



# AAP News

The Newsletter of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

May

2007

## Think about “Bridging Spirit and Action” JULY 2007 AAP CONFERENCE

By David Shirley

Oprah Winfrey’s biggest fight in 30 years was with her best friend Gayle. Sure, Oprah bridges spirit and action—but what does a dip into the lower unconscious have to do with the 2007 AAP Conference? And more important to someone in the helping professions, what were Oprah and Gayle fighting about?

Answer: the meaning of Paul Simon’s song “Graceland.” Oprah thought it was about Elvis Presley’s Memphis, Tenn., mansion, “Graceland.” Gayle thought it was about Africa as “Graceland.”

Who is right? If you are Oprah, you call Paul Simon—and learn that the song has multiple meanings—and that both Gayle and Oprah understood one aspect of the songwriter’s intent.

What is the meaning of “Bridging Spirit and Action?” This title also has multiple meanings, which will be expressed by those presenting at this year’s conference. What will it mean to you? And what will it mean to this year’s conference presenters?

Here is a sample:

### PRECONFERENCE TRAINER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Thursday, July 12 to Friday, July 13 (See page 7)

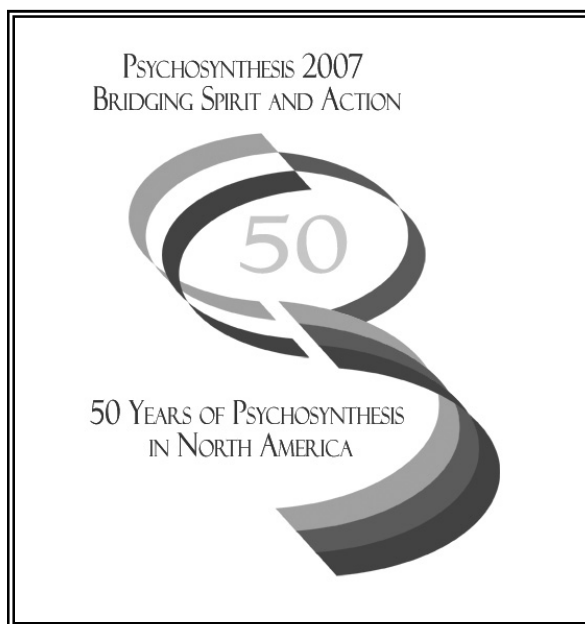
The 2007 Trainer Development Program is designed to improve practitioners’ ability to connect with the spirit of their clients. Five experienced practitioners—Betty Bosdell, Brad Roth, Eva Fugit, Mark Horowitz, and Phillip Brooks—will explore five settings: clinical therapy, therapeutic body movement, education, spiritual therapy, and organization and systems management. And Dennis Wynne will explore further applications.

### AAP CONFERENCE

Friday, July 13 to Sunday, July 15

We kick off the main portion of the conference Friday night, not with Oprah, but with a keynote by one of her guests—Debbie Ford. Debbie connects with spirit, assists others in connecting with it, and has grounded that connection by writing books, developing a coaching program, creating a web presence, and hosting radio and television shows.

On Saturday, and indeed throughout the conference, we will have the opportunity to learn more about the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation—Assagioli’s original way of connecting his Italian spirit with North Americans in the late 1950s. Tom Yeomans will offer a look back and a look forward to the future of Psychosynthesis in his “**Unfinished Cathedral**” presentation. Molly Young Brown will offer her perspective on grounding spirit in a time of global climate change. There are many other exciting options for you: to connect with your muse, to reinterpret the “egg diagram” (Assagioli’s map of human consciousness), or to attend a panel



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# AAP News

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## Yes, Send Ideas, Art, Photos, and Letters

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

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

## Help Your Editors Edit

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

## Submission Deadlines

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

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## The Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

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

# Goings On

## The Synthesis Center

The 7th Annual Presenters' Conference is scheduled for **Sunday June 10th from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** at The Synthesis Center in Amherst, Mass. The conference, an important fundraising event for The Synthesis Center, will begin with registration and coffee/tea at 9:00 a.m. followed by a short welcome at 9:40 a.m. Workshops will begin at 10:00 a.m. and run concurrently throughout the day. Lunch, which includes a special experiential event, will be provided at 1:00 p.m.

