Psychosynthesis: A Psychotherapist's Personal Overview

Frank Haronian, Ph.D.

Reprinted from *Pastoral Psychology*, Volume 25, Number 1, Fall 1976

ABSTRACT: Psychosynthesis, a therapeutic orientation based on personal experience, bridges psychological and theological conceptions of human nature. Psychotherapy is conducted in the here-and-now with emphasis on the relationship. Within that context, many techniques are employed. Imagination and intuition are cultivated. The client is helped to identify with his "personal self," the center of consciousness and will, and to exercise willing control over the process of therapy and over his life. Basic principles include the existence of a higher unconscious, which is the locus of transpersonal needs, the interrelatedness of one to all, the reality of consciousness and will. Positive strivings and continuing growth are emphasized.

I first became interested in psychosynthesis because I was looking for a point of view that could bridge psychology and religion, that could span the artificial but heuristic gap that had been made between these areas of knowledge. To me, the positing of separate and distinct fields of study is a temporary strategy designed to facilitate our understanding but fated eventually to give way to a resynthesis of knowledge so that the interrelationships between all disciplines will become clearly apparent. Such a fusion can best take place between two disciplines that deal with human nature when they share the same image of mankind. When I first encountered psychosynthesis, I thought that Roberto Assagioli's views offered the kind of broad perspective that could provide a continuum from the concepts and methods of psychotherapy to the concerns of theology.

Assagioli, the founder of psychosynthesis, was an Italian psychiatrist who was still busily writing and teaching up to the time of his death last year at the age of eighty-six. According to his theory of psychosynthesis, a human being has a self that is something other than the sum of his social roles. He has a center of consciousness that persists, even when external stimulation is nil, and a will that effects genuine choices. He has the capacity for religious experience. To Assagioli, spiritual proclivities exist in their own right, not merely as sublimatory defenses against erotic and aggressive drives.

I was delighted to be granted a genuine "higher" unconscious state because it fitted with and explained experiences of bliss and ecstasy that had no legitimate place in conventional psychology, either behavioristic or psychoanalytic. I had been surprised by the readiness with which my clerical colleagues accepted the constricted Freudian image of human nature, and I was confused when they showed little or no interest in psychosynthesis, especially because the latter sought only to supplement and enlarge the former, not to displace it. Having no theological sophistication, I began to surmise that the average minister tries to keep his religious views and his psychological conceptions in separate mental compartments.

Sixty-five years have passed since Assagioli first proffered his psychosynthetic view of human nature, its psychopathology, and its potential for growth. I wonder whether the clergy is now ready to give serious consideration to a psychology that unequivocally proclaims mankind's spiritual needs and propensities while accepting the carnal and egocentric aspects as well.

The Experiential Basis of Psychosynthesis

Roberto Assagioli stated repeatedly that his principles and methods were based on solid personal experience. He did not ask anyone to take anything on faith. At most, he asked one to act as if something were true in order to test its consequences before rejecting it. I have therefore chosen to begin this presentation with a few descriptions of my own personal experiences as a therapist, experiences that I believe will explain why psychosynthesis makes sense to me. I have then described my way of functioning as a therapist and explained why I consider it psychosynthetic. I have described Assagioli's notions about the structure of the psyche and how his conception of the self differs from Freud's concept of the ego. I have then discussed the will and its

relationship to values. Finally, in order to give a more comprehensive view, I have offered what I conceive to be the essential ideas and principles on which psychosynthesis rests.

Some Personal Experiences

We are all seeking values by which to guide our behavior, principles by which to make practical decisions in daily life. As children, we are given these values by our parents and teachers. As adults, it becomes our responsibility to reexamine these old standards and consciously to choose values that fit our expanded and personal views of the world. In so doing, we use our experiences, from which we try to draw generalizations about life and principles for action.

When I look back on my own search for values through my own experiences, one of the most consistent facts I have discovered is the satisfaction I experience when I see people growing. It may be a child or an adult; it may he a person who is already an effective adult; or it may be an immature, neurotic patient who for the first time manages to pull himself out of a rut. I find that to witness and take part in another person's experience of growth is always a satisfying experience, whether I am an active collaborator or a spectator. This is one of the few experiences about which I can feel free of ambivalence, even when the person who is growing is someone whom I might consider my enemy, or someone who strikes me in that fashion at the time. As I see him growing and think about what is happening, I can enjoy it, nevertheless.

