

There was no answer to this. After one week's pause June telephoned and after another suitable period was regaled with the following:

'You have asked us important questions. Which are in fact under discussion between us and other Psychosynthesis Institutes at the moment. We'd be happy to talk to you about these later.'

Meanwhile, under another hat, I had lunch with Roger Evans and found him warm, and lively minded and not at all dusty or dogmatic. Which seems to say something about the evil effect of *Institutes*. What we agreed was that he would produce a longer reasoned reply to June's letter which would also have the backing of the Californian and the Italian Institutes. We hope to publish this in March or April.

Diana Becchetti & Piero Ferrucci

What is Psychosynthesis?

Piero Ferrucci has a Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Torino. He had a five year training from Robert Assagioli; and has collaborated with Laura Huxley in workshops and writing. He lives in Florence and works with the Istituto di Psicointesi. He presently is in private practice, writes and trains professionals.

According to an ancient oriental story, one day the gods decided to create the universe. They created the stars, the sun, the moon. They created the seas, the mountains, the flowers and the clouds. Then they created man. At the end, they created Truth.

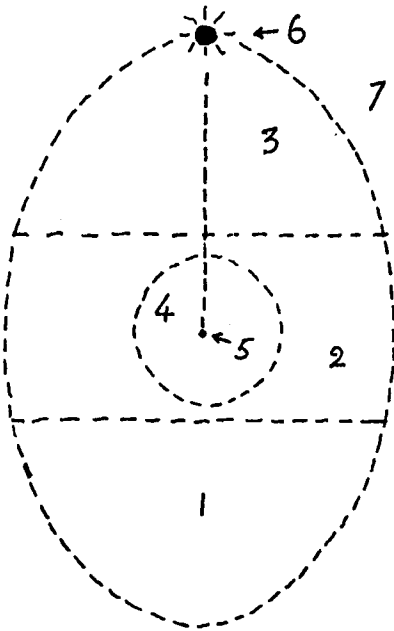
At this point, however, a problem arose: where should they hide truth, so that Man would not find it right away? Because they wanted to prolong the adventure of his search.

'Let's put Truth on top of the highest mountain,' said one of the gods. 'Certainly it will be hard for man to find it there.'

'Let's put it on the farthest star', 'Let's hide it in the darkest and deepest abysses', 'Let's conceal it on the secret side of the moon', suggested other gods. At the end the wisest and most ancient god said: 'No: we will hide Truth inside the very heart of man. In this way he will look for it all over the universe, without being aware of having it inside himself all the time.'

In Psychosynthesis terms 'Truth' is the Self, the source of all creative inspiration, love and vitality. Sometimes the connection between us and our Self is strong and real; at other times it is weak, blocked or in-existent. The central purpose of psychosynthesis is that of building and strengthening this connection, of eliminating the obstructions which it may present, and of facilitating its expression in our everyday life.

Moving to a more concrete consideration of Assagioli's model, we can see that in his diagram, the Self is indicated by the star at the top (6).



1. The Lower unconscious
2. The middle unconscious
3. The superconscious
4. The field of consciousness
5. The 'I'
6. The Self
7. The collective unconscious

Naturally, a diagram can only give a static and elementary image of the psyche, yet it can be useful to enable us to conceive of the many levels of our being. There are three main areas of the unconscious. The 'lower' unconscious (1), which corresponds to Freud's description, is the storehouse of forgotten memories, repressed blocks, biological drives and racial past. The middle unconscious (2) contains all that of which we are not conscious at any given moment, but which we can retrieve at will, like the memory of what we ate this morning or our postal code. The superconscious (3) is the realm of all artistic and ethical inspiration, scientific insight, religious experience, and in general of the states of consciousness described by transpersonal psychology. At the apex of the superconscious is the Self, pure being, energy in it's most intense state.

The circle in the middle (4) represents the area of consciousness-- whatever we are aware of at this moment. The point in the middle of the circle represents the 'I', which is as much of the Self as we can be aware of at any given moment. All limiting lines are dotted to show that the various areas of the psyche are not separated, but that continous dynamic interchanges are going on at all times, among all levels.

The psychosynthetic process begins by assessing the specific existential situation of the individual. It therefore makes use of analytical techniques - guided daydreams, free drawing, dreamwork, stimulus words, autobiography, supersonality exploration, etc.

Increased knowledge of ourselves inevitably leads to insight and to the liberation of blocked energies.

