

## FACES OF GIFTEDNESS

by Joann M. Anderson

Roberto Assagioli strongly encouraged the identification of and specialized education of gifted children (see Psychosynthesis Research Foundation Newsletter #8, December 1959, available at the AAP Web site). What research has shown since Dr. Assagioli's paper was written is that giftedness comes with many faces.

Traditionally, it was thought that all gifted persons think in a linear fashion. That is, they are logical and learn math easily. For example, one highly gifted linear-thinking fifth grader in our local school corrected his teacher's solution to a complicated math problem she was writing on the whiteboard. After checking her work, the teacher agreed he was right and changed it. Her response was excellent. Much harm can result when teachers and parents rigidly adhere to their solutions in the face of challenges from bright young students.

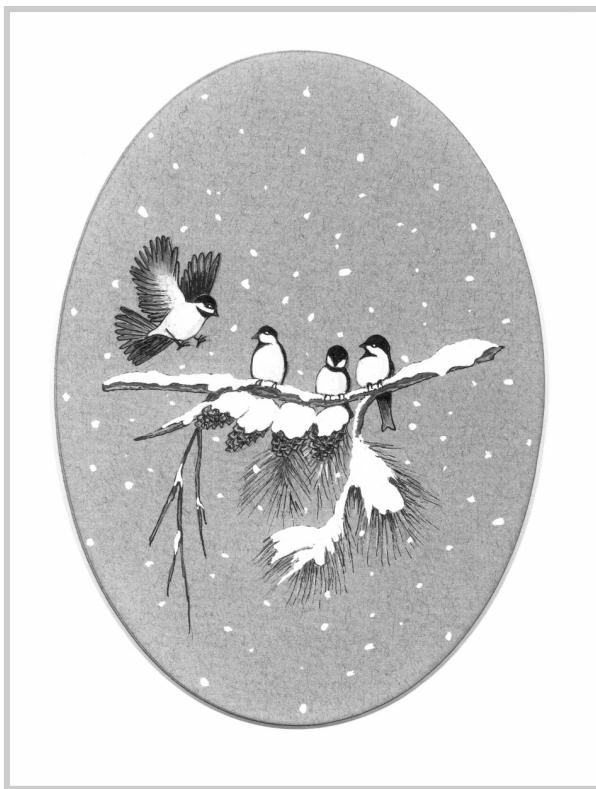
Besides the more commonly-known linear gifted thinkers, a different kind of giftedness can or may result in "creative thinkers." Creative thinkers learn in ways that others might call "disorderly." When faced with a linear task, such as learning the alphabet, a creative thinker is likely to start with G, then jump back to B, go on to M, then X, and maybe back to A. Eventually, they get the letters in order, but their thinking process is vastly different from a linear thinker and can be frustrating to a linear-thinking teacher. Creative thinkers are more likely to learn in relation to how things feel. They will learn more easily if they feel support and care from the teacher or parent. They are more likely to get such care in small-class settings. Bright linear thinkers, on the other hand, are

not so concerned about feeling the emotional connection, but they do need emotional nurturing as well. (See the Web site for Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted

at [www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)).

Surprisingly, it has been found that gifted persons (both creative and linear) think differently depending on the level of giftedness. Students with an IQ of 140 will think differently from students with an IQ of 160 or 180. They will laugh at different things depending on their IQ and they will process information in different ways as well. Dr. Assagioli would have been fascinated with such findings.

Another face of giftedness that has not been so highly publicized is that of the "twice gifted" child. This is a child who has exceptional mental abilities and at the same time may be classified as "emotionally retarded," "dyslexic," or "learning disabled." Autistic persons can be highly gifted. An example of this is an autistic woman, Temple Grandin, PhD, a well-known animal scientist who has written several books describing the



Art by Bonney Kuniholm

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# AAP News

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Jan Kuniholm, Walter Polt

## 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**

Send to

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[newsletter@aap-psychosynthesis.org](mailto:newsletter@aap-psychosynthesis.org)

## 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

## Deborah Onken

### *The Family Self Help Book* offers Families an Experience of Psychosynthesis

Deborah Onken's new book integrates some of Roberto Assagioli's basic psychosynthesis concepts and exercises with family systems theory. The exercises are used to help families connect with their family Self—their generational purpose, potentials, identity, and meaning for society. Through realization of the family Self, the family can build resilience and make choices that allow expression of their deepest qualities. The exercises are written as scripts so that one family member can lead the exercise while others participate. The book is spirally bound to lie open for the exercises.

*The Family Self Help Book* includes the Family Synthesis Questionnaire and many psychosynthesis techniques and concepts adapted for use in families: dis-identification, meditation, the egg diagram, subpersonalities, the evening review, fairy tales, the Will, the star diagram, techniques for the development of the Will, the Ideal Model and synthesis. The final chapter covers family forgiveness, gratitude, dreams, and joy.