This experiential fact about growth leads to one of the most important principles of psychosynthesis, one that is so close to us that we often fail to recognize it—namely, that evolution continues. Evolution is merely a fancy term for growth. We are a part of it, and each of us has his own role to play in it. One way in which we do this is in our loving relationships. To love is to think, feel, and act in a way that fosters the growth of the beloved. It might be said, therefore, that it is love that makes the world grow. According to psychosynthesis, each of us has the responsibility to assess what is happening around us, to ally ourselves with the forces that are working for growth—individual, social, or universal—and to endeavor to eliminate ignorance, selfishness, and destructiveness.

Another frequent experience of mine reveals an important tendency in my own nature and human nature in general. Whenever I manage to conquer some difficulty or to attain a new skill, I enjoy a temporary feeling of satisfaction and pleasure that lasts for hours, maybe days, but seldom longer than that. The gratification of accomplishment is momentary, transitory. Shortly after attaining a skill, I find myself using it automatically as another tool in my repertory of behavior; soon, it no longer means much to me. My attention is redirected toward new goals, new possibilities for growth, and, of course, new sources of uncertainty and anxiety. I lose my conscious sense of achievement because I become absorbed in the new problems that confront me.

From this observation, I came to two conclusions. First, we deserve to enjoy our past accomplishments and we should, as Pierre Janet indicated, take the time to contemplate our achievements with a sense of satisfaction, to go back in memory at times to what we have accomplished, and to remind ourselves that we do not always have to be at our growing edge. Second, after we achieve one thing, we seem to have a built-in need to find new and more difficult goals. I am reminded of a quotation from Whitman, which I would paraphrase as: The achievement of any particular goal always leads to the necessity of facing a more difficult task.

How do these observations relate to psychosynthesis? Because psychosynthesis conceives of man as having an inherent need to grow, it gives relatively more attention to the celebration of man's achievements and to the support of his positive striving than to the analysis of his neurosis. Without neglecting the latter, it attempts to enhance the patient's self-image by helping him to appreciate his own accomplishments, whatever they may be, at his level of readiness to accomplish. As the patient's self-esteem grows, he becomes more able and willing to

scrutinize his errors and to exchange his automatic patterns of neurotic behavior for more productive patterns that are consciously chosen.

Finally, I would like to add a third observation I have made in the course of my work as a therapist. I have repeatedly noticed that as a patient improves, as conflicts are resolved and energy freed, he uses his new-found energy in two general directions. First, he treats himself more kindly; he indulges himself in ways that often were previously forbidden by too harsh a superego. Second, and more interestingly, he seems to need to be helpful to others, not in a compulsive or neurotic way but in response to his new-found recognition of genuine needs on the part of other people.

These findings fit well with the psychosynthetic concept of the higher unconscious. According to this view, as we mature, we become more aware of and responsive to higher, transpersonal, altruistic needs. These needs are autonomous and are not merely sublimated versions of the biological needs of our lower unconscious.

The Therapist and Client as a Dyad

In the practice of psychotherapy, the concepts of psychosynthesis are manifested on many different levels and in a number of different ways. Psychosynthesis is more of an attitude, posture, or point of view than a method of a set of techniques. I have mentioned its emphasis on growth and achievement, on personal enjoyment and helpfulness to others. Now I would like to discuss collaboration in the therapeutic process.

When I work with a patient, I try as much as possible to meet the patient where he is, to affirm his being and his presence as he is and how he presents himself to me at that moment. I set aside my past learning, my professional training, all conception of diagnostic categories, and all specific technical devices that I might be using with this or any other patient. I try simply to experience with my feelings, my impulses, images, with whatever comes to me, this person as he is here and now. I try to be as real and as honest about my perception of him, my feelings about him, my impulses towards or away from him, as I possibly can. If I am pleased, I smile. If I am bored, I frown. If the patient talks too much or changes the subject or if he seems unproductive, instead of making some pronouncement *ex cathedra* that he is manifesting evasive or resistive behavior, I am more likely to say that I am confused by his talk, that I cannot follow it, and that I wish he would try to express himself more clearly and, if possible, stick to the point.