Following the assessment is the stage of activating functions and aspects of the personality which are latent or undeveloped. (Assagioli sees the psychological functions as being sensation, feeling, impulse, imagination, thought, intuition, will.). The techniques for doing so are several, and the central one is the discovery and the training of the will. The psychosynthetic will is conceived as being skilful, loving and strong - we are very far here from the Victorian conception of unregenerated 'willpower'. The discovery of the will is accompanied by the realization of the 'I', the centre of pure consciousness, the common denominator of whatever you may experience - feelings, ideas, thoughts, desires, etc. The whole personality can then be integrated around this centre of will and pure awareness.

Among the numerous other tasks of psychosynthesis is the transformation of psychological energies, especially the energies of love and aggression, whose repression and misuse is responsible for such a great part of the present turmoil.

Through all these techniques we are enabled to move towards a synthesis of personality. From a mixture of conflicting energies, of unconscious potentialities and of undeveloped elements, our personality becomes an harmonious whole in which each part is available and refined. This is our first goal and the continuing process of life.

A great number of people at this time feel an ever-increasing need to explore the 'further reaches of human nature', those regions full of mystery and wonder, beyond our ordinary awareness, which we call the 'superconscious'. Appropriate psychospiritual techniques are given to this purpose - meditation, visualization, 'psychological mountaineering', inner dialogue, silence, etc. This is what we call *transpersonal psychosynthesis*. The power and the beauty of the energies contacted is such that an integrated personality is needed to rightly handle them without distortion or imbalance. On the other hand, personal psychosynthesis alone is not enough. An increasing number of people are experiencing a 'divine homesickness', a nostalgia for the infinite, which cannot be quenched by ordinary psychotherapeutic approaches.

While our priority is the psychosynthesis of the individual, great importance is also given to interpersonal psychosynthesis. Its purpose is that of bringing the harmony which has been created inside a person into his family and other relationships, and among groups as well.

Psychosynthesis is not just another brand of psychotherapy, but rather an *attitude* in which any method can fit as long as it serves the final aim of synthesis. For this reason Assagioli often expressed his belief in the necessity for all those who work for the evolution of man to entertain among themselves relations based on harmony and cooperation, rather than separating each other off with wall of orthodoxy, dogmatism and one-upmanship. 'This means', he wrote, 'above all admitting that any point of view or partial system (as Leibniz stated with regard to the various philosophies) is right in the positive aspects it offers, wrong in whatever it excludes or denies'.

Psychosynthesis is not a closed system but rather an evolving approach, a spirit more than a technique, and therefore it must be experienced and lived in order to be understood. It collaborates with processes much deeper and wider than the ones we may be conscious of. 'Like it or not', said Assagioli, 'man is a part of the Universal Will and he must somehow tune in and willingly participate in the rhythms of Universal Life.'

Diana Becchetti

Roberto Assagioli: The Spirit of Psychosynthesis

All is possible and accessible to you: joy, serenity, I offer them to you as a gift. Roberto Assagioli

Roberto Assagioli was a student of Freud and a contemporary of Jung. He pioneered psychosynthesis in Italy, but quickly saw its limitations. It did not encompass nor embrace the higher aspects of man - the main realm of creativity, inspiration, spiritual understanding, and of higher values like love, compassion, joy, wisdom - nor did it give recognition to man's existential search for meaning; a search which Assagioli believed to be an urge in human nature as basic and organic as any instinct or biological drive. So, as early as 1910 Assagioli began to formulate a holistic theory of man encompassing the groundwork of Freud but also reaching for the stars.

He elaborated on the difference between his view of man and Freud's in an interview published in *Psychology Today* in December 1974. 'In one of his letters Freud said, 'I am interested only in the basement of human being'. Psychosynthesis is interested in the whole building. We try to build an elevator which will allow a person access to every level of his personality. After all, a building with only a basement is very limited, We want to open up the terraces where you can sunbathe or look at the stars. Our concern is the synthesis of all areas of the personality. That means that psychosynthesis is holistic, global and inclusive.'

Any teaching is only as valid as the Being who creates it. Eloquent theories and models of the psyche of man require the addition of aliveness to fully portray the reality of life. This aliveness is often called the essence or spirit of such teachings. Assagioli was a being who fully embodied the spirit of his teachings.

What was this spirit? Who was this man? I asked myself these very questions before my visit to the old sage in Florence. It was not the eloquent theories nor their useful application that drew me to Italy, for coming from a broad and sophisticated background in the human potential movement, I was typically self-contained and all-knowing - and psychosynthesis was, I thought, just another 'trick' to add to my ever-increasing toolkit. I would not have to journey to Italy for that. However I intuitively felt that this man had a unique quality and I was not to be disappointed for the very moment of meeting Assagioli brought an unexpected surprise.