and cousins.

Mary was valedictorian of her high school graduating class in Winnebago, MN. She attended St. Olaf College, and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1944 with a major in Psychology. She married John Ondov, had three girls, and divorced; she went on as a single mother to receive her teaching degree at Mankato State in 1962, and her Master's Degree in high school counseling at Purdue in 1966. She retired from the Robbinsdale School District in 1983.

She then became involved with the spiritual psychology of Psychosynthesis, after studying with Edith Stauffer. She was the coordinator at the Psychosynthesis Institute of Minnesota, where she functioned as the "transformational assistant" until 2002, when she moved to Santa Fe. At the Minnesota Institute, one member recalls that "Mary was the glue that held the MN Psychosynthesis staff together;" she was affectionately known as "The Psychosynthesis Fairy" and performed a ritual with each student as they graduated from their certificate program. One year she led a marvelous "Subpersonalities Party" at a Psychosynthesis International Conference in Hawaii.

Mary was a member of the AAP Steering Committee for several years beginning in 1996. She thought in very inclusive ways early on, and worked to see representation in AAP across the entire country.

The Unity Church was also a very integral part of her life both spiritually and socially. Mary was indeed ahead of her time, and her independent, caring, and humorous spirit touched the lives of many. She loved playing Scrabble and always had at least one crossword puzzle going.

Memorial contributions can be made to www.unitysantafe.org. Her ashes will be laid to rest at Rosehill Cemetery in Winnebago on April 23. Contact Nancy at 505-603-7137 for celebration details. ■



THE SONG OF LIFE

Isabelle C. Küng (Bagdasarjanz)

When our dear ones
leave the scene of earthly trifles
we who remain in this world of strife
believe they've gone their own way
leaving us but in utter dismay...

...dismay though soon unlocks
the Heart's secret voice,
and Lo! the Holy Cavern's rock
gives way to the very Song of Life:



Nicholas Roerich – (1874 – 1947) -«Treasure of the Mountain»
Nicholas Roerich Museum New York www.agniyoga.org

**WINGS OF AFFECTION PROTECT
AND INVISIBLE THREADS OF LOVE RELATE
ALL THOSE WHO ARE BOUND BY FATE;
NOT ONLY SINGLE FAMILIES,
OR FRIENDS, OR EVEN FOES, OR JUST “PERSONALITIES,”
BUT ALL WHO HAVE A COMMON DESTINY
BY LIFE ARE LINKED MYSTERIOUSLY...**

So if atoms build our bodies
and feelings make up our personalities,
if thoughts create the Labyrinth of our realities
and heartfelt prayers bridge us to our spirituality,
once the atoms are dispersed,
once the feelings are purified,
once the thoughts but translate simplicity,
and prayers AIM BUT AT LIGHT, then
The Assembler of atoms,
The Builder of realities,
The Inspirer,
Yes, the Spiritual Self
is known to be

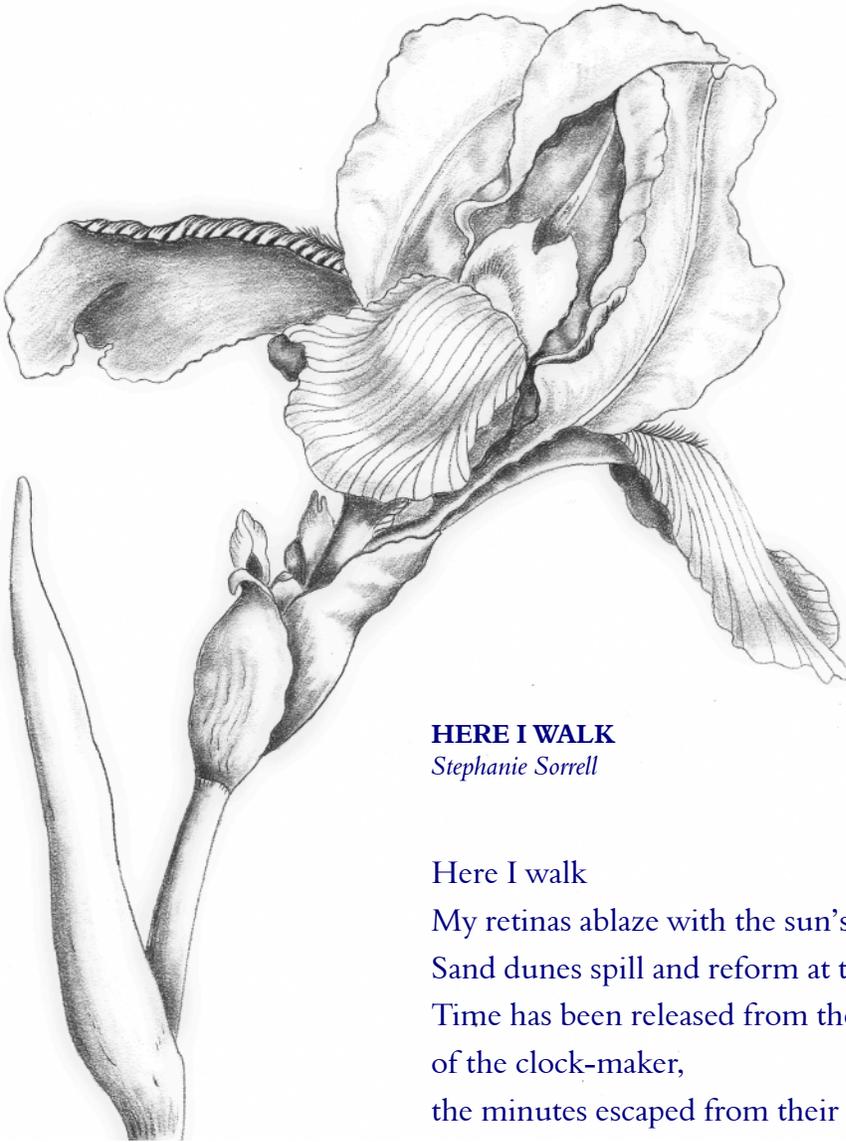
**THE BRIDGE AND CAUSE OF ALL, AND ITS NECESSITY,
THE RADIANT PORTAL BETWEEN TIME AND ETERNITY!**

So when our dear ones
have left the scene of earthly trifles,
we who remain, know
that each enlightened feeling, thought, and loving prayer,
and all our memories...
... through our own Heart, to them hold us bound

**BEYOND THE GRAVE'S STONE
WITHIN LIFE'S EVER RESURRECTING SONG!**

(painting used with permission of Nicholas Roerich Museum New York)

*Original Drawing by
Bonney Kuniholm*



HERE I WALK
Stephanie Sorrell

Here I walk

My retinas ablaze with the sun's shimmering.
Sand dunes spill and reform at the wind's edge.
Time has been released from the fretting hands
of the clock-maker,

the minutes escaped from their moorings.

Stop ...

Become porous so that something outside the known trajectory
enters you.

I feel it in the bright tube of the sun,

In the white shining around which this planet rotates

This is time; raw and unkempt like some down-and-out
stepping off the City subway forever returning to their birthright
of the stars...

The Future of Psychosynthesis

Betty J. Bosdell

Imagine before you an incredibly beautiful luminous space pulsating with life. Know that this is the future of psychosynthesis. It is made up of numerous facets, each with a particular color, flavor, vibration, offering. One of these offerings is what you are doing now. As you follow your passion in psychosynthesis it is added to the passion of others resulting in a tableau that is active, inspiring and ever changing. This, to me, is the future of psychosynthesis in North America. It is built upon a rich history, some of which we cover in this document and some of which is not told in these pages. All of these influences have resulted in a group of individuals who together cast the future.

Yes, AAP has served as a touchstone for many, but there are others who pursue their practice of psychosynthesis in their communities and professional settings. What will formal psychosynthesis look like in terms of training centers and practice centers? Time will tell, but the spread of psychosynthesis as it permeates into other psychological, educational, medical, and business approaches is already evident. Talking with a marketing expert who is knowledgeable about psychosynthesis strengthens my belief that the future of psychosynthesis also lies in its exquisite ability to be a container for philosophical theories from behavioral and cognitive therapies to and beyond what is known as the positive psychology movement. It is to the enhancement of psychosynthesis that its practitioners recognize these various approaches to human development and honor the theoretical interrelationships while also maintaining the integrity of the whole endeavor.

There will always be individuals who choose psychosynthesis as their major approach, incorporating and enriching it with other theoretical approaches. And there will always be those of other approaches who incorporate some of the psychosynthesis principles in their work. With such a wide range of approaches in the field of human psychology, and with the ongoing empirical work with people in their deep experience and unique life journeys, psychosynthesis principles and practice will grow (deep roots), and richly influence many streams.

So, it is up to each person to weave the tapestry called psychosynthesis as it moves into the 21st century. The canvas of human experience is open and available to one and all. You help to create this history and future direction as you pursue your passion and understanding of psychosynthesis. ■

This article is an edited excerpt from *The Future of Psychosynthesis*, in Parks, J.H. (ed.) (2011) *Psychosynthesis in North America, Discovering Our History 1957 – 2010*. Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis (AAP).



What We May Be
by Mary Southard
(Used by permission of the artist)

[Betty Bosdell left us in January. See the obituary on page 51]

THE PREVAILER

Bonney Kuniholm

As I lay on my porch sofa, I am too weary to look
but I can listen.

At first all I can hear is the cacophony of the sounds of machinery —
lawn mowers, roofers with nail guns, cars.

But above all this grinding, nerve-draining noise

I hear the single-note song of some bug —

I don't know what it is, or even where it is.

Its one note rises above all other sounds, yet it is relaxed, unfrenzied,
singing its singular song in its singular place,

doing its job of being who it is very well indeed.

This little creature has prevailed in putting the man-made sounds
of working into the background of its own song of being.

And what could its one note be saying? "I'm above all your
attempts to drown out my little insect song
as I sing to live and live to sing."



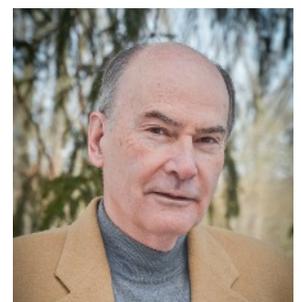
AAP Presents its first Interactive Online Webinar:

Psychosynthesis and Young Adults with Anxiety: A Path to Greater Self-Confidence Presented by Richard Schaub, PhD

Sunday, March 5th, 5-6:30 PM Eastern Time

Target Audience: Young adults with anxiety, their care givers and Healthcare Professionals

Description: Richard Schaub, PhD, is going to lead a live and interactive webinar on young adult anxieties and how to use the skills of psychosynthesis to cultivate greater self-confidence and greater self-respect. The webinar includes discussion, suggestions, techniques and case examples. It is intended for a wide audience of health professionals, educators, parents and young adults looking for new skills and ideas. Free for AAP members, and \$25.00 for non-members.



Register by clicking [here](#).

The Psychosynthesis Northeast Community is delighted to sponsor

*Holding the Sacred Circle for Women's Voices:
A two-day Training with Anne Yeomans*

*Two Saturdays, March 25 & April 1st, 10 AM to 5 PM
St. James Episcopal Church, Greenfield, MA*



Might a circle with a spiritual center be a vessel for women to transform themselves and the world? - Jean Shinoda Bolen, MD, Jungian Analyst

In this two-day training, participants will learn tools and guidelines that will help them create and "hold" sacred circles of their own. Questions and issues to be explored will include: What is a sacred circle? How is it different than a group? How is "holding" a circle different than "leading" a group? What are the conditions that make it safe for women to really listen to and honor the truth of their own experience? We will practice circle guidelines that contribute to safety and support deep sharing.

Other topics will include: Altars and creating sacred space. The circle as teacher. Embodied spirituality. Exploring the balance of love and power for both facilitators and circle members.

Experiential learning and demonstration circle sessions will be an integral part of the training. The tools and principles taught will be relevant both for women who want to create a circle for themselves, as well as for those who want to learn to facilitate such a circle for other women.

For more information and to register
contact: anneyeomans@gmail.com

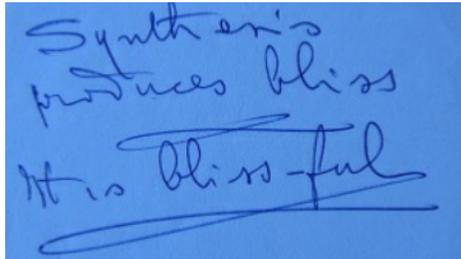
Save the date!

Seventh International Meeting at Casa Assagioli

TOWARDS SYNTHESIS

Firenze, Italia

14-17 September 2017



We invite you to Casa Assagioli to participate in the unique experience we will create together during the International Meeting.