On the other hand, very early in my work with a new patient, I ask him to pay special attention to his feelings about me, about coming to see me, about any specific incidents that occur between us, and so forth. I stress the importance of his becoming as fully aware as possible of the quality of our interaction, of the process through which our relationship develops. I also tell him that he need not feel obliged to inform me of all the feelings, ideas, impulses, and images that arise in him unless he is ready and willing to do so.

I have mentioned an important concept, that of the will, which I discuss at greater length later; for the moment, however, I want to point out two things. First, what I am doing with my patients is not unusual. It is similar to the approach of Carl Rogers and those who have followed him. It does, however, illustrate the psychosynthetic approach to the therapeutic relationship. It may be apparent that my psychosynthetic orientation manifests itself first of all in my attempts to create as real and open and honest a therapist-patient relationship as possible. My aim is to effect a psychosynthesis on the level of the dyad. I try constantly to absorb myself so completely in the face-to-face interaction between me and that other person so as to foster complete engagement on both our parts. In so doing, I provide a model for the patient of how I would like to see him act, not only with me but with others as well. This means, of course, that if the patient behaves in an ugly way, I am likely to express my resentment. If the patient withdraws from me, I will probably express my awareness and my disappointment, and so forth.

The second point about this procedure is that as therapists grow in experience, regardless of their original training, most of them tend to do just these things. Through experience, they tend to adopt this kind of approach to their work. Psychosynthesis is, then, the direction in which we as therapists move when we grow, evolve, improve. It is the outcome of our improved sensitivity combined with our greater freedom to risk being ourselves as people, as human beings, and not to pose as professionals with our patients.

I would like to return to my statement that I tell my patients they need not feel obliged to tell me everything they think or feel. As soon as possible, I want my patients to have a sense of being in control of their part in the interactive process. They have not come to confess abjectly or to debase themselves, although many of them feel that way. They want and they need to maintain their dignity in the process, but they are generally afraid of being made to feel foolish or of acting in a manner they have been made to consider childish. I want to help them avoid losing face by what they do or say. Generally they are not ready to accept my acceptance of their behavior, however. Consequently, I try to give them a sense of control over the direction and the speed of the process. I indicate that I recognize that each of them has a will and that I am willing to respect it. It is amazing how many people are not willing to accept the idea that they have a say in what we do: "You are the doctor. Anything you say, Doc."

The will is one of the central concepts in psychosynthesis. The function of the will is especially suppressed and distorted in patients. When they lose adequate communication with the significant people in their lives, they also lose their sense of control over their selves and circumstances. We see this in dramatic and delusional form in the schizophrenic's sense of being controlled by outer forces. It is understandable that the patient will tend to perceive the therapeutic situation as merely another experience over which his control is distinctly limited. Therapy can be conceived of as the process of giving back to the patient his will and his sense of control over his own destiny, or at least, control over how he is going to respond to his fate.

For this reason, very early in therapy I encourage the patient to express his will in any and all matters that develop during our sessions. It may even be so minor a question as the distance between our chairs, the hours of our appointments, whether the windows are open or shut. In any and all of these matters the patient has a say, but, of course, I have one also. Each of us has the responsibility to be honest with the other, to express his point of view, to air his feelings, and to decide whether we can work together effectively. If we cannot, it is also the responsibility of each to face this fact realistically. It then behooves us to recognize that our present limitations as human beings prevent us from creating a therapeutically useful relationship and to give the effort up, at least for the time being.

This initial aspect of psychosynthesis as it is manifested in psychotherapy may be thought of as an attempt to effect a working synthesis of two individuals who share a common goal—namely, to facilitate and accelerate the growth of one of these two people. However, it is not to be forgotten that to the extent that the therapist is successful he, too, grows. I am no longer surprised when I find myself saying spontaneously to my patient, "You're good to me. You're good for me."

