

On the question of certification, I feel that England is very poor in terms of qualified trained people. I feel that there are too many people working in England that are untrained - that is, group leaders. People should be very careful when they choose a therapist or group leader - check their qualifications, I don't mean degrees or diplomas. If a person has been involved in certain programme, it does mean that that person has gone through *something*. Both the participants and the leader have to take some responsibility. The participant is responsible to meet the leader, feel them and use their own intuitive process when they select a group and to trust their assessments. Not giving their power away. I don't think that formal certification would be a help. A loosely structured certification might help. One of the first requirements to me is that a person is fully committed to working on their own process. This is the most essential factor. There is no other way of saying 'This is a qualified person.' Who is to judge that? And if the Growth Movement started doing this, it would become exactly like other crystallised institutions. You can get a college degree and not know anything. I got my first degree and didn't know anything about my topic. It was pure bullshit. There is no institution that really sees the whole person. The key is judgement. Personal judgement and the judgement of growth centres and other institutions. If you are an on-going organisation you have a commitment to your reputation. But outside control is not the answer. The control has to come from inside. This is a very big area. The other side of this is that there are a lot of totally untrained people about who are incredibly good. There is no right answer, I am sure.

I feel that Self and Society are doing a real service, for at least you are letting people know Who and What and Where it is happening.

On co-operation in the Growth Movement, I am very interested to know what the other groups and individuals are doing in increased communication. I like the idea of professional get to-togethers. I'm curious and interested in what other people are doing. It's good for everyone to know about others and what they are doing so that we don't think that our path is the only path. I think that they are all different paths leading to the same place, and there is no *one* path. It is very important for everyone to recognise that. What I have seen happen in the past when different people and groups have got together is great competitiveness and a total un-openness to other people's ways. That's unfortunately really strong in the Growth Movement. There is a need for more co-operation and recognition among people in the movement.'

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Gabor von Varga

## The Person behind the Personality

My own interest in Psychosynthesis comes from a single and very personal reason: it works for me. It works more deeply and rapidly than any other form of engagement, as I seek to find the elusive and nameless point where I am most who I am. It is the only form of growth work where I find myself laughing and crying at the same time, and where it is most difficult to escape into just living according to the 'system'.

When I first experienced the powerful work that can be done with guided imagery, in 1968, I imagined that this 'revolutionary method' was Psychosynthesis. That is an error that many people experiencing an introductory weekend are likely to share.

In fact guided imagery is at its most potent when it is used in individual work, where the symbolic material and the energies that it liberates can be followed up with a specific person. Beyond that, work with imagery is just one of the numerous techniques available to the guide in Psychosynthesis to facilitate the evolution of the client.

Evolution of the client is the key to the guide's task. It is also a good way to look at the concepts that are active in making Psychosynthesis such a powerful therapeutic process.

The basic theme of work could be most briefly described with the dual question:

- = What is the direction into which your inner compass is pointing at this moment in your life? and
- = What keeps you from getting there? (i.e. what are the blocks, the habitual responses, the armourings, the fears that get in the way of what you most centrally want for yourself)

Psychosynthesis is the result of an amalgamation of many traditions, brought to a focus by the Italian psychiatrist, Roberto Assagioli. It is a comprehensive, psychological and educational approach to the development of the whole person.

It has roots both in East and West. It is a fascinatingly balanced system. Most Eastern approaches have tended to emphasise the spiritual side of being; Western psychological thinkers have usually fixed their attention on the 'personality' level. Psychosynthesis gives equal importance to both.

Assagioli recognises man's spiritual core and has developed specific techniques to evoke and strengthen the connection between this core and the personality. This means that the work moves back and forth between personality issues and the moving forces from the superconscious that energise them.

## **THE SUPERCONSCIOUS**

This is the area where Psychosynthesis goes beyond the tenets of classical, and even Jungian, psychology. Developing a direct experience of the superconscious is a central aspect of Psychosynthesis work.

Psychosynthesis recognises and works with the 'Freudian' subconscious whenever necessary, but its emphasis is beyond the subconscious. It reaches for a more direct experience of the high energies involved in the superconscious areas of the psyche.

## WHY?

The superconscious is an autonomous realm from which come man's most highly evolved impulses:

- = the drive for purpose
- = the drive for meaning in life
- = artistic and scientific inspiration
- = philosophic and spiritual insight
- = love and will

From this follows that man may suffer, not just from repression of his basic biological drives, but that he can cripple himself just as effectively by the 'repression of the sublime'; the failure to accept his higher nature. Practical work with a client - the dance of his evolving pattern - touches both on the integration of material from the lower unconscious with a recognition and actualisation of the content of the superconscious.