You are invited to come and co-create the meeting, bringing all your curiosity, openness and will to Firenze, to the wellspring of Psychosynthesis. You will leave being more at home with yourself (and your Self) and inspired to offer your own gifts to a hungry community back home!

VENUE: CASA ASSAGIOLI Istituto di Psicointesi, Via S. Domenico, 16 - 50133 Firenze (Italia)

INFORMATION

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 24 LANGUAGE: English

SCHEDULE:

14 September	10.30 am to 7.30 pm
15-16 September	9.30 am to 7.30 pm
17 September	9.30 am to 1.00 pm

REGISTRATION FEES, including vegetarian lunch, refreshments and snacks:

- Early bird (by 28 February): € 350,00
 - Standard (by 31 July): € 400,00
 - Last minute: € 450,00
 - Under 30: € 200,00
 - Grants available for low income applicants upon request
- Withdrawals before 30 June: €200,00 refund, nothing thereafter

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is not included in your registration fee. We suggest you book your room well in advance.

FOR INFORMATION: E-mail: ps.events@psicosintesi.it

[CLICK FOR WEBSITE](#)



Looking for . . .

PURPOSE? ~ MEANING? ~ DIRECTION?

2017-18 Psychosynthesis Training

*The Will To Grow: Transformational Life
Coaching*

Professional Development

This is a Level 1 training for new students as well as a chance for others already trained in psychosynthesis to re-engage with this work in a spiritual retreat setting. Prospective “graduate” students will go deeper into psychosynthesis, help mentor new students, and at the same time step up into the role of becoming a certified Transformational Life Coach. Contact us for more details and program information.

***NEW!* Fully Accredited Life Coach Training Program
hosted at the beautiful [Hallelujah Farm Retreat Center](#)
in Chesterfield, NH, just minutes from Brattleboro, VT**

Study.

Experiential and dynamic group learning process that brings to life the theory and methods of Psychosynthesis, a transformational model of human growth and development based on principles of spiritual psychology.

Grow.

Exceptional opportunity for self development and personal growth. Let new dreams, possibilities and ways of living inform your path towards wholeness and health.

Find a deeper, more authentic expression of self in the world.

Train.

Acquire essential skills that can be applied in your own life and while working with others to help people thrive and reach their highest potential. Earn your certification as a Transformational Life Coach and open new doors to meaningful professional work.

Service.

You are drawn to a life fully lived. You may be in the field of mental health and wellness, education, social services, management, or any of the helping professions. You want to make a difference and make your own best contribution to those around you.

Learn more about the Synthesis Center’s upcoming national training programs and how you can get involved. Our teaching staff is available to answer questions and explore program options, including in person & low residency groups (southern Vermont, Florida and San Francisco), as well as independent study and online, distance learning formats.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Web: www.synthesiscenter.org **Email:** jon@synthesiscenter.org **Phone:** 413-256-0772

EATING WITH ASSAGIOLI

Reflections on Food, Soma and Psyche

Jan Kuniholm

Food is at or close to the bottom of the chart if we are listing the “hierarchy of needs” for human well-being: it is pretty basic. Only air, water and temperature, perhaps, are more basic—and not by much—for most of us. But food is not given much space in the theories of psychological health that I have come across—including psychosynthesis, which is perhaps the most holistic of them. Earlier in modern history people made a distinction between “physical” and “psychological” health and well-being, a separation that was due more to ignorance or convenience than to reality. More recent experience and research is reaffirming the ancient intuition that a human being is a single organism, and that the divisions perceived in a person’s makeup are more a matter of the observer’s ability than fact. What this means, I think, is that eating food is an activity that is essential and significant for the entire person, not only for “the body.”

The holistic approach to the person is yielding many insights. Modern experience is showing that trapped emotions can be accessed and released in the body through manipulation of the body, as well as through “mental” efforts.¹ Psychoactive chemicals ingested by a person can also become temporarily “resident” or trapped in specific areas of the body,² which has led many to suspect that aspects of “mind” are expressed in many parts of the human body other than the brain. Some recent studies of the human microbiome lead one to think that the ancient Sufis were correct when they described a human as a “three-brained being,” in that mental activity has been shown to be taking place not only in the brain, but also in the heart and the gut.

The “second brain” is in the heart. The notion of “heart intelligence” has been supported in modern research by different findings.³ While some people will use these findings to support an epiphenomenal approach to psyche (that suggests that emotions and intelligence are merely “epiphenomena of the body”), I find it more likely that the findings point to a notion of physical *expressions* of a mind or psyche that is essentially non-local in nature. The *energy* of thoughts, emotions and memories are likely to be “trapped” or “temporarily resident” in heart tissue in a way that is similar to the way that the energy of trauma has been shown to be trapped in a variety of tissues throughout the body.

The “third brain” is in the gut. Recent research has described an information superhighway called the “brain-gut axis”⁴ which involves hundreds of millions of neurons connecting the brain and the enteric nervous system, the part of the nervous system that is tasked with controlling the gastrointestinal system. Any of us, on reflection, might be in awe of the vast and seemingly infinitely sophisticated intelligence that organizes and directs the identification, digestion and assignment of the foods (and the other substances) that we ingest. But the notion of “gut intelligence” or “gut feelings” is probably as old as the human race, reflecting a “common sense” awareness that modern science is only now catching up with in its attempt to provide empirical demonstrations.

“Gut intelligence” is not limited to directing the amazing processes of digestion, but also is highly responsive to events both within the soma-psyche and outside in the larger environment, as our “gut feelings” will attest. Studies that have shown that *conscious* awareness of a perceived event often occurs only after other portions of the body have already recognized and responded to the event, and processed and analyzed information about it,⁵ tell us that human intelligence is not limited to conscious intelligence, but rather is distributed throughout aspects of the soma-psyche system.

What this means is that what Roberto Assagioli called the lower, middle, and higher unconscious refer in part to highly sophisticated, intelligent systems that are focused in three areas (brain, heart and gut) and distributed

(Continued on [page 30](#))

(Continued from [page 29](#))

throughout our soma-psyche system, and that these systems cross the “traditional” boundaries between “body” and “mind.” In crossing these boundaries, the human system also seamlessly incorporates inputs and outputs that we have traditionally divided up into “what is physical” and “what is mental.”

In this light, one of the features of our human system is that there is little or no functional distinction between what we take into ourselves *physically* and what we take into ourselves in any other way—mentally, emotionally, intuitively, imaginatively, and so on. The differences should be regarded as analogous to comparing different types of apples, rather than comparing apples and other fruits. This conclusion has implications that are relevant to “inputs” into the human system; but for the present paper, the important aspect of this conclusion is this: *food and eating practices are a vital part of our overall mental health as well as one of the foundations of our physical health.*

In the light of this conclusion, it seems only natural to me that the psychological community needs to take greater cognizance of the *psychological* significance of numerous bodily processes, including the eating of food. Eating food is to be observed and understood as intricately intertwined with other soma-psychological functions, and can be studied from a psychological vantage point for an understanding of overall personal health, not merely (as in such conditions as bulimia and anorexia nervosa) when there are indications of pathology.

Meditation: Eating a raisin

(If raisins are a problem for you, then do this exercise with a small, bite-sized food that is safe for you):

Take a raisin (preferably an organic one) in your hand.

Hold it in your hand, look at it, feel it.

Put it in your mouth, and hold it for a moment on the tongue, not chewing.

Notice its texture, its weight, everything about it.

Notice also your own emotions, thoughts, sensations, other expressions.

Slowly chew the raisin, not swallowing—notice your saliva, tastes, changes in textures. Chew until it is entirely pulp.

Swallow, being aware of all that is happening within you as you do so.

Be aware of all that is happening within you and outside you as you allow the food to be absorbed into your system.

Review which of the following came up for you as you ate the raisin, or which may come up for you as you eat other things at different times:

Ideas

Emotions

Images

Intuitions

Impulses and Desires

Sensations

Allow yourself to experience the relationship between yourself and what you have just eaten, (including your responses to this activity as an exercise) and how the act of eating produces effects in all of your psychological functions.

(Continued on [page 31](#))

(Continued from [page 30](#))

Eating as Fundamental Physical and Emotional Self-Care

In the womb before your birth, the food coming from your mother through your umbilical cord provided the material to create your body, and to create the physical matrix within which your human energy flows. Eating food in everyday life is the physical means to maintain the constant change that *is* your body, which replaces most or all of its cells on a regular basis. Some cells (like intestine walls) are replaced after five days, some (like bone cells) remain in your system for up to fifteen years.

Reflect (or, maybe, do some research) on this relationship between what you eat and what you physically are. Do you normally eat *consciously*—i.e. with conscious awareness of what you are eating, how you are eating it, and what the desired results are?

“Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are.”

—*Anthelme Brillat-Savarin*

During your next meal, reflect with gratitude on all the living creatures whose lives provided your food. Get a sense, in a general way, of everything that happened over the past hours, days, weeks, that enabled this meal to be eaten by you, now. After you have finished the meal, allow yourself to imagine what your body is doing with this meal—how the food is being digested and transformed within you, sent in various ways throughout your body as nutrient and energy.

Meditation on Process

Close your eyes and sense your physical body, not as a “thing,” but as a locus of change like a river in which the only thing that remains constant are the banks between which ever-changing waters continually flow. Sense the flow of material within you, from food, to nourishment, to cells, to energy, to waste. Visualize this flow like a river’s watershed, some parts moving fast, some more slowly. Sense the integrity of your own flow, like a river between its banks, and all its tributaries. Recall the raisin you ate and sense it becoming part of your flow. Be aware, now, that your entire body-process is a flow of food and air. Sense where the raisin *is*, now. Sit with that awareness for a moment. Sense, or imagine, the effects that eating it have initiated, or contributed to, within your system.

Appetite: the Impulse to Eat

“I cannot remember the books I’ve read any more than the meals I have eaten; even so, they have made me.”

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The function of appetite is often connected with one or more of our subpersonalities. A person who is identified with a traumatized subpersonality, for example, may be unable to eat at all for a time; whereas someone identified with a subpersonality that feels unloved and needy may eat a lot for comfort. A happy person may associate wellness with restrained eating, or with eating with gusto. The responses will be purely individual, of course.

Do you eat only when you are hungry, or on a schedule, or habitually like regular snacking? Take a moment to reflect on how your appetite changes (or doesn’t change) with time, location, the company you are with, and your inner state. Is your appetite responsive to your will, or to one or more of your psychological functions, such as emotion? Trace in yourself, over time, the most important connections within you, between appetite and other aspects of yourself.

(Continued on [page 32](#))

(Continued from [page 31](#))

“No man is lonely
while eating spaghetti.”

– Robert Morley

Assagioli listed “sensations” and “impulse/desire” as distinct psychological functions. But appetite may be a “bridge function” in that it involves both sensation and desire. It may overlap several categories among Maslow’s concepts of needs: appetite may be stimulated by the need for physical survival, and by the need for safety, comfort, love and belonging. How one’s appetite is trained (or not) may reflect one’s sense of self-esteem, and the discipline of appetite may be a cornerstone of one’s practice of self-realization or transcendence.

Appetite is often also involved with both attraction and aversion, and may be a co-function of both emotion and sensation, as it may be triggered (in the positive or negative sense) or suppressed by happiness, sadness, anger, or aversion, as well as the overall *feeling* (sensation or felt sense) of the body as a whole. How and when it is triggered or suppressed may involve *what* foods are included in, or excluded from, one’s choices in the actual practice of eating.

Exercise: Memory and Appetite

Recall to awareness a time when you were really unhappy. Take a few moments for this, recalling the experience vividly in the present as much as you can. Then notice: What is your appetite like? Now recall a time when you were really happy, again taking a few moments to do this. Notice: What is your appetite like? Repeat this exercise, calling up memories of times when you are exhausted or tired, fatigued, energized, aroused, or in physical pain. When you are experiencing a feeling or emotion connected with food in any way, stop to see whether one of your subpersonalities is “in the driver’s seat” and is the source of your experience, and the driver of your appetite. Are you pleased with your appetite and habits related to food? Do they express your life’s values?

Other Issues

Other life issues are often intertwined with food and eating in your life. Which of these areas are important in your relationship with food (or is there another that is more important)?

Money; success or personal fulfillment; appearance; age; fashion; health; comfort; environment; family; convenience; mood/emotional state; social customs and peer pressure; loneliness; contentment; a pre-personal issue; habit; spiritual practice.

“It is a mistake to think you can solve
any major problems just with
potatoes.”