Psychosynthetic Therapy

I have couched the goals of therapy in constructive terms: "to facilitate and accelerate growth." In so doing, I have manifested a very important belief of psychosynthesis: namely, that when we as human beings are functioning properly, we are constantly striving to grow and evolve, to expand awareness, to assimilate experiences, to enlarge our effectiveness, to be happy, and to radiate our happiness in a loving way to others. It follows that the process we usually call "treatment" can be seen as an unblocking of an essentially normal growth process. It is undertaken in order to facilitate the occurrence of events that are simply blocked or distorted.

Normal growth takes place in two reciprocal directions, inward and outward. We are familiar with these directions, but in a different context: i.e., in the writings of Carl Jung. The individuated, effective, mature person has developed in both directions and can willingly orient himself either externally or internally. The West has given greater emphasis to the externally oriented skills and functions, while the tradition of the East has been in the opposite direction. The trend toward synthesis of these two approaches is manifest today in, for example, the fascination of Western youth with a myriad of forms of Eastern religious practices, or the engrossment of Eastern nations in the task of catching up technologically with the West. On the level of personality and psychotherapy, psychosynthesis represents an effort to develop and to integrate both the inner and the outer functions. For Westerners, this usually means making special efforts to develop those inner functions that have been left undeveloped, most notably the imagination and the intuition.

As in Jungian psychotherapy, we in psychosynthesis believe that the specific course of action most suitable for any given individual can best be determined by consulting that individual's psyche. For this purpose, the analysis of dreams or the evocation of guided daydreams seems especially valuable. When the patient is ready for it, the practice of relaxation and inner imagery to develop the imaginative function (which I think is grossly underrated in modem Western psychology and psychotherapy) is encouraged because it is a source of information about one's potentialities that comes directly from one's inner psychic processes.

In psychosynthesis, there are also a number of particular procedures for developing the intuitive functions. These generally are used in the latter part of therapy. Intuition is another aspect of the psyche that we in the West tend to neglect. Partly because psychosynthesis refocuses attention on these two functions, imagination and intuition, it tends to reintegrate the outer and the inner, the Eastern and the Western, within the context of psychotherapy. I do not think this is done so consistently by other points of view.

It is important that each person have a strong will, but strength of will is not in itself sufficient. It is also important that a will be identified with the highest and most valuable of the individual's functions. The will can, unfortunately, become the slave of one's body, of one's intellect, or of one's emotions. While one should be free fully to *experience* one's emotions, their *expression* must be tempered by rational considerations. Excesses of expression of sexual and aggressive drives and the accompanying emotions are encouraged only within the context of a cathartic psychotherapeutic experience; they are not encouraged as habitual ways of conducting oneself in daily social situations.

In that connection, I am reminded of a letter I received from a humanistically oriented psychologist who expressed her disillusionment with much of what goes on in the human potential movement today. She said she feels that much of it should be put under the rubric of the "*animal* potential movement." I think her point of view concurs with psychosynthesis.

The Psyche

As I understand Roberto Assagioli, he was not very interested in systematizing his ideas, in organizing them into some clear-cut, symmetrical pattern. He adopted some of Jung's basic views of personality, but he modified Jung's concepts in significant ways on the basis of his own observations. There is no definitive psychosynthetic theory of personality, and Assagioli hoped that there never would be one. We expect to see the system kept open to the possibilities of growth and change because we believe that it is not possible to perceive and organize all the multifarious facts of psychological existence. Each effort, we hope, will be more and more inclusive, more explanatory, more esthetically elegant. Each formulation, we hope, will lead to a better understanding not only of how people function but also of how more effectively to help them grow to greater social usefulness and personal satisfaction.

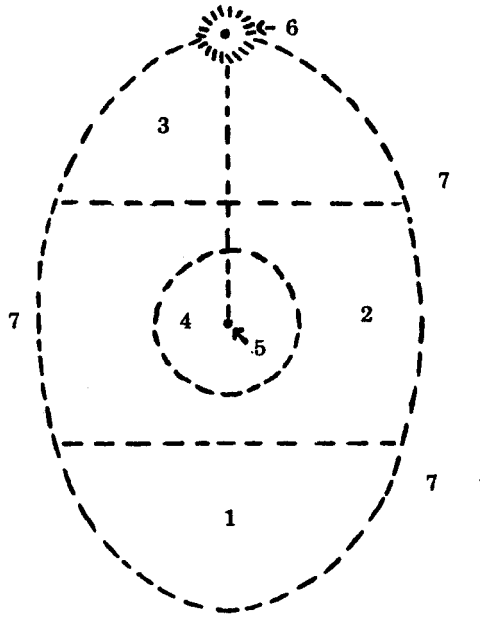
The self is one of the central concepts in psychosynthesis. Before describing the self, however, I would like to describe Assagioli's model of the structure of the psyche, so that the self can be placed in its proper context.