We look forward to seeing you there. Please contact The Synthesis Center to register in advance:

The Synthesis Center  
274 North Pleasant St.  
Amherst, MA 01002  
413-256-0772.

## Free Materials

The Synthesis Center now has a large amount of psychosynthesis material for **free download**, including Martha Crampton's articles on imagery and all of the Psychosynthesis Palo Alto (John Firman) monographs. In addition, we now have most of the better-known PRF monographs, many important articles from Synthesis Journal and some controversial articles written by John Firman on the "egg diagram" and religious fanaticism. Quite a collection, and we plan to add to it over time.

Synthesis Center website:  
[www.synthesiscenter.org](http://www.synthesiscenter.org)

## Connecticut Center for Psychosynthesis

Our Psychosynthesis Community usually has an **Open Sunday the third week of the month.** This includes an Open Class; medi-

tation and sharing circle; sharing lunch around the table, and networking.

Rosalind Till is planning a **trip to Assagioli's town and offices** the last week of July. E-mail her at [ritill@comcast.net](mailto:ritill@comcast.net)

We are currently offering "**Creative Retirement: a Psychosynthetic Class**" as well as **Psychosynthesis training** with CEUs.

Our bulletin "**PS Lifeline**," offers information, resources, and a referral roster with up-to-the-minute details of moves, offices, and practices of subscribers. (\$25/year or \$35/two years.)

We have been raising funds for wounded vets with **Open Houses** (with music, free workshops, videos, etc.) and now are collecting silly string (detects IEDs in Iraq for soldiers) a program started in our town by a triple amputee.

For more info contact  
Cynthia Russell, PhD:

[psynn timer@aol.com](mailto:psynn timer@aol.com)

Tel. 203-377-2421

## Spiritual/Global Psychology Summer Institute

**In Service  
to the World:  
Soul in Social Action**

June 20-24  
Easton Mountain Retreat  
Greenwich, New York

Tom Yeomans and colleagues are sponsoring this year's Summer Institute in June. This series has grown out of the previous ones in Concord, Mass., and in Norway.

The Spiritual/Global Psychology Summer Institutes explore the

*Continued on page 3*

# Goings On

Cont'd from page 2

integration of personal, community and social transformation in order to encourage a deeper commitment to spiritual activism. This year we will focus on deepening our understanding and experience of the practices that help us find our authentic contribution to the transformation of our communities and society.

Presenters will include **Bernie Glassman** of Zen Peacemakers; **Raúl Quiñones-Rosado** of Organizers for Consciousness-in-Action; **Alexander (Sasha) Badkhen** and **Mark Pevzner** of Harmony Institute, St. Petersburg, Russia.

For detailed program and registration information:

1-800-553-8235,

Summerinstitute

@concordinstitute.org

## ASSAGIOLI'S ONE-LINERS

*Quotes from Roberto Assagioli  
Collected by Piero Ferrucci  
Submitted by Joann Anderson*

Problems are never solved,  
they are forgotten

*Harmlessness*

Let's leave him to his sad destiny

*Offer a firm, kind refusal*

*"The End"*

*La vita è magica*

*You can always find the time*

*Calm, calm; we are in eternity*

*I am doing the same work as you*

*It's never either-or, but both-and*

*The universe is evolving  
and imperfect*

*Are you willing to make a bet?*

*Namaskar*

From the Archives:

## ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI LAUNCHES FIRST DISCUSSIONS

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS RESEARCH FOUNDATION INC.

MAY 23-25, 1958

Psychosynthesis takes for granted the essential points recently stressed by Abraham Maslow of Brandeis University; namely, holism, organismic conception, whole-functioning, and self-realization. Another essential point is the application of the principle of synthesis in every connection. First, the synthesis of thought and conceptions. We are not and I hope we will never become a "school," one school of thought. If we have one distinguishing feature it is bringing together, synthesizing, the best of all schools and all conceptions.