– Douglas Adams

How does this other issue influence your eating—or your *not* eating—at various times and ways in your daily life? Select one way that one of these issues affects your ordinary daily life, such as the following examples, or another that better expresses your situation: “I eat organic broccoli because it is good for my health,” or “I avoid eating meat because of my compassion for animals,” or “I eat fat-free food because it helps me to stay looking good,” or “I started eating steak after I got a raise last year,” or “I eat candy when I feel depressed and lonely,” or “I lose my appetite when I feel bad,” or “I eat organic foods to protect myself from harmful substances in food,” or “I eat whatever I like and whatever tastes good.” Identify one transpersonal value that lies beneath the relationship between your issue and your food—whether that value is being affirmed, avoided, frustrated, or fulfilled. Just sit with this connection and see, feel, how this value connects the act of eating—or not eating—with your Higher Self.

(Continued on [page 33](#))

(Continued from [page 32](#))

Self and Food

The relationship of Self, or Higher Self, to food may be discerned in a variety of ways (meditation, inner hearing, inner sight, felt sense, etc.), but I find that this relationship is often obscured or blocked by outside influences, by ideas or agendas that we hold, or by habits we have developed over time that effectively block creative inner communication. There are a variety of techniques to bypass some of these obstacles, as well as practices to make this inner relationship more palpable. Many of us tend to ignore “food issues” when we focus on our spiritual lives, unless our spiritual practice specifically includes food selection and eating practice.

Traditional spiritual practices in both east and west have included attention to both food selection and eating practice: for example, orthodox Jews and Muslims avoid pork and certain other foods; orthodox Jews limit themselves to foods that are certified as being *kosher*, and kosher regulations govern not only selection of food, but all aspects of the food preparation including treatment of animals. Many Muslims also follow similar dietary regulations as part of their spiritual practice, and these traditions and others require or encourage the practice of performing blessings over food. For some, a strict Buddhist eating practice is not only vegetarian, it also forbids the killing of any being; so no food may be used if its use results in the death even of a plant. Hindu scriptures contain conflicting references concerning food and eating practice. Hindus are among those who specifically connect food to Self, or Atman (see Taittiriya Upanishad). Moderation and self-restraint are qualities often urged by spiritual traditions in their treatment of diet and food practice. Some people explicitly make the connection between Self and food; for others, this is not an issue. But we may see that Self is expressed in the *act of eating* as well as in any other aspect of living.

In psychology, one of the emerging disciplines is nutritional psychology, which focuses study and practice on the relationship between food and mental health and behavior, drawing on resources in the fields of nutrition, integrative medicine, and psychology. I think such activity suggests that we encourage the development of a “nutritional psychosynthesis” practice as a specifically holistic approach to how diet and food practice integrate into human well-being on all levels, including the unique contributions that psychosynthesis can make to such practice. Personal and transpersonal awareness can easily be encouraged in clients in such a way as to include specific food practices to promote both physical and psychological health. It seems to me that such awareness and practice have been conspicuously absent from the psychosynthesis I learned (except during training breaks, where lots of goodies were often available!). Eating is often not included in psychological or non-sectarian spiritual practice unless there is a clear problem that is manifested in an eating disorder or problem. But there is mounting evidence that food selection and food practice can have dramatic impacts on physical health and mental/emotional well-being. How can food and eating practice be included in your personal or professional practice?

Ideal Model

Close your eyes and visualize your body being the exact size, shape, weight, and feel that is truly best for you, or that you would prefer it to be. Do not visualize something totally impossible like becoming a foot taller or shorter, but something in the realm of the possible—within the limits of where you are now. Allow this image to take shape in your mind’s eye. Become aware of your thoughts, feelings, and sensations as you call up this image. See yourself *becoming* this image. Ask within yourself, “As I am this person that I visualize, what are my diet and my eating habits like?” Wait, and allow an ideal model to emerge that may guide you in your choices of food and eating practices.

(Continued on [page 34](#))

(Continued from [page 33](#))

Habits Connected to Food

“Habit” may be defined as “an acquired behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary.” It is no surprise that some addictions are often referred to as “habits,” because repeated behaviors create neural pathways in the brain and nervous system that become default behaviors. The difference between “addictions” and “habits” is largely a matter of the difficulty in stopping or changing them. Such behaviors over time acquire an emotional and physical momentum, which because of their inherent inertia (“the property of matter by which it retains its state of rest or motion so long as it is not acted upon by an external force”) become over time more difficult to change. If the habit is connected to eating, the “external” force needed to change it, in psychological terms, may come from a variety of forces: fear, desire, aversion, aspiration or some other sources. In some way or other, usually any effective change will involve a mobilization of a person’s will. How can the will change a habit? There are many ways, but most students of will and food habits recognize that a simple conscious “decision” is rarely sufficient for success. Changing habits usually involves practice of some kind, such as Roberto Assagioli outlined in *The Act of Will*. And students of habits have recognized that it usually takes a minimum of thirty days of daily practice to even make a dent in an established habit. The more psychological functions (intellect, emotion, intuition, sensation, impulse and desire, and imagination) that are actively involved in the change on a daily basis, the greater the likelihood that a change of habit can be successful. My own experience suggests also that if one invites and experiences a spiritual or inner change of orientation with regard to the issue, the change will be greatly facilitated, maybe even made “easy.”

It is also true that the ease or difficulty of changing a habit is directly related to the extent to which a habit is rooted in an unresolved emotional issue. My own observation indicates that an unresolved issue will unconsciously act to prevent a change in the related habit, and the habit will retain its strength against nearly all efforts to change it while the underlying issue is unresolved. Furthermore, the habit will remain strong on its own momentum even after the underlying issue is resolved, unless specific steps are taken to break the sheer psychological and physical momentum of the habit. Some earlier approaches to psychology seemed to affirm that the simple recognition of an issue (such as by analysis) would suffice to change behavior, but much history seems to contradict this notion. The practice of grounding in psychotherapy seems to be essential to a change of behavior, and the grounding probably must involve a regular practice or discipline that incorporates multiple psychological functions if it is to succeed. Habits connected to food may be among the most difficult to change, because one does not ordinarily make a connection between eating and emotional or mental health, and eating is often taken to be one of life’s purely positive behaviors. In the contemporary USA, changing food habits may be complicated by the fact that sugar is added to a huge number of foods. Sugar can be habit-forming or addictive. The presence of sugar in foods, as I have verified in my own experience, can alter one’s appetite, sway one’s emotions, work on unconscious issues, and even alter the taste of other, non-sugared foods which one eats after consuming a sugared food.⁶

I once had dinner at the home of a family in which the mother was bulimic, and her teenaged daughter was, it was apparent, rapidly becoming bulimic. Both mother and daughter ate dinner in a manner that would suggest that they were nearing starvation—desperate-seeming motions to shovel food into themselves. In fact they had eaten two meals previously that day, along with some snacks in between meals. Most probably, their previous meals had been followed by deliberate purging, so that in fact their bodies felt starved. What I found sad but fascinating was that the daughter had not been bulimic as a child, and her siblings showed no signs of this disorder. She apparently began to mimic her mother in numerous subtle ways, and absorbed the mother’s emotional convictions that led to the disorder—not all at once, but over time, and particularly as she began to mature physically, and became sensitive to her physical appearance, and acquired some of her mother’s self-attitudes. It appears that habits of mind contributed to what progressed from habitual behaviors into full-blown attraction/aversion compulsion.

(Continued on [page 35](#))

(Continued from [page 34](#))

Some sources suggest that the particular foods that one eats may play a large role, not only in the development of eating habits, but also of behaviors and attitudes as well. In her book, *Food and Behavior: A Natural Connection*⁷, Barbara Reed Stitt affirms that food can have a direct influence on behavior. In her career as a probation officer in a correctional system, she amassed evidence that some types of violent behavior correlated directly with the consumption of processed “junk” foods and foods with high chemical and sugar contents. She maintained that diets that were extremely high in processed foods and sugars, among other factors, actually contributed to people’s becoming malnourished, and that certain levels of malnutrition or nutritional deficiencies contributed not only to known physical diseases, but also to specific “dis-eased” behavior patterns.

Exercise in Conscious Eating

Repeat the exercise at the beginning of this paper, using a chocolate-covered raisin (if this is safe for you). Here we have slightly altered the nature of the food we are consuming, but what difference do you notice in your process as you do the meditation this time?

Diets, Fasting and Discipline: Food and Will

Spiritual teachers through the ages have emphasized the value of going without food for periods of time, for spiritual purposes. If we choose what we are to do, is our power of choice also extended by our choosing *not* to do? What are the possible effects, positive or negative, of going without food for a period of time? While there can be a benefit for some people in simply refraining from eating if one is over-weight, the greatest benefit may be gained from the exercise of will, which for some people is a particular difficulty with respect to food.

“Never eat more than you can lift.”

– Miss Piggy

Likewise, developing exercises for the will around eating certain foods, or developing certain eating patterns and habits, may be particularly challenging and at the same time very rewarding. But what do “diets” and other attempts to discipline the will with respect to food often miss? It seems to me that they focus too exclusively on the food, or on the eating, and not enough on the place that eating has in our overall mind-body system, and on the personal issues that may drive or inhibit eating patterns.

“Strength is the capacity to break a chocolate bar into four pieces with your bare hands — and then eat just one of the pieces.”

– Judith Viorst

Food and Healing

Consider what place the issue of food has in healing and psychotherapy: a relationship with food and eating may be illustrative of an issue that a client presents in therapy, or it may be indicative of an issue that is present even though it is not consciously acknowledged by the client. There can be noticeable effects from eating or not eating that directly affect a person's feelings—and even thoughts. For example, in the course of the past year I discovered that for some people the withdrawal symptoms which plague a person’s efforts to taper off psychiatric drugs such as benzodiazepines can be made a little easier by eating potatoes often; as the potato, eaten with vegetables, produces a noticeable “feel good” effect a while after the meal. The change is often evident on multiple levels—in sensations and physical energy patterns, in emotions, thought patterns and imagination.



(Continued on [page 36](#))

(Continued from page 35)

An Ongoing Experiment

Food can become a major factor in one’s overall being, including psychological health and well-being, in surprising ways. A personal experience: responding to an intuition, my wife and I decided to switch our diets to all organic food, to see what would happen. Within two weeks I noticed clear differences: a rash that mystified my health care provider for months disappeared; some internal organs that had not been “behaving” normally began to function properly, and other noticeable results. During the same time, my wife noticed a fairly dramatic decrease in symptoms of the osteo-arthritis in her fingers.

“Come along inside... We'll see if tea and buns can make the world a better place.”

– Kenneth Grahame,
in *The Wind in the Willows*

I have a suspicion that many of the health symptoms I had been experiencing were in fact allergic reactions. But to what? Our diet did not change in any way—except that the foods we now eat are 100% certified organic foods. A little research on the internet revealed that a huge percentage of foods available in the United States—particularly some “healthy” foods like fresh apples and strawberries—carry measurable amounts of residues of pesticides, preservatives and herbicides, along with sugars and other chemicals that masquerade as “food”—with government approval. It appears to me that, although all of these chemicals have been shown in laboratory experiments to be non-toxic in the approved amounts, the on-going consumption of some pesticides, preservatives, herbicides and other synthetic chemicals and sugars in food may have a cumulative effect of toxicity. As in my own case, the signs may seem to lead elsewhere, or nowhere, or be so small as to invite us to disregard them—until they become numerous or acute.

A mountain of “anecdotal evidence” is being quietly amassed by such people as myself, who are not being “scientifically rigorous” but only want to have healthy, happy lives. This experiment is making my life difficult: I can no longer go out for dinner, because I cannot find a restaurant that serves only organic food! I am loath to impose my food preferences on others, and so am reluctant to visit friends or relatives who eat and share “conventional” food. I discovered it was not a good idea to discuss it with some people, who have concluded I am following a fad and being “kooky.”

But I am feeling better! My body is working better. So the experiment is worthwhile, for me. I intend to continue observing my thoughts, attitudes and impulses over the next year. If Barbara Reed Stitt’s idea is true—that food can have a direct influence on behavior—then I may notice a difference in my psychological outlook and responses in addition to the physiological changes I have already observed. I intend to continue observing the results.

Where does this “experiment” fit into the “psychology of food?” I had searched everywhere for the source of my ill feelings and physical malfunctions—everywhere except in my pantry and refrigerator. Because my psychology and spirituality did not include a “food orientation” this issue was not “on my radar,” and it was invisible to me. I know that if I have more than one glass of beer my mind and emotions will be effected, but it never occurred to me that my entire system could be threatened by eating apples or strawberries. It should not be! But the truth is that the vast majority of the food sold in the United States is contaminated in one way or another. Most of us will not recognize any immediate effects of this contamination—until it has been going on in our lives for years. But this state of affairs may be exactly why ancient religions adopted rules governing hygiene and diet: without proper self-care, you can get sick physically or mentally, or die before your time. In our time, in this country at least, good self-care should include choices to eat food that promotes mental and physical health and well-being.