The collective unconscious, marked 7 on Figure 1, has permeable boundaries with the personal unconscious, marked 1, 2, and 3. The personal unconscious is subdivided into (1) lower, (2) middle, and (3) higher areas, none of which is rigidly demarcated from the others nor from the collective unconscious.

The field of consciousness, marked 4, represents the limited material that exists in consciousness at any particular moment. This is centered around the personal self, 5, the center of consciousness and will. The personal self is the focal point of consciousness. It is not the contents of consciousness, nor is it the various functions and roles of the personality. It *has* these contents, it *owns* them, but it is not identical with them. In psychosynthesis, consciousness is defined as separate from its contents, as existing independently of afferent stimulation.

Finally, the transpersonal Self is represented by the star, marked 6 at the top of the diagram. This higher, transpersonal Self is, paradoxically, both individual and universal, half in the individual and half outside of him. Because it does not generally function on the personality level, I need not discuss it here except to say that the personal self, the center of consciousness and will on the personality level, 5 in the diagram, is thought to be a diminished reflection of the transpersonal Self.

The Freudian concept of the ego is a broader and much more inclusive one than that of the self. It includes the mechanisms of defense, the control of the motor apparatus, the operation of the several sensory modalities. In Freudian thinking, the ego is the mediator between the demands of the id, the superego, and the outer world. Consciousness is also a function of the ego.



1. The lower unconscious 2. The middle unconscious 3. The higher unconscious or superconscious 4. The field of consciousness 5. The conscious self or "1" 6. The higher Self 7. The collective unconscious

FIGURE 1: Assagioli's model of the structure of the psyche.

In psychosynthesis, we separate the functions of consciousness and control from the ego and assign them to the personal self. This is merely an extension of the psychoanalytic observation that the ego is able to split itself so as to sustain two or more different attitudes simultaneously. For example, the ego can utilize its defenses while carrying on an activity and observing that activity. We find it useful to separate the defensive functions of the ego from the directive and observing functions and to assign these latter two to what we call the personal self.

The censoring functions of the ego have generally been grouped under the name "superego." We see this as an agglomeration of rules and regulations more or less arbitrarily imposed by authority figures on the growing child. As the individual grows in knowledge and expands in consciousness, we expect that he will naturally reconsider these arbitrarily imposed rules of the superego and gradually replace them with the fruits of his own judgment. It is in this way that the superego is dismantled and replaced by an adult conscience. The conscience is not based on the arbitrary edicts of parents and other authority figures but on the enlightened consciousness of the individual. However, it includes those parts of the superego that are consistent with one's mature judgment.

One concomitant of this process of maturation is that the defensive functions of the ego tend to decrease. Another is that, as consciousness expands and energy is freed from neurotic complexes, the directive role of the self becomes enlarged.

In French, as you may know, there is only one word for both consciousness and conscience. I have long suspected that this semantic fact represents an important psychological fact-namely, that a mature conscience is rooted in and may even be identical with a broad and expanded consciousness.

The Will

The "will" is the name we give to the controlling and directing functions of the personal self.' It is so essential a part of ourselves that we tend to ignore it, to neglect it, even to deny its existence. But its presence and functioning are evident whenever we are faced with alternatives, decisions, or choices between different courses of action, whenever we must consciously and intentionally adopt a course of action and carry it out. Although we define the will as a noun, I do not think of it as a thing or an entity but rather as a process or function—namely, the process of deciding, of choosing and renouncing among alternatives. Because of this, the process of willing depends on the holding of values. Modern psychology, in its attempt to be "scientific," has given up values. Because willing depends on values, and values have been thrown out of psychology, psychology has for some time ignored the will. Having purified itself or, should we say, sterilized itself by the vigorous attempt to throw out all values, psychology thereby gave up any interest in recognizing or understanding the will.