Leibnitz once said "All schools of philosophy are right in what they affirm and wrong in what they exclude." Leading from this thought, in a special way we may attempt (I think the time is right for it) a synthesis of American, European and Eastern psychologies. From the synthesis of conceptions follows the synthesis of all good psychotherapeutic and educational techniques.

Another basic principle which requires immediate application is the emphasis, the application, and the research on certain neglected and unexplored areas of psychology. The field of psychology is enormous; it includes practically the whole human life, so we have to have our priorities. It is obvious that we attend to what has been neglected and unexplored. This includes first the so-called higher aspects and functions. "Higher" and "lower" are unfortunate but unavoidable terms, but we can use them if we give them no moral connotations. The use of the term "lower" is fully justified and not to be condemned. Neither is it to be wholly accepted, for all these "lower" drives have their legitimate place. However, we can and should say "lower" in comparison with other aspects, finer, more mature, and so on.

So, we can and must speak of the higher and lower, for this is connected with some of the most fruitful techniques—for example the technique of ascent which Robert Desoille so ably uses in his "reve eveille." This higher part of the human being has been curiously—we can speak frankly—deplorably neglected by scientific psychologists. There is a curious notion that it is not scientific, so that one of our talking points, I might say "fighting points," will be that the higher manifestations of the human being are as scientific as the others. By this I mean that they are facts, facts in the most empirical and pragmatic sense.

*Submitted by John Parks, MD*

*These are the opening words spoken by Roberto Assagioli, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, at the beginning of a three-day conference May 23, 1958. The major speaker throughout the conference was Dr. Assagioli. Among those attending were Frank Hilton, administrator of the PRF during its entire existence (1957-1976), and Robert Gerard PhD, who assisted Dr. Assagioli in bringing to publication his book Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques (1965).*

*John Parks served on the board of directors of the PRF, and Sharon Mandt was recently appointed chairperson of the AAP Archives Committee. They'll present a workshop on the history of the PRF (1957-1976) at the upcoming AAP Conference at JFK University, focusing on what Assagioli and the PRF achieved in its 19-year history—and the implications for psychosynthesis today.*

# Letters

To the Editor:

I share Dennis Wynne's concern for the health of Psychosynthesis and his objective to have Psychosynthesis accepted as a legitimate psychological area of study. It was disappointing to see him use his visit with Piero Ferrucci to again bring up the old bugaboo that the San Francisco Institute was somehow the shadow of Psychosynthesis and has irreparably damaged it as a creditable psychology. He could have used his time and his article in a better way: I want to know what moved Piero to write his new book on kindness. I want to know the state of Psychosynthesis in Italy. I want to know how he feels about losing his hair.

I am angry about this. Dennis' article implies that the SF group is responsible for the failure of Psychosynthesis in North America. This happened 30 years ago and it's time to move on. The former members of the Synthesis Graduate School, the Synthesis Journal, and the Institute have continued to publish, teach and train people in Psychosynthesis, straighten out our past distortions, and advance our discipline. Maybe the fact that "mainstream" psychology has refused to take Psychosynthesis seriously might have something to do with "mainstream" psychology, as well as the fact that so few people in Psychosynthesis (myself included) have published serious, scholarly, work.

Nevertheless, Psychosynthesis continues to face real challenges: I believe one of them arises from Roberto's study of Theosophy and the esoteric teachings and from the "wall of silence" that was erected between Psychosynthesis and these teachings. When you split off something and erect a wall to keep it hidden, it leaks out, often in distorted ways. I think some of the early distortions in Psychosynthesis, as well as current ones, flow directly from these teachings—or from a misunderstanding of these teachings. I think that Psychosynthesis' over-emphasis on the superconscious, the distortions of the "higher" Self, the confusion of dissociation with disidentification, the creation of dualities between I and Self, the lack of incorporation of the body, and several other problems flow from outdated esoteric teachings that were kept hidden and therefore not researched, challenged, and discarded as our understanding of psychology, spirituality, and consciousness grew and evolved. The question is, what are we going to do about it NOW? I would like to see a serious discussion of these issues as part of the ongoing evolution of

Psychosynthesis. I agree with Piero: keep pouring in clean water, flush out the old concepts and distortions and train solid psychologists who will further the rigorous study and practice of Psychosynthesis and highlight its connections to other fields of modern psychology.