## SUPERCONSCIOUS ENERGIES

In terms of practical work, the superconscious can have an extraordinary effect. This area of the personality has considerable, and generally untapped, resources of energy, imagination and will to help actualise a more evolved and integrated person. In terms of an irreverent analogy: 'Rare is the horse who won't pick up his feet when his head is turned towards the stable'.

A wide range of techniques have been developed to contact this realm of creativeness, right direction, and power. They establish a bridge with the part of our being where each individual's inner wisdom and core energy can be tapped.

Lest this sound too esoteric it is well to remember that this is the same magic hat from where Einstein drew his formula; the inventor draws his ideas; the poet his sense of rightness; the painter his juxtapositions of palette and form; the writer his inspiration; and all of us, in our better moments, our most inspired ideas, and our deepest sense that there is more to life than meets the casual or bored eye.

In fact, work with the superconscious can be so rewarding, interesting and exciting, that the inherent danger for those working with these transcendental tools is to get absorbed in the fascination of the technique and its possibilities. The most frequent way this tends to happen, is the development of a strong transcendental 'part-time' personality, which can spend a lot of an individual's time turning his eye heavenward, and saying 'Oh! Isn't it wonderful' while it is unaware of the fact that it is knee-deep in mud. This is a potential weakness against which it is only fair to caution. On the

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whole the distortions of Psychosynthesis seem to do less harm and to retard the evolution of the person less than distortions of most other techniques do.

Access to the superconscious begins to answer the question: what is it that your innermost self wants? Sometimes the answer comes in a symbolic and sometimes in a most direct way. But generally it comes in a way that is intelligible to client and guide alike, and that brings with it the motivation to do something about it.

## **THE SELF**

Psychosynthesis makes a sophisticated distinction between the person and the personality. We are all aware of the many, and often violently, clashing positions that our personality will assume in the dance of life. So I will not bore you with the examples of how, on the personality level, we are all contradicting ourselves many times each day.

A central tenet in Psychosynthesis is the existence of the Self as an entity above and beyond the various aspects of the personality. So, the person behind the personality exists in a more profound and universal sense than the forms of consciousness that we experience when we are identifying with our body, our feelings, or with our mind. This is even more obviously true when the identification is with a partial personality, such as the top-dog, the under-dog, the judge, the victim, the adapted child, the rebel, the critic, the parent, the adult, or the child - to name some of the more popular partial identifications we all tend to experience.

The personal Self, or 'I', is viewed as a centre of awareness and purpose. The integration of the personality takes place around it, much as the conductor of an orchestra will mould a mixed group of musicians to really express a fine piece of music. In order to do that job well he not only has to be a leader of men but also be able to 'hear' the symphony in his head and heart and body.

## **THE 'I' AND THE SELF**

We distinguish between the 'personal Self', the 'I' or the 'centre of individual consciousness' - the conductor so to speak - and the 'transpersonal self'. The transpersonal self is a deeper and inclusive centre of identity where individuality and universality blend. It is a point inside ourselves which we come close to touching at various times in our lives and which we tend to yearn for, consciously or sub-consciously, ever after.

Although most of the work with clients, or with groups, in Psychosynthesis is done essentially on the personality level, behind every step of the dance there is a mute question: 'And how is this most like what you want and need for yourself on your path now?'

Although on paper it may sound like a somewhat simple-minded approach, it has a surprising ability to channel fundamental energies from deep inside the person behind the evolution of the personality.

More readily perceived is the 'I', the centre of individual consciousness. The two central functions of the personal self are consciousness and will. On the consciousness side, the personal self is able to be clearly aware of what is going on within and around the person. It can perceive without distortion or defensiveness. The experience has been called the position of the 'objective observer', or the 'fair witness'. To the extent that I am able to achieve this vantage point, the claims of my personality, and its tendency to self justification, no longer stand in the way of my seeing clearly.

There are a variety of techniques in Psychosynthesis with which to gain more ready access to this internal vantage point. The position of the 'fair witness' is extremely important because it is a position of leverage. From this place the most effective work proceeds.

A legitimate question may be asked at this point as to whether or not we are putting the cart before the horse. Surely once I have the maturity to achieve the position of a 'fair witness' quite easily, I will have achieved what psychological work is supposed to do anyway, and I will be acting congruently with myself.

I will attempt to answer only one half of this question. The answer is yes. Yes, the cart is before the horse. Much of the work in Psychosynthesis is in fact work with false identifications.