The essential problem in establishing willing control over one's behavior lies in the process of putting that behavior within the context of superordinate values, values whose reality and importance are more potent than whatever value inheres in the undesirable behavior. Assagioli's method for employing the will can be seen as a step-by-step procedure for doing just that. When the willed behavioral act, even if unpleasant, is seen as necessary in order to attain a higher value, it can be executed willingly. I willingly undergo painful operations at the hands of my dentist because I value my teeth. In a critical battle, a soldier may willingly sacrifice his life in order to save the lives of his buddies.

Wolpe's concept of reciprocal inhibition may also fit into this model. One can inhibit an undesired behavior by willingly substituting a more acceptable, more highly valued on that, by its nature, cannot be performed simultaneously with the undesirable one. This process of reciprocal inhibition is essentially negative in character because it involves blocking one act by interposing another. There is another process of willing, more positive in nature, which might be called "facilitation from above."

Forty years ago the Russian psychologist Luria was working with victims of Parkinson's disease, paralysis agitans. Luria asked his patients to squeeze a rubber ball an indefinite number of times. Because of their neurological disability, the task was an extremely difficult one for them. Then Luria changed the task slightly, but in a manner that was very significant because it put the task under the direction of higher symbolic mental processes. He said, "Squeeze the ball five times and count as you do it." When the patient was instructed to count a specified number of times while squeezing, the formerly difficult task was greatly facilitated. Thus, when the patient willingly employed his higher, intact symbolic functions, he was able to exert greater control over lower, defective, psychomotor functions. This appears to be an illustration of how the will, acting through higher symbolic processes, can indirectly facilitate behavior that is otherwise very difficult to execute.

The act of willing includes the focusing of consciousness in any one of several directions. It is also expressed by the intentional employment of any one of several functions of personality. The will needs little energy of its own. When it functions properly, it controls the energy of the organism. But it is not that energy itself. The will can be likened to an agent that can either provide or deprive the various functions of the personality of energy, as it chooses.

The act of willing may be either directive or receptive in character A directive act of will seeks to create certain effects and to put energy to work towards a given objective. However, when the will is in a receptive mode, it seeks to permit or to allow certain events to occur, such as falling asleep. The directive mode of the will controls the senses and the body's response to them, forms figure-ground relationships, defines form, enumerates objects, manipulates concepts in abstract thought, and seeks to influence events toward preconceived directions or outcomes. On the other hand, the receptive mode of the will attends to inner sensations, to the physical expressions of emotions, and to the emotions themselves. The receptive mode of the will observes inner imagery in any of the sensory modalities without attempting to control or direct it. It can turn away from external stimulation. It can refuse to act. We use the receptive mode of the will to relax, to calm our emotions, to stop our thinking—simply, to clear our consciousness and to invite what may present itself from the unconscious.

Three Dimensions of Interest

The will can direct consciousness along any of three dimensions. First and most familiar is the polarity of the outside world versus inner experience. Secondly, there is the dimension that ranges from the sublime or higher values to lower or material values. Finally, there is the time dimension of past, present, and future.

The first of these three dimensions is the well-known extroversion-introversion polarity. The second was offered by Assagioli under the label of supraversion versus infraversion. Supraversion is the direction of interest towards the higher unconscious, towards more transpersonal, altruistic interests, towards positive values, towards activities of an esthetic or intellectual sort. Infraversion may manifest itself as a fascination with the lower unconscious, with the material, the carnal, the sensual. Concerning the third dimension, the dimension of time, to be absorbed in memory is to focus one's attention on the past, while an interest in the future is often manifested by the production of anticipatory fantasies. This polarity might aptly be called retrospection versus prospection.

Assagioli has pointed out that it is erroneous to think of a person as being consistently extroverted or introverted. During the course of one's life, there are normal developmental shifts from one direction of interest to another. Moreover, at any given period, one may manifest some functions in an extroversive fashion and others in an introversion mode. One of the goals of maturation is to develop both directions of interest, to have both at the command of one's will, and to be able to use each when it is appropriate.