Mark Horowitz  
Weston, Mass.

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To the Editor:

While reading Dennis Wynne's article in the February 2007 *AAP News* I had several reactions. First, it is not surprising that Psychosynthesis was not accepted by the doctoral programs of several of his alumni. Not even transpersonal psychology has been included at this level in traditional universities. This lack of recognition is not unique to Psychosynthesis. Acceptance of both transpersonal psychology and Psychosynthesis in mainstream universities will come only as we think, innovate and produce writings that bridge to general psychology. I see this happening in the work of our doctoral students at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. Are members of the Psychosynthesis community willing to do this work and contribute, small step by small step, to the recognition and acceptance Dennis Wynne's alumni were seeking?

A second response to Dennis Wynne's article was concerning the implication that the "shadow" of Psychosynthesis in North America is related to the activities of the San Francisco Institute of the 1970s. I must say that I am getting weary of the responsibility for the lack of acceptance of Psychosynthesis being placed on the San Francisco Institute. Personally, I believe the "shadow" of Psychosynthesis is esotericism and that as long as Psychosynthesis is wedded to esotericism it may be perceived as a religion rather than a psychology. What was sadly lost in the demise of the San Francisco Institute was a group of thinkers who were focused on psychology.

Ann Gila  
Palo Alto, Calif.

# Co-chair Report

By Betty Bosdell and David Shirley

Welcome to Spring! We trust you have received the brochure for the Annual AAP Conference. Outstanding and exciting programs as well as a beautiful venue offer an excellent opportunity for us to meet and exchange ideas on many topics. We hope to see you at the conference!

As this is the last newsletter column for your current co-chairs, we would like to acknowledge the foresight and help of the previous co-chairs, Mary Eileen Kiniry and Scott Thompson (and those who worked with them). We would also like to congratulate the incoming chair, Hedi Weiler, who will assume leadership of your organization during the 2007 conference.

What has been accomplished during our terms would not have been possible without the support and hard work of an excellent Steering Committee. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to

- David Parks-Ramage, our Administrative Assistant, who has worked to improve communication and member services.
- The newsletter staff for their dedicated service in improving the look and production processes of the *AAP News*.
- The editors of the 2006 *Conversations on "Psychosynthesis and the Body."*
- The Conference Committees—both the one that planned last year's conference in Kentucky and the current group that has planned an outstanding conference for July 2007 in the San Francisco Bay Area.
- The Membership Committee, for the emphasis they placed on identifying and serving members and improving member services.
- Our webmaster Dirk Kelder, whose hard

work is visible on the web page, including the most recently added Practitioners' Directory.

- The Professional Development committee, which has culminated several years' work with the production of guidelines for training programs and also has planned and executed programs as part of the annual AAP conferences.
- Member volunteers, whose participation in various committees has increased—thank you!

Your organization closed 2007 in better fiscal shape, with a stronger membership list, and with a Steering Committee that integrates the practice of group psychosynthesis while improving the services the organization delivers to you.

As we leave the Steering Committee we are excited by the recovery of the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation material, the activities of the Archives Committee, and the expansion of Psychosynthesis material available on the Web.

We believe membership benefits have increased significantly over the last two years, and it is our hope that the organization's membership will continue to increase during the next years. We trust your efforts will continue to increase awareness and use of psychosynthesis as a process from which we all benefit.

We appreciate the opportunity we have had in serving you.

**You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.**

—*Buckminster Fuller*



**Mount Diablo State Park** is just ten miles from JFK University—one of the many attractions you may visit while attending the AAP Conference in July.



## Conference, cont'd from Page 1

discussion on the evolution of guiding techniques. If you feel overwhelmed, consider attending author Abbey Seixas' session titled "Soulful Life in a Speed-Obsessed Culture" or Ann Yeomans' session, "Connecting With the Mother Bear in All of Us: Protecting What is Precious."