Amount Per Serving		Calories from Fat 10	
		% Daily Value*	
Calories 280			
Total Fat	13g	20%	
Saturated Fat	5g	25%	
Trans Fat	2g		
Cholesterol	2mg	10%	
Sodium	660mg	28%	
Total Carbohydrate	31g	10%	
Dietary Fiber	3g	0%	
Sugars	5g		
Protein	5g		
Vitamin A	4%	Vitamin C 2%	
Calcium	15%	Iron 4%	
Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.			
		Calories:	2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat. Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat	9	Carbohydrate	4
		Protein	4

No listing for pesticides?

(Continued on page 37)

(Continued from [page 36](#))

Barbara Reed Stitt and a host of other writers have provided a lot of evidence that food will profoundly affect mental and emotional states and behavior. She has shown that a diet that is heavy on processed ingredients and sugars correlates with violence, hyperactivity, anxiety, and other states that would be expected to need therapy (or imprisonment), and yet the standard approaches to such difficulties is not to investigate the sources of the issues—diet, among other things.

Conclusions?

I am not offering any “definitive” conclusions with this presentation, but I am suggesting that we take a good look at possible connections between food and health, food and behavior, food and our subpersonalities, food and psychological functions. Because each person is unique, it may be difficult to pinpoint broad patterns in diverse populations, but it should be quite possible to spot individual patterns in such a way as to discover paths to wholeness and healing. This might be a helpful exercise, both for our clients and for ourselves. You can try the exercises in this article for yourself to see what comes of them, and you may find it interesting or helpful to share them with others. In general, I am suggesting that more attention to food and to our eating practices may be illuminating in the short run and helpful in the long run. ■

References:

- ¹ See, for example, Peter Levine’s *In An Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*, 2010, North Atlantic Books
- ² This statement is the result of my personal experience in years of assisting a person process and detoxify from psychoactive drugs, using a variety of methods including acupressure to connect the mental and emotional effects of drug withdrawal with energies that can be located at specific (albeit transient and changing) locations in the body.
- ³ See, for example, articles in the research library of the Heart-Math Institute at <https://www.heartmath.org/research/research-library/>
- ⁴ See, for example, “Gut Feelings—the ‘Second Brain’ in Our Gastrointestinal Systems,” by Justin Sonnenburg and Erica Sonnenburg, *Scientific American* May 1, 2015
- ⁵ See, for example, Max Velman, “When Perception Becomes Conscious,” *British Journal of Psychology* 90(4), 543-566 <http://cogprints.org/838/1/BJP2web.html>
- ⁶ I tried this experiment and repeated it numerous times: first I ate half of a granola bar that contained lots of nuts and very little sugar, noting how I enjoyed the flavor of the bar. Then I ate a small amount of milk chocolate, which contains a lot of sugar. After allowing the chocolate bar to be completely dissolved in my mouth and be swallowed, I then ate the second half of the granola bar. The second half now tasted like cardboard. I was shocked! It seems that the presence of the residual sugar and chocolate on my taste buds in my mouth completely altered—effectively destroyed—the taste of the granola.
- ⁷ Natural Press, Third Edition, 2004, Manitowoc, WI.

Jan Kuniholm is editor of *Psychosynthesis Quarterly*.



Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.
— Jalaluddin Rumi



“The Will to Grow: Transformational Life Coaching” goes “TransAlpine” with PLC-Italia!



Mentored by Synthesis Center founder [Dr. Dorothy Firman](#), and led by [Cristina Pelizzatti](#), Psychosynthesis Life Coach, Synthesis Center Staff member and Trainer, Psychosynthesis Life Coach- Italia (PLC-I) grew out of Cristina’s work with the Synthesis Center and a mutual interest in bringing the Center’s Psychosynthesis Coach Training Program back to the birthplace of Roberto Assagioli.



PLC-I is based in [Sondrio](#) in the heart of the Italian Alps. Our trainers are experienced, multi-faceted professionals from Italy and Switzerland with backgrounds ranging from Life Coaching and Business/Executive Coaching to C-level management and world-class competitive racing, as well as contributors from the Italian psychosynthesis community and the Association for Coaching (AC Italy). We’re presenting the Synthesis Center’s Psychosynthesis Coach Training Program entirely in Italian, using a “hybrid” approach consisting of distance learning sessions and in-person seminars at PLC-I’s classrooms in Milan. Our goals in doing this are to:

- Foster personal development and growth of course participants
- Introduce the power and insights of Psychosynthesis to the Italian coaching community
- Promote a new level of effectiveness in the process of Life Coaching
- Train and support a new generation of Psychosynthesis Life Coaches

With the patronage of the Association for Coaching (AC, Italy), and under the auspices of [The Synthesis Center](#), our program leads to Certification from the Synthesis Center as a Psychosynthesis Life Coach, opening possibilities for graduates for accreditation at various national and international levels including Board Certified Coach (BCC), Association for Coaching (Global), and other European/international associations.

The PLC-I program is aimed at current and aspiring coaches, professionals, counselors and psychotherapists wanting or needing to develop coaching skills as well as individuals who have identified a need or desire for the personal and/or professional insights and growth that are the result of Psychosynthesis training. Program focus is on theory and practical development of coaching skills within a fabric of Psychosynthesis, thereby supporting the development of the Call of Self in a unique personal/professional context.

Come visit us at www.psicosintesi-life-coach.com!

Psychosynthesis: A Foundational Bridge Between Psychology and Spirituality

Catherine Ann Lombard

Pastoral psychologists have long tried to establish a working model that encompasses the seemingly conflicting disciplines of science and religion. Forty-one years have passed since Haronian (1976) offered the readers of *Pastoral Psychology* his personal overview as a psychotherapist of the rich capacity of psychosynthesis to bridge the chasm between psychology and religion—yet his call remains unheeded. Perhaps more than ever before, pastoral psychologists are struggling to fit religious, spiritual, and transcendent experiences into a scientific model of the human psyche that includes unquantifiable qualities such as forgiveness, patience, good will, and courage (Slife and Richardson 2014). This struggle seems to revolve around the seeming conflict between logical thought and a richer, multidimensional system of analogical thought.

The following is an excerpt of an article recently published in *Pastoral Psychology*. I wrote this with the hope of reintroducing psychosynthesis as a psychological perspective on spiritual experience that can be put into service of the Christian faith. This article explores psychosynthesis psychology and therapy as a theoretical framework for pastoral psychology, beginning with introducing psychosynthesis concepts and techniques. I then present testimonies from qualitative research conducted with eleven scientists who received psychosynthesis counseling, three of whom, as self-identified atheists, exhibited spiritual growth. In addition, testimonies are included that show that psychosynthesis counseling also helped all eleven clients to attain personal growth. Finally, based on the theoretical introduction, the research findings, and my own personal experience as a Christian psychologist and counselor, I discuss how the perspectives of psychology and spirituality converge within the psychosynthesis context.

This excerpt is from the section that describes the qualitative findings showing how psychosynthesis counseling helped to awaken spirituality in three out of eleven clients who had formerly identified themselves as atheists. [This article in its entirety is published on Open Access and is available for free.](#) I urge you to share it with pastoral care workers that you may know.

Psychosynthesis counseling examples of spiritual and personal growth

In previous studies, psychosynthesis techniques were shown to intervene, relieve, and transform the effects of culture shock experienced by student sojourners in the Netherlands (Lombard 2014) and to open the door to their creativity (Lombard and Müller 2016).

This article further describes how psychosynthesis counseling aided some of these clients to become aware of their spirituality and to practice techniques that allowed for superconscious material to emerge.

Research method

The source of the data is psychosynthesis counseling work conducted in the Netherlands from October 2008 to November 2013. The data gathered and analyzed were qualitative. For a full explanation of the participants, psychosynthesis clinical techniques, data collection, and data analysis, please refer to studies by Lombard (2014) and Lombard and Müller (2016).

Participants: A total of eleven clients (two male and nine female) voluntarily sought counseling, ranging in age from 25 to 36 years old. All were international scientists working in technical fields (see Table 1 next page).

(Continued on page 40)

(Continued from page 39)

Table 1. Participant Details

Pseudonym	Nationality	Gender	Age at the start of therapy	Research area	Religious identification	Number of sessions
Liliana	Italian	Female	28	Philosophy of technology	Atheist	55
Nicole	French	Female	26	Philosophy of technology	Atheist	42
Maria	Portuguese	Female	26	Tissue engineering	Atheist	41
Paulo	Brazilian	Male	29	Computer science	Atheist	34
Henk	Dutch	Male	27	Tissue engineering	Atheist	32
Susan	Canadian	Female	28	Philosophy of technology	Atheist	31
Julia	Austrian	Female	29	Communication science	Atheist	25
Biyu	Chinese	Female	29	Nanobiophysics	Atheist	13
Jingfei	Chinese	Female	30	Spatio-temporal analytics, maps, and processing	Uncertain	12
Thabisa	South African	Female	36	Sustainable production and consumption of energy	Christian, prays occasionally	10
Carol	South African	Female	31	Biophysical engineering	Prays but doesn't know to whom or what	10

Psychosynthesis clinical methodology.

Clients met the counselor from 10 to 55 times, two to four times per month, with each session lasting one hour. In total 305 hours of counseling work occurred. Sessions were conducted in English. In addition, clients were invited to self-reflect and write about any critical issues they faced or emotions they felt between sessions and to email their observations to the counselor. Although the topic for self-reflection remained open at all times, the client would sometimes be directed to reflect and write on a specific topic and email that reflection before the next session. All clients were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and permission from all clients to quote them in this article was obtained. Psychosynthesis techniques were employed during the counseling sessions as the counselor deemed appropriate, but the dominant techniques used were the self-identification exercise and the subpersonality model.

(Continued on page 41)

Data collection and analysis.

Data collected and analyzed from the counseling sessions included emailed reflections, drawings created by the clients during the sessions, verbal testimonies of the six participants who were recorded, and the researcher's reflections, which were carefully written and compiled immediately after all non-recorded sessions.

To initially assess the clients' religious identification, past experiences with superconscious material (i.e., peak experiences), and awareness of a Self, the counselor asked the following questions during the initial interview: "Do you have any religious or spiritual practice?" and "Have you ever experienced a time when you felt like you were a part of or connected to something greater than yourself?" During the counseling sessions, however, the counselor did not ask any further questions about religion or religious practices, nor did she evangelize in any religious way or educate clients about the Self or superconscious. Instead, she applied the various psychosynthesis techniques to the client's presenting issues and continually focused on holding the spiritual space that might allow the Self to emerge and the client to innately discover his or her spiritual dimension.

Work on the data was an evolutionary process that included written observations, reflections, and detailed notes of all meetings immediately after each session. Whenever a client revealed a new awareness of his or her spirituality, the counselor carefully noted the client's emerging spirituality by logging the date, session number, and the client's testimony verbatim. In addition, the clients themselves also played a central role in the process of data analysis in order to check for counter-indications of the emerging theses (Yin 2003). Whenever a client spoke about his or her spirituality, the counselor further discussed the client's observations in order to reach a consensual understanding. In this way, the clients were able to correct, reshape, or contextualize the counselor's perceptions as they deemed appropriate, and their reflections and adjustments were integrated into the final data collection and analysis. The researcher listened to and reviewed the tapes of those clients whose sessions were recorded. Consequently, the narrative of each client was carefully held, reflected upon, observed, and analyzed with the aim of understanding the emergence and evolution of spirituality in each client's psychological process.

Research ethics

It is important to note that the researcher and the counselor (as well as the author) are the same person in this study. This combined role of being both counselor and researcher can foster some inherent dilemmas, such as in cases where the client might want to please the therapist with their responses or the possible conflict between the therapist's loyalty to her client vs. her research. Nevertheless, studies have shown that it is possible to combine the roles, and, in fact, a number of clinical researchers are of the opinion that such research in itself has a beneficial therapeutic effect on the patient (e.g., Lorentzen 2003, Richardson and Reid 2006; Sandahl and Wilberg 2006). Sandahl and Wilberg (2006) state that "it is not only possible, but also very necessary to unite the roles of researcher and clinician if we wish to develop applicable knowledge on psychotherapy" (p. 409). Many studies have appeared in the literature in which the researcher, counselor, and author are one and the same person (e.g., Jernigan 2001; Koppel 2004; Selvam 2015; Turp 2002).