Although Assagioli's views are not on record with regard to the other two dimensions of interest, supraversion versus infraversion and retrospection versus prospection, I believe that he would express similar opinions regarding them. There should be a balance in the directions of interest and a capacity to shift willingly from one pole to the other in response to the demands of one's changing life situation. When those rare instances occur in which all three directions of interest are balanced, I believe that we are experiencing a fully interactive relationship. To put it briefly, a full relationship between two people can be conceived of as a momentary meeting at the interface of I and Thou in the here and now. This is a shorthand expression for the simultaneous resolution, in two people who are together, of the tensions that are inherent in all three dimensions of interest. I will try to explain that more carefully.

To meet at the interface of I and Thou means that each member of the pair is willingly and consciously as close to the other as possible, so close that, for each person, the subject-object dichotomy is blurred and more or less dissolved. Ego needs are not operative. Self meets self; and these disinterested aspects of each individual merge for a moment in a sense of union and brotherhood. This synthesis is the resolution of the Jungian polarity of introversion versus extroversion. In the moment of relationship, there is a sense of community of interest or, at least, of absence of conflict of interest. Hence we feel that the inner-versus-outer, self-versus-other distinction is meaningless for us at this moment in this relationship.

I specified that the relationship takes place in the here and now. By "here" I mean to indicate the resolution of higher and lower interests, the breakdown of the polarity of supraversion versus infraversion. In a full relationship, both the carnal and the spiritual are present. I used to be surprised at the mild feelings of sexual arousal that I felt at times of close spiritual communion with others, whether male or female. I how believe that this physical response is a normal part of my total responsiveness to another person's being, a response that is both spiritual and carnal, both idealistic and sensual. The most obvious example of this is the loving relationship that exists between a man and a woman who are truly respectful of each other. When both the carnal and the spiritual find expression and fulfillment in the relationship, there is a resolution of the polarity of supraversion versus infraversion.

Finally, there is the resolution of the temporal dimension of past versus future. This occurs by the focusing of attention on the "now." When we are fully involved in a relationship, there is for us at that moment neither past nor future, only that moment. Time stands still; more than that, all memories are put aside and all anticipations are suspended. In this way, the freshness and uniqueness of the moment of relationship is fully experienced. At such moments, one is free of all thoughts of future personal advantage and of past resentment and hurts. The moment exists for itself and is its own justification. One could conceive of the long-range goal of psychosynthesis as the establishment in each of us a full, permanent sense of such a relationship with all other beings.

The Essentials of Psychosynthesis

I have described some of my personal experiences and the values to which they have led me. I have described my view of therapy and how I do it, the concept of the self and its difference from the Freudian concept of the ego, the concept of the will and its relation to values. Then, after describing the various directions of interest in psychosynthetic personality theory, I defined the relationship in terms of these three dimensions. I would like, finally, to present as succinct a statement of the essentials of psychosynthesis as I have been able to distill for myself. It comes to eight points:

First, there are autonomous, so-called higher or transpersonal drives, and these are not merely aim-inhibited or sublimated versions of lower drives. When sublimation deprives the lower drives of their energy, this energy can be diverted to the expression of higher drives. These higher drives exist in their own right, however.

Second, there is a higher unconscious that counterbalances the so-called lower unconscious and is equally important. This is a source of inspiration, intuition, and a kind of pre-rational knowledge of the ineffable, if we know how to tune into it.

Third, the personal unconscious is contiguous with the collective unconscious as described by Jung. There are no hard and fast boundaries.

Fourth, consciousness is a reality that exists in its own right. It is not merely the product of afferent stimulation. The seat of consciousness is the personal self, which is to be distinguished from the ego.

Fifth, cultivation of the personal self strengthens both the willing and the integrating functions of the psyche. This is done by a process of dis-identifying from one's body, one's emotions, one's intellect, one's personality.

Sixth, the personal self is a projection onto the personality level, onto the level of everyday consciousness, of the transpersonal Self, which is the individual's spiritual link to all other beings and to the cosmos. This higher Self is an inner source of wisdom, altruism, growth, and creativity, which, when we are able to reach it, is a better source of guidance and direction for us than either the advice of others or the decisions at which we arrive in a more intellectual way. Regardless of how disturbed the person may appear to be on the surface, this inner center of sanity, wisdom, and value persists and can usually be evoked.