On Sunday the spirit of the conference largely turns to love. There are three presentations with love in their title: "Psychosynthesis Therapy: an Act of Love," with John Firman and Ann Gila; "Love, Power, and System," with Mark Horowitz; and "Love—The Bridge Between Spirit and Action," with Carla Peterson. Also, Phillip Brooks will share his Psychosynthesis journey.

Other presentations include "Manifesting Your Intentions," "Integration of Polarities Through Mandala Work," "Using Psychosynthesis in Clinical and Family Practice," and more.

The challenge will be choice—which of more than 30 to attend.

## POSTCONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

Monday, July 16

On Monday, for those who want more—greater depth, a deeper connection—there are two post-conference workshops: one on soul collage, and one on discovering and affirming your role in the turning toward a more sustaining society.

And on Monday and Tuesday the AAP Steering Committee will meet.

So share your sense of the direction of the organization's spirit and volunteer to ground that in action, and if you prefer, visit one of the many wonderful sites in the greater San Francisco Bay area; perhaps this year Pleasant Hill will be *your* Graceland.

—David Shirley, AAP co-chair and conference co-chair



The AAP Conference site: JFK University in Pleasant Hill, Calif., 29 miles northeast of Oakland.

# THEORY AND PRACTICE

## Speaking of Dissociation: The "Classic" Disidentification Exercise

By John Firman and Ann Gila

The Professional Development Committee has recently included Assagioli's "Classic Disidentification Exercise" as a basic concept in psychosynthesis training. This has prompted us to write about the dissociative and unscientific nature of Assagioli's classic exercise. Assagioli (1965/2000) initially approaches the exercise in a beautifully experiential way:

The procedure for achieving self-identity in the sense of the pure self-consciousness at the personal level . . . can be summarized in one word, . . . *introspection*. It means, as its terminology clearly indicates, directing the mind's eye, or the observing function, upon the world of psychological facts, of psychological events, of which we can be aware (p. 101).

This objective observation produces naturally, spontaneously and inevitably a sense of dis-identification from any and all of those psychological contents and activities (p. 103).

However, Assagioli strays from this experiential approach as he launches into the exercise that he claims will facilitate this disidentification:

The first step is to **affirm with conviction** and to become *aware* of the fact: "I *have* a body, but I *am not* my body" (p. 103, emphasis in bold added). [He repeats this affirmation vis-à-vis feelings and mind as well.]

Turn to "Exercise", page 8

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Trainer Development Program for July

By Mary Kelso

Nine members of the Professional Development Committee (PDC) met in retreat for four days in January at the home of Mary Kelso in Thousand Oaks, Calif., to finalize planning for the Trainer Development Program for July 12 and 13. It should be exciting and very informative for new trainers! If you have any questions regarding the TDP please contact John Parks (drjhparks@alltel.net) or Mary Kelso (MKelso0627@aol.com). Several professionals will present 45-minute guiding sessions that will be videotaped. Participants will then be able to discuss the sessions, paying particular attention to traditional techniques and evolving forms of guiding. The Thursday night dinner is planned to network and honor the effort of the Trainer Development Program. The tentative program is as follows:

### THURSDAY, JULY 12

#### Introduction

**Betty Bosdell, PhD, Licensed psychologist – clinical guiding**

**Brad Roth, MA – Demonstration of guiding using the body**

**Eva Fugitt, MA – Educational applications**

**Networking dinner and program for honorees of previous trainer development programs**

### FRIDAY, JULY 13

**Philip Brooks, MA – Demonstration of spiritual guiding**

**Mark Horowitz, MA – Demonstration of organizational development and guiding**

**Dennis Wynne, MA, LCSW – Further applications of psychosynthesis**

The discussion of a national curriculum continued after the June 2006 Trainer Development Program in Kentucky. The Professional Development Committee felt that a face-to-face discussion would bring clarity and focus to this topic as well as the mission and purpose of the TDP. Prior to the retreat each committee member read and studied several documents, including a brief history of the Professional Development Committee ; *Psychosynthesis Research Foundation* (a 7-page monograph written by Assagioli); and demonstration seminar outlines and training programs used to train teachers in Psychosynthesis throughout North America.