To minimize any conflict, at the end of their last session all clients were given the option to withdraw their testimony from this study's final research results. In addition, at least six months after their therapy had ended, clients were sent an email asking them to answer the following five questions: (1) Did you know that the counselor was a psychosynthesis counselor? (2) Did you know that psychosynthesis was a spiritual approach? (3) Did the counselor ever bring up spirituality or did these types of questions come from you? (4) Did the counselor ever impose her values on you in any way? and (5) Did you ever feel that the counselor was "leading you" towards spirituality, religion, Christianity, or God? Clients were invited to either answer "yes" or "no" to each question and/or write

(Continued from page 41)

freely in response to any of the specific questions or in general. One month after the first email was sent, a second request was sent by email to those clients who had not already responded.

Results

The following sections describe the results found in this study. Clients' testimonies regarding their religious identities and past experiences with superconscious material are presented. Secondly, during the course of their counseling, three clients talked about their newly-discovered spirituality and the actions they were taking with regard to this awakening, and their testimonies are presented. Finally, the results from the email questionnaire that was sent to the clients once their therapy had terminated are presented.

Clients' prior experience of superconscious material

When asked during the initial interview "Do you have any religious or spiritual practice?" eight of the eleven clients said that they had no religious affiliation or belief in God and described themselves as atheist (see Table 1). Thabisa said that she did pray as a Christian on occasion but did not have any regular spiritual practice. Carol said that she longed to be spiritual and often prayed, but she did not know "to whom or what." Jingfei, who was suffering with uncompensated labyrinthitis (better known as vertigo), admitted to having conflicting feelings regarding faith:

My grandmother and mother tried to make me a Buddhist. But I understand that if you are a Buddhist, then you only have your own inner being to depend on. With Christianity, there is always a God that you can go to. When I experience vertigo, I often imagine God right above me.

Of the eight others, the following testimony was a typical response:

I would call myself an atheist. As a scientist, I know that there is no proof showing that God exists. But I also know that there is no proof showing that He does not exist. (Henk)

Interestingly, clients' responses became very different when asked if they had ever had a feeling of connection to something greater than themselves. Without exception, all had had a transpersonal or peak experience at some point in their lives, mostly while they were in a natural setting. In fact, James (1943) noted that nature "seemed to have a peculiar power of awakening such mystical moods. Most of the striking cases which I have collected occurred out of doors" (p. 394). Henk, who is quoted above, said:

When I was 20, I was on a boat at night and all around in the water were bioluminescent plankton. It was so beautiful; I became very emotional and cried. I wish my girlfriend had been there so I could have shared such a deeply moving experience with someone.

Upon being questioned, Maria's face completely changed, from being tense and drawn to radiant and smiling, when she related this experience while in nature:

I had a deep connection while swimming in a lake in Finland under the stars. There were many experiences like this while I was recently traveling in Norway. I don't believe in God, but I admit there are times when I think there might be a superior cosmic intelligence capable of creating this natural beauty.

(Continued on page 43)

Clients' spiritual growth

After a number of sessions, three of the eleven clients showed evidence of a more active spiritual life. All three had initially described themselves as atheists. The following testimony occurred during Maria's 24th session:

I don't know how to say this, but I've become more spiritual. More in touch with me. I now have a small space on the balcony of my house that I call my temple with my painting stuff. It's really perfect. I already see many changes inside me. I'm much more in peace in my daily life. . . . I am much more connected to myself.

The second testimony comes from Liliana, who related her choice as a preteen to not believe in God. Before her final session, at the request of the counselor, Liliana made a drawing of her inner life (see Figure 1). In this drawing, Liliana depicted the subpersonalities she had learned to coordinate and integrate (i.e., Miss Perfect, the Child, the Jumper, the Artist). Remarkably, at the center of the drawing she also depicted herself in a meditative state next to a lit candle. Next to this figure, she wrote "the time for God," and directly underneath, "the time for me." When asked about this figure, she said:

That's my God time. It's the time I make for God. Not in a religious sense, but in a spiritual one. It's when I try to be quiet and not do anything. Just connect to God. Just connect to me. To myself. And I do this more now. It's important. It gives me a sense of peace.

The final example comes from the client Julia, who, for the first time in her life, made plans to attend a two-week retreat at a monastery in order to actively pursue her personal and spiritual growth.

Questionnaire results

Eight of the eleven clients responded to the questionnaire after the second email was sent. Of the eight respondents, two clients did not know the counselor was a psychosynthesis counselor and one knew this only after the first session. Five clients did not know that psychosynthesis was a spiritual approach. Responses varied to the question "Did the counselor even bring up spirituality or did these types of questions come from you?" Four said "no," one could not recall whether she or the counselor had raised the issue of spirituality, and three said "yes." The three who said "yes" all recalled spirituality being raised by the counselor only during the first session. Examples include the following feedback from Julia and Liliana, who were two of the three clients who demonstrated spiritual growth:

We discussed my take on religion and God once, but I feel this was brought up by [the counselor] just to get a better sense of my personal history, but I didn't feel it impacted my relationship with her during our process or the result of my work with her. (Julia)

During our very first session, the counselor asked me about my relationship to God. I told her I didn't have a relationship with God and I didn't want to have one. I felt that she accepted it, and we didn't talk about religion and God as such anymore during our sessions. (Liliana)

All eight clients responded "no" to the two remaining questions: "Did the counselor ever impose her values on you in any way?" and "Did you ever feel that the counselor was 'leading you' towards spirituality, religion, Christianity, or God?" Three clients clearly stated they would not have continued with their sessions if they had felt "led" by the counselor towards spirituality:

(Continued from page 44)

If I felt that she was imposing her values (and not those of her profession), I would have stopped attending sessions with her. (Thabisa)

I didn't feel the intentional leading from my counselor towards religion, Christianity, or God (and I would not have allowed it). (Biyu)

I am an atheist and I really appreciated that religion or God were not "part" of the sessions. Maybe [the counselor] sensed that (that I am not into religion and spirituality, to put it bluntly); and I am very grateful for her sensitivity and for the fact that, even during moments when spirituality or God could have been mentioned (such as during meditation or for self-understanding), I never felt that I was being invited or pushed towards spirituality, religion, Christianity, or God. (Nicole)

Discussion

This article attempts to offer psychosynthesis concepts and its model of the human psyche as a foundational bridge between psychological and spiritual conceptions of human nature. By recognizing the existence of a higher consciousness within all human beings, psychosynthesis is an open system that defines the human being as a psychological and spiritual being. Non-dogmatic and universal in its approach and conceptual understanding of human nature, psychosynthesis therapy's orientation is based on our having an inherent need to grow, personally and spiritually, and supports this positive evolutionary process (Haronian 1976).

Results in this study included testimonies from clients who expressed not only their experience of personal growth but, in some cases, newly-gained spiritual awareness and their longing to continue to develop this dimension of their lives. In addition, the eight clients who responded to an email questionnaire (including the three clients who exhibited spiritual growth) did not feel that the counselor ever imposed her values or "led them" towards spirituality, religion, Christianity, or God. Perhaps of particular interest to the pastoral psychologist is that the three clients who felt an inner need to further explore and develop their spirituality identified themselves as atheists. This activation of spirituality in self-identified atheists can lead to the assumption that, for those psychologists working with faith-based clients, psychosynthesis can provide a powerful platform from which to guide them towards spiritual growth.

Conclusion

Throughout its history, the methods of the field of psychology have had "a shaky relationship with academia, and a particularly fraught and anxious connection to science" (Brottman 2011, p. xii). Pastoral psychologists have had an even greater challenge in their attempt to develop a psychological understanding of spirituality within a scientific framework. In the words of the poet Tagore (1919), "A mind all logic is like a knife all blade. It makes the hand bleed that uses it" (p. 51). Perhaps more than ever before, pastoral psychologists need to resolve what Slife and Richardson (2014) called the "compatibility issue" by providing a bridge across the chasm between objective scientific methodology and the mysterious experiences of our lives; in other words, they need to find a way to stop the bleeding caused by purely logical thought. Ultimately, psychosynthesis embodies the idea that personal and spiritual growth entails a synthesis of the ineffable mysteries of the invisible with the reason and intellect of the visible. This article suggests that psychosynthesis provides a bridge between psychology and spirituality, indicating new ways to wisely hold the blade of logic so that, instead of wounding, it may discern what is the truth, the authentic, the sublime, and the higher potential held in all of life.

(Continued on page 46)

(Continued from [page 45](#))

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank all the clients whose testimonies and drawings appear in this article. Also, special thanks to Dr. Barbara C. N. Müller, Dr. Kees den Biesen, and Kathy McKay for their suggestions for improving this manuscript.

References

- Brottman, M. (2011). *Phantoms of the clinic*. London, UK: Karnac Books.
- Haronian, F. (1976). Psychosynthesis: A psychotherapist's personal overview. *Pastoral Psychology*, 24(1), 16–33.
- James, W. (1943). *The varieties of religious experience*. New York, NY: Modern Library.
- Jernigan, H. L. (2001). Spirituality in older adults: A cross-cultural and interfaith perspective. *Pastoral Psychology*, 49(6), 413–437.
- Koppel, M. S. (2004). Self psychology and end of life pastoral care. *Pastoral Psychology*, 53(2), 139–151.
- Lombard, C. A., (2014). Coping with anxiety and rebuilding identity: A psychosynthesis approach to culture shock. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 27(2), 174–199. doi:10.1080/09515070.2013.875887.
- Lombard, C. A., & Müller, B. C. N. (2016). Opening the door to creativity: A psychosynthesis approach. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Prepublished June 30, 2016. doi:10.1177/0022167816653224.
- Lorentzen, S. (2003) *Long-term analytic group psychotherapy with outpatients: Evaluation of process and change* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.
- Richardson, L., & Reid, C. (2006). “I’ve lost my husband, my house and I need a new knee. Why should I smile?”: An action research evaluation of a group CBT program for older adults with depression. *Clinical Psychologist*, 10(2), 60–66.
- Sandahl, C., & Wilberg, T. (2006). Researcher and therapist in the same person: A feasible combination? Review of Steinar Lorentzen’s doctoral thesis: ‘*Long-term analytic group psychotherapy with outpatients: Evaluation of process and change.*’ The Group-Analytic Society (London), 39(3), 400–410. doi:10.1177/0533316406066607.
- Selvam, S. G. (2015) Character strengths in the context of Christian contemplative practice facilitating recovery from alcohol misuse: Two case studies, *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 17(3), 190–211. doi:10.1080/19349637.2015.1053302.
- Slife, B. D., & Richardson, F. C. (2014). Naturalism, psychology, and religious experience: An introduction to the special section on psychology and transcendence. *Pastoral Psychology*, 63, 319–322.
- Tagore, R. (1919). *Stray birds*. London, UK: MacMillian.
- Turp, M. (2002). Acting, thinking and feeling: Psychoanalytical psychotherapy with Tracey. *European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling & Health*, 5(2), 103–120.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London, UK: Sage.



Catherine Ann Lombard, MA is a psychosynthesis psychologist, practitioner and researcher. She has had numerous articles published on psychosynthesis. Most recently, she edited Roberto Assagioli's *Freedom in Jail*, published by the Istituto di Psicopsintesi, Florence. After the International Conference at Casa Assagioli in September, Catherine and her husband Dr. Kees den Biesen will be leading 5-day trip in Tuscany and Umbria called “Journey to the Higher Self.” For more info, see poeticplaces.org. You can follow Catherine's bi-monthly blog at LoveAndWill.com.





European Federation for
Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy

+++ Save the Date +++
26 – 30 July 2017

in Rösrath near Cologne (Germany)

7th EFPP European
Summer School of Psychosynthesis

The Revolution of the Peaceful:

come and be a co-creator of a whole and peaceful
world

Where it takes place: Venue / Veranstaltungsort GENO
Hotel Raiffeisenstr. 10 –16 51503 Rösrath-Forsbach,
Germany Telephone: +49 (0)2205 8030 Telefax: +49
(0)2205 86457

REGISTRATION FEES -

Summerschool Fee by February 28, 2017: Euro 250,00
from March 1st on, 2017: Euro 300,00 Plus full board
(compulsory) Euro 250,00

This July (26th-30th) sees the 7th EFPP
Psychosynthesis Summer School hosted in 2017 by our
colleagues at Circadian Institute for Applied
Psychosynthesis, in Cologne, Germany. The invitation is
to come and be a co-creator of a whole and peaceful world.

The historical venue in Rösrath sits in the middle of a
big forest, a short journey from Cologne/Bonn Airport.

With seminars and workshops delivered by an
international team of psychosynthesis practitioners, a deep
crucible of learning and community will be created.
International trainers will guide you through workshops,
lectures and nature experiences to put you into contact with
the Earth's wisdom. Sharing and thus multiplying our
creative force for peace. The work will be experiential and
skill-building.

you will find full information on our website
www.circadian.de/2017efppsummerschool

An Open Letter to Agents of Change on Inauguration Eve, January 19, 2017

Barbara Veale Smith

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” – Gandhi

“As we act, let us not become the evil that we deplore.” - Rev. Nathan Baxter

I did not vote for Mr. Trump, nor do I support or condone the hatred and disrespect he expressed, nor the repressive and regressive initiatives he championed.