## **FALSE IDENTIFICATIONS**

The major difficulty in learning to act 'from centre' is our exceptional resourcefulness in coming up with a large number of false identifications which we then make a powerful or painful part of our personality. I may be at one instant fully identified with my feelings, my fear, my anger, my depression, and far enough from a centred place. Just as far as I would be if I was fully identified with my mind expecting to think my way through life. When I am angry then at least I have a vague inkling that this is a special state I am in; but when I am identified with one of my sub-personalities, the consciousness of what I am doing, may dim to near nothing, although I will be very sure to feel very much 'myself'.

Subpersonalities are semi-autonomous and often contradictory, partial and conditioned ways of being that usually pass for who we are. Well they might, for we have practiced them diligently during most of our lifetimes, adapting them to . . . . aye, there's the catch. They were born in a creative moment, under great stress and at the time of their birth they probably represented the most creative approach we could find to deal with some otherwise insurmountable problem. The difficulty is that along with inventing a way out, we have forgotten to forget the solution. We have gradually accustomed ourselves to put our consciousness into the childhood or adolescent clothes that we have dreamt up long ago. So much so that now, each time an issue comes up in our life where that subpersonality can function more or less

appropriately, presto and we have identified with it, and are acting as if we were it.

The key difficulty there is, of course, that the specific way of being represented by the subpersonality:

- = is based on an old situation and may not be really applicable today
- = is reactive to the environment within very narrow limits. It is predictable, pre-programmed, routine and can be expected to surface just as readily as Pavlov's dogs will salivate when the proper stimulus is presented
- = is almost certainly contradicted by some other subpersonality in our repertoire (and this is about as useful as a swimsuit and sweater in your wardrobe having an argument as to which is more 'right!').

The real difficulty with subpersonalities is that practically all contain and channel some valuable and life-supporting energy which we obviously would not want to reject. However they all have tunnel vision, applying yesterday's solutions to today's issues and meanwhile do an excellent job of seducing our consciousness into believing that they are in fact the full expression of our real potential at the time.

Much of the basic work in Psychosynthesis is on the personality level and points towards an internal recognition of the individual's full potential.

The first step is to recognise that I am more than any of my identifications, no matter how glamorous and attractive or safe that identification may be. The second is to harmonise the various subpersonalities so that I no longer subconsciously slip into them when the occasion calls for it, but retain my awareness of my true options and increasingly *choose* my way in a new and less conditioned way. At that point I can begin to harmonise their actions and I am in fact assuming my rightful place as conductor of my own orchestra.

A shorthand description of the technique involved would be along these lines:

- 1 I own my parts as being actually part of me;
- 2 I recognise and assert that I am more than any of my parts;
- 3 I dis-identify and distance myself from the habit of seeing them as being fully 'me';
- 4 I move closer to the point of friendly witness and identify myself with my central self, the place of my clearest consciousness and will;
- 5 From there I choose and act.

The effect is that I gain the distance needed to really choose in my life and I begin to

do that much more autonomously and more congruently than I have ever done before. I am beginning to conduct my orchestra.

## **STAGES OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS**

Psychosynthesis works both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, the personality integrates around the personal self. This is where the conductor learns to know and to direct his orchestra; he begins to sense his power over his own destiny and acts on his perception.

This integration is at the level of a well-functioning personality in terms of the client's relations. This would be considered the end goal of traditional therapy: the individual is 'in touch'.

Psychosynthesis works vertically as an in-flow of creativity from the superconscious of the client which gives a sense of personal direction and purpose.

This is the beginning of transpersonal Psychosynthesis. If the client chooses to continue on this path, he begins to achieve increasing alignment with the transpersonal self and begins to transmit the energies of the Self and becomes conscious of transpersonal purposes in his own life, and begins to develop a global perspective, altruistic love, and an internal sense of social responsibility and caring. (However, he or she most definitely does not turn into a do-gooder!)

## **METHODS USED IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS**

Psychosynthesis is often, and inappropriately, identified with only the use of guided imagery. The actual 'tool-kit' of the psychosynthesis guide contains many more methods than it would be feasible to list here.

Since each client is perceived as a unique individual, the tools used with him will vary depending on what is best suited to his existential situation, his psychological type, and his own goals, desires and path of development.

Some of the methods which are most commonly used are: guided imagery, gestalt, symbolic art work, movement, creativity, meditation, training of the will, journal-keeping, ideal models, and development exercises to enhance intuition.

The purpose of all of the tools is to foster an on-going process of growth which can gain momentum and bring about a more joyful and balanced expression of the client's self, in his life.

Through the will of the personal self the client gains freedom of choice along with the power of decision for his actions. Increasingly he frees himself from helpless reaction to unwanted impulses, as well as the need to live up to the expectations of others. As he moves closer to being truly 'centred' he is increasingly able to choose a path according to what is best within him. This active, healthy sense of values and a flexible will are two basic aims of Psychosynthesis.