I may quite reasonably be challenged with my own earlier statement that psychosynthesis is based solidly on experience. If that is so, how have I dared to bring in so fuzzy and mystical a concept as the transpersonal Self? I think this deserves an explanation. Most of us have, at one time or another in our lives, experienced moments of truly transcendent bliss, joy, serenity, security, or happiness; moments that were not explainable logically on the basis of our life situation or our physical condition. These experiences may have been of cosmic insight, complete spiritual union, or perfect security. The religious mystics call them illumination. Bucke used the term "cosmic consciousness" for them, and more recently Maslow has popularized the concept of the "peak experience." Most people hesitate to talk about these experiences, partly because they are so hard to describe and partly because they definitely contradict the common wisdom about reality. We secretly remember these moments, however, and cherish them as clues to the existence of a deeper meaning to our lives that definitely transcends our day-to-day understanding. Any model of human nature that attempts to be complete must include these experiences and offer an explanation for them.

To put these experiences in terms of psychosynthesis, one would say that, for a brief period of time, the close but normally hidden link between the personal self, the seat of consciousness, and the transpersonal Self, one's link with reality beyond the self, was momentarily revealed. Psychosynthesis attempts to incorporate this rather common but difficult-to-express experience of the transcendent in its model of humanity. It does so by postulating the existence of the transpersonal Self.

Seventh, psychosynthesis postulates that our several destinies are all intertwined, or as John Donne put it, "no man is an island entire unto himself." Therefore, for our own welfare, it behooves us to learn to live congenially and cooperatively with all others.

Eighth, and finally, the universe continues to evolve, and man with it. There is an intrinsic unity that undergirds and holds together the apparent diversity that we see about us. Each man is free to choose either to work with and for this dynamic synthesizing process that is the evolutionary trend of the universe or to resist it. Each man finds the meaning to his particular existence in the way that he responds to this synthesizing, evolutionary direction. Psychosynthesis is one mode of manifesting one's awareness of this cosmic purpose—in this case, by

working to integrate body, mind, and soul into an organically coherent and functionally harmonious human being.

This is the sum, as I see it, of psychosynthetic doctrine. Psychosynthesis gives consideration to all serious efforts to understand man and to treat his psychic disturbances and finds that all are useful at some time and for some kinds of patients." Psychosynthesis does not conceive of its message as replacing existing methods but rather as supplementing and extending them beyond the purpose and treatment of psychic disturbance and into the area of personal growth and unending development.

In conclusion, psychosynthesis emphasizes the value of a will that is versatile in capacity and flexible in response to the demands of the changing scene. The mature person is seen as attentive to both external reality and inner experience. He remembers and uses the past just as he plans for the future. He gives due attention to both his physical nature and his spiritual strivings. In effect, he has learned willingly to shift the focus of his consciousness and the direction of his efforts readily and rhythmically from one legitimate direction to another. Beyond that, he is able to establish a position of poise in the here and now with another human being. This ability to join with another at the interface of *1 and Thou* in the *here* that reconciles higher and lower values, in the *now* that reconciles memories of the past and anticipations of the future, is the hallmark of a genuine synthesis of psyches and an indication that a true if momentary balance has been reached among the directions of interest in both parties. At this moment, each is completely open to the other, completely absorbed in the other. An experience of synthesis occurs and is shared. At this moment, each knows something of what the full potential of a relationship can be. Each has a touchstone, a standard, with which to gauge the quality of all future personal encounters. Henceforth, each is prepared to be a more genuine person in his future relationships.

References

1. Roberto Assagioli, *The Act of Will* (New York: Viking Press, 1973).
2. Joseph WoIp, *Psychotherapy by Reciprocal inhibition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1958).
3. A. R. Luria, *The Nature of Human Conflicts* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967).
4. Frank Haronian, "A Psychosynthetic Model of Personality and Its Implications for Psychotherapy," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 15 (Fall 1975).
5. For further information on psychosynthesis, see Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965).