In an odd way, however, I am inspired by Donald Trump.

Just after the election, I walk into the Fort Lauderdale airport. A young child—about three—is crying, and a mom is not doing well with her daughter. She threatens time out; she points her against a wall; she tells her if she won't promise to be a good girl she will leave her home and not take her on the plane with her. The child cries more loudly. She calls for daddy. Mom gets louder. More threats. The little child cries more loudly too. The shouting voice and the crying can be heard throughout the entire check-in area. People move away from the mom and her daughter, uncomfortable with what is unfolding.

My judging mind gets going: *“Some people shouldn't be parents. Forget time out for her daughter, that mom should be in time out. How can she threaten her own child like that? That child must be feeling terror, blah, blah, blah...”*

And then I remember.

I've never used the same exact words that that mom was saying to her daughter with my own two children, but when my kids have pushed my buttons, I've acted and reacted badly too. I imagine there's not a parent alive who hasn't “been there”—that is, reacting less than gracefully with their child, falling short in living the values they hold dear. And this dynamic isn't limited to parents and their children: it happens in many relationships. Why is that? Because the common, shared life-ness of all of us precedes the specifics of any one of us. As Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli wrote, “In each of us there are, potentially, all the elements and qualities of the human being, the germs of all virtues and of all vices. In each of us there are the potential criminal and the potential saint or hero.” (*Act of Will*, 65-66)

It's as if there's one Life and then *poof*, Life takes the form of each unique life expression.¹ And what is common to all sits right beside the uniqueness of any one of us. Think of each one of the seven billion people on the planet. At this very moment, there is one common Life force that animates all of us, breathing our lungs and beating our hearts. The breath in our lungs and our beating hearts make us all card-carrying members of the human race, capable of acting, reacting, and responding in all the potential ways that humans can show up. Life looks like that mom in the airport, and Life looks like Donald Trump, too. Life looks like me and it looks like you reading this essay.



(Continued on [page 49](#))

(Continued from [page 48](#))

For every criticism my mind makes of Donald Trump—and there have been many—I make a practice of finding that behavior in myself, too; because if I can see it in him, it surely exists—either in actuality or in potential—in me. If it didn't, I wouldn't be able to identify it at all. That's the mechanism of projection: we project out onto others what we can't see or don't wish to acknowledge in ourselves. In seeing our projections, we don't dismiss nor relinquish responsibility for actual behavior: neither our own, nor others'. Yet it's my conviction that in this shift of perception the seeds of possibility rest for compassionate change, for connection amidst differences, and ultimately for a nation that recognizes we truly are indivisible, and thus ensures that the promise of “liberty and justice for all”² will be realized.

In another time, pre-Donald Trump, I might have noticed my mind's chatter about that mom in the airport, wished I could be more charitable in my thoughts, said a prayer for the mom and child, and gone about my day. In this new, *Donald Trump Was Elected President* world, I am a bigger, bolder, more courageous person. And I am ever more dedicated to the transformation of consciousness. I know that change happens one person at a time, even when transformation is inspired by national or global events. The personal and the social are one.

The New York Times recently published an op-ed piece from R. Derek Black, the godson of David Duke and a former white nationalist who “moved on from extreme views” and now believes “this country can too.”³ Of his own dramatic transformation, he credits the “devoted and diverse people” at his college . . . people who chose to invite me into their dorms and conversations rather than ostracize me.” Through those conversations he “began to realize the damage” he'd done.

“That kind of persuasion,” he notes, “happens in person-to-person interactions and it requires a lot of honest listening on both sides. For me, the conversations that led me to change my views started because I couldn't understand why anyone would fear me. I thought I was only doing what was right and defending those I loved. Even those on the furthest extreme of the white nationalist spectrum don't recognize themselves doing harm—I know that because it was easy for me, too, to deny it.” Mr. Black underscores that moving anyone from abstract ideology to an understanding that real people will bear the burdens of what “hate will reap,” requires building relationships with people with whom we are not in agreement, rather than maintaining isolation from or disregard for them.

Back at the airport, the crying continues and a short while later, I see the mom with the child in her arms. As I finish my business at the airport counter, I notice the mom a few people from the front of the line. The child has now settled and stopped crying and is still in her mom's arms. In this *Donald Trump Was Elected President* world, I pass by the mom and daughter and I stop. I approach the mom tenderly, to see if she might be open to a smile. I see openness. I offer my smile and then these words flow out. “Parenting is hard. I know you're doing your best.” and I look in her little girl's eyes, and I say to Mom, “And I know she's doing the best she can at this moment, too.” The mom feels apologetic and tells me her little girl is usually well behaved and she doesn't know why she chose this moment to act otherwise.

“There's a lot going on in the airport and it can be stressful. Maybe she feels that, too,” I say to the mom. “Would you like me to watch her for a moment, while you get checked in?” I didn't plan to say those words, and the mom looks as surprised as I feel. A big smile lights up her face. I think she may have expected judgment. I offered a small kindness. She joyfully thanks me, and declines my offer. Nothing has changed on the surface, yet energetically something shifts. As I get in line to board my plane an hour later, I watch that same mom and her smiling daughter go down the jetway with ease, when the call comes for families to board.

It would be absurd to think I changed the world on some grand scale that morning. But in that moment, I know without a shadow of a doubt that kindness changed that mom and her daughter's world. But this isn't about kindness alone. It's about seeing beyond the judgments of our minds, noticing our common humanity and listening to a quiet call to

(Continued on [page 50](#))

(Continued from [page 49](#))

loving action that is in alignment with our deepest nature. Our deepest nature is Life; and allowing yourself to be moved by That which is life-giving is to be in alignment with an Unconditional Regard for All—what some would call Contentless Awareness, Self, True Nature, Unconditional Love, Spirit, God, or the Divine—that moves and lives the world. All of it. Including Donald Trump and all those he is appointing in his administration. Because our deepest nature is Life, even though our actions (and those of others) may not always be in alignment with that reality and may have caused great harm. If Mr. Trump’s campaign and the promises he made are indicative of future action, I recognize that his presidency portends grave, if not calamitous, potential changes.

While I wouldn’t have wished for these times, now that Donald Trump has given voice to the inner judgments of millions of people in the US, he has made public what was previously closeted and thus silenced (or held in shame) within those who voted for him. Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli, the founder of the spiritual psychology called psychosynthesis, suggests in his classic synthesis exercise that identification must precede transformation. In making vocal extreme views, Donald Trump has made bigotry, racism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia part of a national conversation unlike at any other time in recent history—and I sense that the possibility of transformation is also heightened. Donald Trump and all that he represents are not some great mistake. He is part of the transformation of consciousness. As am I, and as are you, reading this essay. We all have choices to make. What will you do in the face of overt bigotry, racism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia?

For me, I am thanking Donald Trump today for inspiring this bit of writing. Pre-Donald Trump I might have held back, played it safe, worried that I would be misunderstood as someone who supports what Donald Trump has espoused and worried that I’d be dismissed and judged for being a person of privilege who has the luxury to fly on airplanes and write essays, because I don’t or won’t suffer directly the effects of a Trump presidency. In my pre-Trump life, I might have decided publishing this was too risky, put my computer away, and concluded my voice didn’t have a place in this conversation. In the age of *Donald Trump Was Elected President*—and all that preceded his election—I’m not playing by the norms of conformity I imposed on myself anymore. This is my new refrain: *If Donald Trump can run for and be elected President of the United States with his brand of humanity, isn’t there room in this world for the concerns, hopes, dreams and vision that flower through my humanity, too?* What about you?

I dedicate myself to relationship and conversation even with—and *especially with*—those whose views are different than mine, and I invite all people of good, strong and skillful will to do the same. I write with respect and appreciation for all those who have come before me on the paths of justice and peace, and those who work today for a better world. I’m willing to see what I may not be seeing. And I will show up more fully in this post-election world. And I know I am not alone. While hate crimes may be on the rise, I’ve also witnessed a concomitant blossoming of kindness in the general population; an increase in the number of people who understand and are willing to act as allies for people who suffer discrimination and injustice; and greater numbers of people taking action to catalyze systemic change for justice and peace, post-election.

In this new *Donald Trump Was Elected President* world, when you find yourself angry or enraged, saddened or disgusted by another’s actions, will you act for change from a divided place of “us” and “them” within yourself? Or will you allow yourself to be inspired to act from wholeness in the face of hatred—and from a place of peace in service of justice? Because where our actions arise from matters as greatly as, if not even more so than, what shape our actions take.👁

¹ Great thanks to one of my spiritual teachers, Adyashanti (www.Adyashanti.org) for sharing this particular way of describing Life in all its myriad forms

² United States’ Pledge of Allegiance

³ R. Derek Black, *New York Times*, Sunday Review, 11/27/16, “Why I Left White Nationalism,” pp. 6-7.



Barbara Veale Smith is a Psychosynthesis, Open Focus™ and Board Certified Coach (www.ContentmentCoaching.com). She offers training through www.UndefendedHeart.org and she is an affiliated staff member of the Synthesis Center (www.synthesiscenter.org), specializing in contemplative ventures. Barbara and her husband Mark are the founders of www.HarmonyLakeRanch.com, a fun place to play and retreat in the high desert of Central Oregon, dedicated to spiritual awakening. She and her young adult daughter Tara are the authors of *The Invisible Present*, a book about attention, presence and the quiet joy of contentment. Barbara is a member of the AAP Steering Committee, and writes from her blog at www.BarbaraVealeSmith.com.

Betty Jane Bosdell, PhD
August 30, 1928 – January 10, 2017
Celebrating a Life of Applied Psychosynthesis
Mary L. Kelso, PhD
(with generous assistance from many of Betty's friends)



Betty Bosdell's life is the story of a spirit that touched many lives. Betty lived life simply, planting ideas and dreams as she traveled along. She loved turtles and often commented that "they had the pace of life figured out." She lived on La Tortuga Drive, and when visiting and training in Trinidad made certain to visit the tortoise preserve. So as she traveled along, noticing people, she often stopped to plant a positive feeling in another soul with a troubled heart. That was simply the way Betty was. Yet, she always seemed amazed when all the seeds she planted started growing like crazy and people around her began blooming.

Betty Jane Bosdell, PhD, was born in Mobile, AL, the oldest child of Charles E. and Thelma (Pleues) Bosdell. She had one brother, Charles, who was two years younger. Her father worked as a typesetter to support the family. Trained as a pharmacist, he was unable to find work in his career field. Betty's mother, an artistic woman, produced the fine porcelain pieces that decorated Betty's home. Betty was born prematurely and several people remember the stories she told of her family warming the house with the stove so she would have heat to survive. She once said, "my birth family was made of people who were all different, yet there was an energy that held us together."

During the Great Depression Betty's father continually reminded her, "There is always enough." Betty took this awareness into her very bones, living a rich, fulfilling life, spending little on herself, yet sometimes quite a bit on friends. When anyone close to her gently suggested she buy a new dress she would airily tell them she would go shopping in her closet.

While passionate about education as an adult, Betty did not fit easily into her elementary school classroom. In fact, she once described school as a place that "rejected" her. Some teachers thought she was dyslexic and unable to learn. She did not talk for many years. Fortunately, others realized her giftedness and found ways to educate her very brilliant mind. This may explain why she dedicated a large portion of her energy to programs and services to help non-traditional learners.

Betty earned a BA from Alabama College and went on to teach both elementary school and high school Spanish and English. She returned to school and completed both an MA and PhD from the University of Illinois at Urbana, earning her doctorate in 1958. Her dissertation, "Perception of Guidance Services as Related to Personality Needs and Job Titles," continues to be available as seminal research in that field.

Betty taught at Chico State College, CA; University of North Dakota; and the University of Northern Iowa before becoming part of the faculty at Northern Illinois University in 1966, earning the rank of Professor Emeritus upon her retirement in 1984. She taught doctoral level courses, directed three training institutes for school counselors, conducted research, and served two terms as Chairperson of Counselor Education. Her major teaching areas were theories of psychotherapy, group therapy, supervision, child (play) therapy, transpersonal psychology, psychological assessment and biofeedback. She also served as Clinical Coordinator for DELOS, Inc (a psychological corporation).

(Continued on [page 52](#))

(Continued from [page 51](#))

Betty was a member of the American Psychological Association (Division 17 - Society of Counseling Psychology) and served on national committees; she held offices in the American Counseling Association and the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis.

She was a licensed therapist until she retired her California license in 2006 and went on inactive status. Many of us know she continued to provide wise counsel by phone and while she suffered severe loss of eyesight, her mind was razor sharp. Her focus was always on developing the best within a person and on the integration of approaches from a transpersonal and humanistic perspective.