Group discussion was lengthy and well-structured. The committee worked as a whole and in several subgroups over the retreat. The group's thoughts were distilled into two documents that have also been approved by the Steering Committee of AAP: (1) the mission and membership description of the Professional Development Committee , and (2) a listing of the fundamental principles of psychosynthesis (and this has been distributed to the training centers for discussion). Both documents will be available at the AAP Conference in July.

#### Watch for "Psychosynthesis Tools"

The PDC has also formed a **Research Committee** under the direction of Vincent Dummer, PhD. After more than 200 hours of work, Vincent has already scanned and catalogued four categories of material ready to go on a sub Web page. There will be a link from the AAP main Web page to "Psychosynthesis Tools." Training materials will include sections on Archives, Training Materials and Tools, Publications, and Research Articles. Vincent has scanned and cleaned up the PRF files, the four *Synthesis* Journals, and some other journal articles. The materials produced at the Kentucky Trainer Development Program are still being reworked. **Stay tuned as the PDC hopes to run a pilot test of this sub Web site as soon as possible.** Vincent is also requesting any PowerPoint documents, monographs, or PDF files that might be available, so they can be added as PDF read-only files. If you have material to add, you can contact him at Vincentdummer@cs.com. The Professional Development Committee is planning to contribute student projects, dissertations, and materials that especially speak to work with adolescents. The entire committee agrees that this is about the "coolest thing we have been a part of in a long time."

The Professional Development Committee is also focusing on **developing training materials** that can be used by new trainers and new centers. Phyllis Clay and Janet Messer are collecting these contributions. They are currently working on descriptions of Psychosynthesis written by various people. Watch for an announcement in the newsletter. We will be informing you when new training materials are available on the Web site.

The **Professional Development Committee is actively working** to fulfill its mission as part of the AAP.

## “Exercise”, cont’d from page 6

First, the phrase “affirm with conviction” is a radical shift from the preceding introspection and disidentification; this is now not an invitation to observe inner experience but to *profess a belief*. But affirming a belief has nothing to do with the experience of disidentification just described.

Second, this affirmed belief replaces the earlier terms “sensations” and “mental contents” with the terms “body” and “mind.” But the actual experience involves observing *sensations* and *mental contents* come and go in awareness; we are *not* in fact observing the entire *physical body* or *mind* come and go in awareness! Thus the experiential distinction between self and sensations/thoughts has been replaced by a dualistic belief postulating a separation between self and the body and mind—supporting not disidentification but dissociation (see O’Regan, 1984).

Assagioli, apparently caught in this dualism, is asking us to utter a “credo” concerning the nature of human being. Whether or not this credo is true or false is not the question; the point is that this belief is not “scientifically demonstrated” (p. 101) by the experience of introspective inner observation and disidentification.

This dualism affects not only the disidentification exercise, but is an implicit assumption in other psychosynthesis theory as well—perhaps part of the dissociative “shadow” of psychosynthesis (see Firman 1991). This substitution of belief for experience is a fundamentalism that keeps psychosynthesis theory from changing and growing, and too, from being included in mainstream psychology.

### References

- Assagioli, Roberto. 1965/2000. *Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Basic Writings*. Amherst, MA: Synthesis Center.
- Firman, John. 1991. “*I*” and *Self: Re-Visioning Psychosynthesis*. Palo Alto, CA: Psychosynthesis Palo Alto.
- O’Regan, Miceal. 1984. “Reflections on the Art of Disidentification.” Pp. 44-49 in *Yearbook IV*, ed. J. Evans. London: The Institute of Psychosynthesis, London.



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### Explore This Issue:

- **Bridge Spirit and Action at the AAP Conference**
- **From the Archives: Assagioli Launches PRF**
- **Professional Development**
- **Speaking of Dissociation . . .**
- **Goings On at Psychosynthesis centers**

. . . And much more . . .

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