In addition to teaching, Betty was a consultant to many schools and educational groups, including universities in New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Tennessee, Iowa, New Mexico; public schools and/or State Departments of Education in California, Washington, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, North Dakota, Minnesota, Texas, Florida, Wisconsin, Michigan, Kentucky and New Mexico; and the US Department of Education in Washington, DC.

Publishing was also part of Betty's academic life. She authored numerous articles in academic and peer-reviewed professional journals; served on the editorial board of the *Personnel and Guidance Journal* in the 1970's; wrote a monograph, *Evaluation of Counseling Treatments with Underachieving High School Students*, published by the US Office of Education; and published *Research Guidelines for High School Counselors - Evaluating Counseling Effectiveness*, through the College Entrance Examination Board in New York.

If you google "Betty Jane Bosdell, PhD," references suggest that her students and colleagues are still using her ideas and work. Betty shared a kindred spirit with fellow professors and collaborated with David and Anna Tiedemann in their development of integrated vocational theories.

In addition to her work with individuals, couples and families, she lectured and conducted professional training workshops throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. She gave over 100 presentations from 1960 to 2006 for the American Psychological Association, American Personnel and Guidance Association, American Counseling Association, American Humanistic Psychology Association, and the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis. Betty, and two of her doctoral candidates, presented one of the first workshops for the American Personnel and Guidance Association on the use of biofeedback with high school students.

She maintained a curiosity about life, people and the world around her. Students and fellow learners John and Becki Hackett, remembering many discussions on Betty's living room couch in Vista, were touched by her words, "Learning is everywhere, and we just have to look around." John uses this quote as one of his foundational beliefs as he works with doctoral candidates in educational leadership. Betty served as the chair of John's doctoral dissertation committee.

One of Betty's graduate students first introduced her to *Psychosynthesis* in 1969. The student completed a paper on transpersonal psychology and brought Betty a book by Roberto Assagioli. Betty had considered writing a book that integrated all she was learning about transpersonal psychology. But the minute she read *Psychosynthesis* she said, "Roberto Assagioli had already done this expertly." Betty knew a Gestalt teacher who went to Italy to work personally with Roberto Assagioli and learned even more from him.

Clarke Moustakas, PhD, one of the leading American experts on humanistic psychology, and one of Betty's major mentors, also used the psychological approach that Assagioli described. She was fascinated enough to continue more training in this area and also studied Child Therapy and Play Therapy with Moustakas.

(Continued on [page 53](#))

(Continued from page 52)

Betty studied psychosynthesis at the Hill Center and also with Martha Crampton at the Canadian Institute and in Deerfield, Massachusetts, traveling there for one month in the summer and weekends for a year. There she met Harry Sloan and Mark Horowitz. She also studied at the San Francisco Psychosynthesis Institute for a summer.

During this time Betty developed a three-unit university graduate level course in Psychosynthesis at Northern Illinois University-Urbana, as she thought it added a fuller dimension to the counseling courses offered. She also had students meet in her home as they practiced the experiential learning necessary to integrate the theory into their work with clients. Eventually Betty and Jeanette Zweifel, EdD, opened the Mid-West Center for Psychosynthesis near Chicago.

After her retirement from Northern Illinois University, Betty moved west and bought a lovely home in Vista, CA, and paid it off completely, presumably with the money she saved on clothes. Betty also attended workshops at Sky High Ranch in Apple Valley, California when Brugh Joy and Carolyn Conger were teaching. Many of us know Betty as a brilliant scholar, but she was also spiritually adept and an active part of a local women's spiritual network. She was diabetic, almost blind, and crippled from a car accident, yet her generosity often extended to others, helping even though it cost her physical pain and inconvenience. Some of her spiritual depth seemed to emerge out of her physical pain. These explorations into spirit brought her this prayer with which, internally, she began any private or group session: "Let me never interfere with another individual's path." Tricia Kelly remembers that as she watched Betty work; she "would ask, not tell, and at the slightest breath of resistance, willow-like, would move away. One of my clinician friends calls her the silkiest therapist she ever met."

Minutes of Psychosynthesis International (PSI) meetings reflect that Edith Stauffer was consulting with Betty as early as 1992. Betty officially became part of the PSI Board of Directors in 2000, after presenting at the International Psychosynthesis Conference held in San Diego, July 21-25, 1996. One member of PSI recalls, "When Betty presented her workshop on 'Subpersonalities' at the conference, I experienced personal theoretical integration of my psychosynthesis training and all my graduate training—instantly. It was magnificent."

PSI had been conducting distance learning of psychosynthesis since 1986. In 2002 they were approached by Sister Paul D'Ornellas, a member of Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny and Director of the Center for Human Development, Port of Spain, Trinidad. She requested PSI to consider training all the practitioners from her organization. PSI appointed Betty Bosdell as Director of Training, and both distance learning and on-site workshops were conducted from 2002 until 2006. Although travel was a challenge, Betty made the trip to Trinidad twice to provide a week of training and individual sessions with students each visit.

Betty became a member of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis (AAP) and helped organize psychosynthesis groups across the country. She became a member of the Steering Committee in 2004 and served as Cochair with David Shirley from 2005 to 2007. While they had not known each other prior to this service, Betty and David became close friends, often talking by phone and visiting.

Betty brought quiet questioning, an intense quest for knowing and a commitment to high standards to any organization and program in which she participated. AAP was no exception. Eventually, her quest to expand professional psychosynthesis training led in 2003 to her creating, along with other like-minded colleagues, the first AAP Training Task Force (TTF), followed by the development of the Trainer Development Program (TDP), eventually under the auspices of the Professional Development Committee (PDC). This evolution of AAP's focus of attention on training standards represented the refinement of the needs of the growing psychosynthesis community.

(Continued on page 54)

(Continued from [page 53](#))

Betty assisted with the transcription of Houston Smith's talk after the AAP Kentucky Conference in 2006. Houston said he would want the inscription on his tombstone to read, "Here Lies Nobody." Betty often mentioned how much she liked that sentiment. Betty presented a demonstration applying psychosynthesis to psychotherapy at the 2007 TDP Training in Concord, CA.



When Vincent Dummer began Psychosynthesis Video Portraits project, he chose Betty Boddell as a mentor teacher to be taped and interviewed by Mary Kelso. That video is available at <http://psychosynthesisresources.com/> Betty also challenged us with the ideas expressed in her article, "The Future of Psychosynthesis" written for Psychosynthesis in North America: Discovering Our History – 1957-2010. That piece is reprinted elsewhere in this issue.

Betty once said, "I've been here and hopefully done what I needed to do. I'm like an individual drop of rain that melds with all the other drops in the ocean or universe and it all evolves into something larger." She counseled others "that there are no secrets in life. Everything that is within me is also within the other. Once one realizes this basic truth, fear loses its grip. If hate is based on fear, what would this world be like without fear?"

Betty Boddell was a visionary, teacher and mentor to many. She learned from Psychosynthesis and also gave a great deal back. We will miss her.☐

A Memorial Celebration for Betty Boddell is planned for Sunday, March 26, 2017 at 11 AM at the home of

Robin & Harry Mullin
3 Terraza Del Sol
Dana Point, CA 92629

You will be approximately 30 minutes from John Wayne Airport.

There is a hotel in Dana Point Harbor 2 miles from Robin's home, Dana Point Marina Inn www.DanaPointMarinaInn.com at Dana Point, CA. The rates are very reasonable, from \$89 to \$120, the decor dated, but you are right at the water.

For directions and further information please email robinmullin918@gmail.com or triciakelly888@gmail.com.

As Betty wished, this will be an informal and easygoing time together. Dress is casual. We would like to listen to stories of your relationship with Betty and your perspective on this brilliant and generous woman. Or you can just listen. There will be refreshments and a light lunch and if you like you can bring a dish to share. You can slip out when you are ready or need to.

Memorial contributions can be made to Berea College, Berea, Kentucky in honor of Betty Jane Boddell, PhD. Berea College is an inclusive liberal arts college that accepts only academically promising students who have limited financial resources. All students are awarded 100% tuition scholarships, so that students may graduate with little or no debt.

How I Taught Self-Identification to Young Adults —1964-1981

Isabelle C. Küng

This paper has two objectives. First, I want to describe how I taught young adults the “self-identification” technique and why calling it that was a safer approach for them. Then I want to show how the appropriate use of this universal process of identification and disidentification helps one understand and cooperate with one’s own psychic processes and grow to maturity according to the ideal model one defines for oneself.

I’ll show how integrated Psychosynthesis into the school curriculum as a subject-matter. Then I will offer a few observable facts that will ring a bell for practitioners and readers because, as Dr. Assagioli liked to say with a grin, “Everyone actually does psychosynthesis without knowing,” paraphrasing Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who was so proud of himself when told that he had been speaking ‘prose’ all his life.

The Greek roots of the term “psychosynthesis” indicate it means a synthesis of psychological states of the mind. One could even say that the synthesis of psychological components in humans continuously produces a new creation by assembling psycho-spiritual virtues, while preserving the “tone” of each. It is like singing in a choir: each member sings his or her part, but a new sound or harmony results, changing constantly in line with the piece that is being interpreted. If you have a moment, the following is an example of synthesis where even the silence of the choir enhances the quality of the solo’s performance: “Et incarnatus est,” a 1956 extract of Mozart’s Mass in C, KV 427, with Emilia Petrescu: <https://youtu.be/2jTuh6fdqwQ>. In these next examples, voice, choir, and orchestra enhance each other: the first is Barbara Hendricks singing Mozart’s “Laudate Dominum”; the second is the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah* <https://youtu.be/AaEGwph2Qr4>.

Introduction

In the December 2016 *Psychosynthesis Quarterly*, I described how in the mid-sixties Dorette A. Faillettaz, founded and directed a Swiss Finishing school, Institut Bleu-Léman in Villeneuve, Switzerland. (Yes, attending the school were the kind daughters of VIPs.) Confronted with the huge existential dilemmas of many of her students, she decided that it would be significant for all students to systematically learn the ABC’s of Psychosynthesis.

Psychosynthesis was chosen as a means of character education and training where the students would learn to “tailor themselves.” It would be a continuing asset for them, thanks to practicing the exercises given; it would help them to recognize their essential Self; it would give them a reliable approach or attitude and the resilience to shape their own life “no matter what.”

Despite my being only 19 years old (but her daughter and quite hyperactive), Mrs. Faillettaz appointed me to learn the methods of psychosynthesis with Dr. Assagioli in Florence, Italy, and teach it to the students. French popular wisdom says, “*Les voyages forment la jeunesse!*” Travel is formative! But there are further meanings to this proverb. I was given a privilege: to implement my mother’s and Roberto Assagioli’s project, to integrate this life-enhancing course into the general curriculum of her school. How I coped with this assignment will be the subject of another article.

So, our experiment had to do with teaching the ABC’s of Psychosynthesis to young adults in the making—as a distinct subject. In my own private life, like everyone, I discovered opportunities for synthesis in my many roles, such as motherhood, career woman, and seeker after truth (which the mathematician Prof. Gonzeth said “is One, but its expressions are infinite”).

(Continued on [page 56](#))

(Continued from [page 55](#))

Observable Facts

While I imparted—and practiced—Assagioli’s outline of Psychosynthesis I observed the following phenomena:

1. The exercise of identifying with the Transpersonal Self, also named the disidentification exercise, complements the development of the will. There is a synergy between “Self” and will: on one hand, experiencing the Transpersonal Self in the technique of disidentification helps one to acquire a sense of perspective; on the other hand, mobilizing the power of the will helps one to conceive, plan, and carry out the process of psychosynthesis.
2. We can better understand the reflex of identification through this technique of disidentification, which leads to identifying with the Transpersonal Self.¹ This understanding then helps us knowingly direct our psychological forces into the formation of patterns, habits, and building blocks that stimulate transformation of the personality, its harmonization and regeneration. The regenerated personality’s ever more stable alignment with the Transpersonal Self (the center of pure Peace) empowers both the ongoing transformative process and any life work that circumstances lead us to undertake.
3. To teach young adults this exercise of disidentification leading to identifying with the Transpersonal Self requires a “top-down” approach (connecting Self-mind-emotions-body) rather than going “from below up” (body-emotion-mind-Self), which is the usual procedure for adults.

Development

My mother hosted the “Fourth International Psychosynthesis Week,” from September 1 to 7, 1961. Dr. Roberto Assagioli organized it and presided over it. A week before, Assagioli had participated in the Fifth International Congress of Psychotherapy in Vienna, where there had also been a Symposium on Psychosynthesis. The title of the paper he presented to the Congress was “Psychosynthesis and Existential Psychotherapy.” The paper he gave at the Symposium was a general outline and introduction to the topic.²

Speaking about the *techniques* of Psychosynthesis, Assagioli emphasized: “The basic one, which helps and even makes possible the use of all the others, concerns the arousing and development of the *will*.” He added: “The will is ineffective only when it attempts to act *in opposition* to the imagination and to the other psychological functions, while its skillful and consequently successful use consists in *regulating* and *directing* all other functions towards a deliberately chosen and affirmed aim.”

These words struck a note of hope, not only for parents who were caring but often over-worked, but also for earnest but at times fed-up educators, and for dedicated but also discouraged leaders of teams (managers, directors). And these words had not escaped my mother’s attention. She was looking for some logical approach to understand and help transform the existential questionings of her well-off but so unhappy students. She decided to follow up on this method.



(Continued on [page 57](#))

(Continued from [page 56](#))

Having begun teaching the ABC's of Psychosynthesis, I stumbled upon a few questions and needed advice. Our students were ages 15 to 25, whereas Assagioli's manual was meant for doctors and specialists in the helping profession, as well as other adults, like parents, teachers—grown-ups like me!

My questions were often “situation-bound” and not subject to generalization, so I managed to find many answers on the spot. Assagioli used to recommend avoiding generalizations, adding, “and that is a generalization!” (Smile! Laughter! And immediate release of any tension from the question.) Sometimes Assagioli would not wait for me to ask the appropriate question. Regarding relaxation exercises and visualizations, he spontaneously explained to me that young people need to *take it in*—correctly—before they can reconstruct any content of their personality. Thus, the importance of giving the young the opportunity to discover objects with their own five senses, and to be helped to give an appropriate name to each item discovered, without value judgments. For example, with the “Exercise of the Blossoming of the Rose,”³ he insisted that the younger students first become familiar with a *real* rose: touch, smell, etc. Then, to help the experience pass from the short-term memory into the long-term memory, they were to draw the flower, best figuratively. Not only does this “feed” the individual's inner five-senses bank, but it also develops the skills of observation, exactitude, and the ability to mentally see details and to recreate the image. This is the introductory technique for the visualization exercises.



Then, about relaxation, he simply said the young first need to be given the opportunity to coordinate their movements and functions—not performance, just ability—each in its own time. He added that Life is the “right tonus of all muscles...” And tonus is a matter of being in harmony. Therefore, become attentive, become conscious of what is, and thus be conscious of having the right tension in any movement, but without concentration. I found that a good exercise to foster this right tonus and awareness, is “Walking meditation,” which a Buddhist monk taught in a seminar I attended near Zermatt, Switzerland.

Because my students were 15 years of age and older, I took good notice of Assagioli's indications for teaching certain techniques to youngsters. It spared me giving wrong advice to others! I would make my students discover a *real* rose before doing the visualization of a rose... They liked this. One student even got hay fever in the middle of the winter after doing the exercise of the rose.

I never used the data acquired in doing the exercises as a means of “assessment”—that was not my role. My students were learning these techniques and exercises to manage their own psychological energies more efficiently. And I must say that this was quite successful; because in a boarding school, the slightest emotion hitting one member usually immediately affects all the others—given their tendency to pick up emotions that are not theirs. (It's called “the grapevine” in other settings.) This could sometimes reach quite disturbing peaks. Was it a mirror? Empathy? Or just sensationalism? Be that what it may, it was very reassuring for us, the directors of the school,

(Continued on [page 58](#))

(Continued from [page 57](#))

to know that students could be constructive instead of creating havoc. They could transform their emotional forces by various means, including sports. However, we scrupulously observed the word of warning Assagioli gave about not forcing an exercise on someone who “has a fit.” In his own words (p. 120): “The [self-identification] exercise is suited to all cases except people at such a primitive level that they are not able to really grasp the technique, or *when they are in such an emotional turmoil and distracted state that temporarily they are unfit to use it.*” (When this applied, empathy, taking a walk, and listening to music would help.)

How I Taught the Self-Identification Exercise

As I said above, teaching young adults this exercise of disidentification leading to identifying with the Transpersonal Self requires a top-down approach rather than an up from below approach. The young have relatively little control over their bodies and nervous systems, so they are easily overwhelmed by emotions and may be dominated by thoughts that almost squash their thinking function. Consequently, when they are doing this fundamental exercise of self-identification, they need help connecting first with their inner identity (the self, whether personal or transpersonal). From that stronghold, they can “descend” to gain control over the kingdom of their thoughts and realize that they are responsible for them (and thus for the words they use to formulate them). We can then guide them to gain control over the vast territories of their emotions and understand that they are not powerless but can even learn from emotions and transform those that need to be tamed. Finally, we encourage them to become aware of their precious instrument of expression in the world: their own bodies, which they therefore must appreciate and take good care of.

At each stage of the exercise, we first asked Who am I essentially, then What do I have to get along with. Example:

1. I am a centre of pure consciousness and will, and I have thoughts (like this that and the other; I would enumerate a few); they are mine; I am responsible for my thoughts. Thanks to my thoughts I can express myself. *But I*—I am a centre of pure consciousness and will.
2. I am a centre of pure consciousness and will, and I have emotions (like this, like that like the good, the bad and the ugly, like the marvelous ones; I would enumerate a few emotions); they are mine, I am responsible for my emotions. Thanks to my emotions, feelings can “move me about.” *But I*—I am a centre of pure consciousness and will.
- 3 I am a centre of pure consciousness and will, and I have a physical body (like this, like that and so on; I would describe the body having arms, legs, this and that); I affirm: my body is mine, I am responsible for my body. Thanks to my body, I can manifest thoughts and feelings and accomplish needed actions. *But I*—I am a centre of pure consciousness and will.
4. And I would conclude the exercise insisting on the energy of consciousness and will infusing my thoughts, feelings, and behavior, all under my responsibility.

But, you might ask, how do you begin “at the top” without giving the impression of preaching some non-material approach? (If I had done this, they would have fiercely opposed me, since each had her own religion or firmly anchored belief system.) Well, to gently introduce—without seeming to do so—the logic of identification-disidentification, and instead of “coming out of the blue” with identity with consciousness and will (the I or self), I first applied Martha Crampton’s “Who am I?” technique.⁴ It indeed was of immense help. Only after having discussed something like the “Who am I?” approach, would the situation be sufficiently ripe for the proposition,

(Continued on [page 59](#))

(Continued from [page 58](#))

“Let’s try to go through all this, beginning with the Self, feeling we are the self, a centre of pure consciousness [this point no one could deny, since they had just followed the whole dialogue], and then let’s include our thoughts, our emotions and our body! Agreed!” We would spend ten minutes on that (never more!), followed by taking notes if desired. No obligation!

Assagioli corroborates this way of practicing this exercise in his own words in his *Manual of Principles and Techniques*, where he extensively discusses identification processes, disidentifying from attaching ones, and identifying with one’s centre of self-consciousness. I highly recommend rereading the section dedicated to Self Identification. Here are some excerpts:

P. 111: “The conscious and purposeful use of self-identification – or dis-identification – is basic in psychosynthesis. It proceeds from a dynamic centre on which the whole process of synthesizing the psychological multiplicity into an organic unit is based. It offers a very effective means of controlling the various elements of the personality.”

P. 120: “As the technique of self-identification is a basic technique not only for therapy but for education and personality integration, it can be considered also as a defense mechanism against the constant stream of influences, inner and outer, which try to capture the ego and demand identification.” [In Assagioli’s terminology the ego is the personality.]

It is also important to keep in mind that in Assagioli’s presentation, the Transpersonal Self and the personal self are one and the same, the second however only being merely the reflection of the first; in his words:

P. 113: “there are not in reality two independent selves. There is one Self – but there are very different and distinct levels of self-realization. Therefore between the self-identity of the ordinary or normal level of functioning and the full spiritual Self-realization there are intermediate stages or levels, ever wider, clearer, fuller.”

And in Summation and Combination with Other Techniques, Assagioli adds:

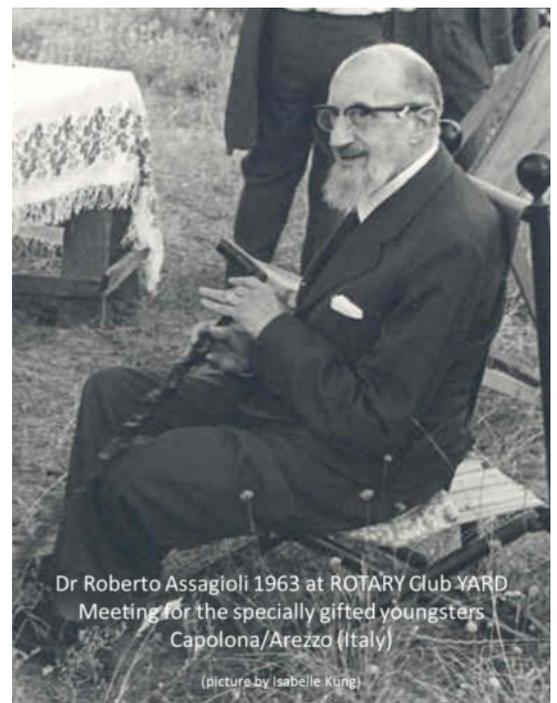
P. 124: “In some cases it is even necessary to invert the order of the two, or to make them two phases of the one exercise, *beginning* with the self-identification, and adding the dis-identification as a necessary means to self-identification.”

Except that with young adults, as I described above, I rather emphasized becoming the ruler and master of one’s thoughts, emotions, and body, for that was what they needed.

The Bonus

The experience of the Self that transcends the personality *matters*, because it belongs to the intimate domain of psychic experience. It is neither this, nor that, nor any other “thing” easily “reduced to words,” which veil what they try to reveal. Words about such matters can create idols if they are taken too literally; and then, sadly enough, instead of bridging towards the meaning they stand for, they turn into drawbridges and dogmas!

(Continued on [page 60](#))



(Continued from [page 59](#))

But in the last analysis, this is not so unfortunate, because thanks to this petrification, the consciousness—which is movement—rebounds. (It is always on the move!) Yes, the experience of the Self which transcends the petty matters of the personality is just an experience, like “being in the now.” This sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Well yes, many normal means can induce the experience, but it happens at its own “moment.” And this unpredictability is a fortunate protection indeed, because of the phenomenal energy unleashed by experiencing the reality of the Transpersonal Self. It appears that our instinct for self-preservation allows this experience to occur only when we have adequate inner psycho-physical interrelations and interdependencies. Assagioli wrote an article, included in his *Manual of Principles and Techniques*, about psychological disturbances. These are symptoms of awakening to intense psychic energies that may flood the personality before its psychological functions have been trained to cope with this abundance of light. The experience then “enlightens” what is not in order, and is then mistaken for a nervous disease or a psychological unbalance. That article is called *Self Realization and Psychological Disturbances*. It is online at the following link: <http://www.synthesiscenter.org/PDFgallery.htm>

Psychosynthesis as outlined by Roberto Assagioli puts the emphasis on the inner path, the golden middle way. It focuses on transforming the psychic energies into constructive forces which the personality manages. Therefore, the emphasis is on the “soul” of things. Humor is one of the most refined expressions of this “soul-side” energy of things. Like consciousness, humor is always “on the move,” catching the spark of truth of situations, putting it into perspective, presenting it with all-embracing kindness, encouraging to “get going” and to rejoice! Assagioli had a delightful sense of humor and used to say that the secret of humor is detachment. I say this is the kind of detachment that comes with the realization of the Transpersonal Self. ■

Notes:

¹ See the English version of Assagioli’s *Manual of Principles and Techniques*, pages 111-125, 1965/Hobbs, Dorman & Co, Inc. N.Y. [Note that this book has been re-published several times, the most recent edition being titled *Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Basic Writings* published by The Synthesis Center, Amherst, MA, in 2000. The pagination in the newer editions is different from that cited in this article—Ed.]

² Assagioli adapted and included parts of these two papers into his *Manual of Principles and Techniques* which he published in 1965/Hobbs, Dorman & Co, Inc. N.Y.

³ See the English version of Assagioli’s *Manual of Principles and Techniques*, 1965/Hobbs, Dorman & Co, Inc. N.Y. p.188.



Isabelle Clotilde Küng (Faillettaz/Bagdasarianz) was trained from 1963 to 1974 by Roberto Assagioli to teach Psychosynthesis to the students of Institut Bleu-Léman in Villeneuve, Switzerland, a Finishing School which Isabelle also directed until 1981. After closing her school, Isabelle worked in international corporations and now lives in Geneva and writes about her experiences in teaching Psychosynthesis, both as a subject matter and simply as an “Attitude that matters.”