For more information or to purchase:  
Family Synthesis Institute  
P.O. Box 9439  
St. Louis MO 63117  
[dsonken@aol.com](mailto:dsonken@aol.com)

## Anne Yeomans

### Holding the Circle

Anne Yeomans will again teach her course "Holding The Circle," a Training/Workshop for Women, this spring at the Synthesis Center in Amherst, MA. This is a training opportunity for women who are interested in learning how to facilitate women's circles. It will meet for six Wednesday nights from March 26th through April 30th, and all day Sunday April 27th. Information: call Anne at (413) 522-5285.

## Connecticut Institute Building Toured, Used

The Connecticut Institute has been snowed in this winter, but we continue with much spirit!! A number of us plan to go to the AAP Conference in June.

Our building (built c.1790) recently participated in a historic house tour for the food pantry, and while it was a big challenge to get ready, we raised a lot of money!

We continue to offer training, counseling sessions, supervision, coaching, and classes for the public. We offer a sliding scale and accept most insurances. Our Open Sundays continue monthly throughout the academic year. Contact Cynthia P. Russell, PhD at (203) 377-2421 [psynn timer@aol.com](mailto:psynn timer@aol.com).

## Psychosynthesis Resources

Anyone wanting to see a variety of resources related to psychosynthesis is invited to visit the Psychosynthesis Resources Web site, which has been created and maintained by Vincent Dummer, at [www.psychosynthesisresources.com](http://www.psychosynthesisresources.com)

Do check it out! It is a great com-

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# Goings On

*Cont'd from page 2*

plement to the AAP Web site at [www.aap-psychoanalysis.org](http://www.aap-psychoanalysis.org).

## Roberta Nelson

### Uniting Psychosynthesis & Anthroposophy in *Self-Development: The Task of Our Times*

A series of workshops in three units will be presented by Roberta Nelson, PhD, LAPC, ACI, & Psychosynthesis Certified

**Course Description:** Selfishness and selflessness are the paradoxical states of consciousness underlying the task of our time: to develop the self or true being. We are all caught up in this developmental quagmire, struggling with hate, fear, and self-doubt: the aspects of self that resist change, life, empathy, love, and genuine community.

Unit One of *Self-Development* seeks to uncover the treasures hidden in our ordinary faculties of soul: thinking, feeling, and willing. These three are the fallen counterparts of our latent spiritual capacities.

This interdisciplinary course is inspired by Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy and Roberto Assagioli's psychosynthesis. It is highly participatory, using drawing, painting, clay modeling, eurythmy, mandalas, and journaling to support the development of self. The story of Parsifal, an ancient tale valid for our times, frames units one through three.

**Unit One:** April 30 to May 3, 2008, in Lexington, Kentucky

**Preregistration is Required.**  
**For Information & Registration:**  
Dr. John Parks at 859-269-6588  
Roberta Nelson at [cdnrrn@ictc.com](mailto:cdnrrn@ictc.com)

## An Invitation:

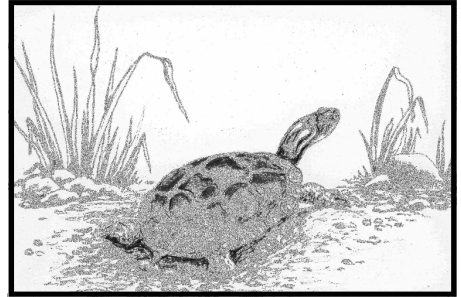
### Participate in Psychosynthesis Study

Data from a pilot study presented by Vincent Dummer at the AAP conference in Amherst (2005) suggests that psychological growth as conceptualized in psychosynthesis can be measured and that as a group, psychosynthesis practitioners differ from the average population in the expected direction of psychological growth.

As a next step of this research project, volunteers who are seeking psychological growth are asked to participate in a study to help determine whether measurable changes happen over a period of time. Ideally, a measurement would be taken before a person intends to make a significant growth step (such as beginning psychosynthesis training or therapy), and the measurements would be repeated at yearly intervals.

Anybody who is seriously seeking psychological growth is invited to participate in this study, regardless of any specific involvement in psychosynthesis. The survey also has a component that can be completed by an outside observer such as a spouse or best friend, to establish some intersubjectivity. After at least two measurements have been obtained and the participant wants to end the study, the participant may request feedback on the results, which may be offered in the form of a written report or a telephone interview.

Please visit the *Psychosynthesis Resources* website at [www.psychosynthesisresources.com](http://www.psychosynthesisresources.com) and click the button on "Research" to learn more or to participate in the research.



Art by Bonney Kuniholm

## Co-Chairs: New Territory for Staff, Systems

Greetings to all in 2008! Not only are we beginning a new year, we as an organization are also entering new territory. Our primary goal for this year is to streamline and put systems into place which will allow us to use your money wisely, use our time efficiently and expand membership services. We are also moving toward a system which will allow the Steering Committee to address the broader issues of advancing psychosynthesis.

One of the steps that has been taken is the change to annual membership renewal. We are gratified by your generous response and support. For those of you who may have forgotten, please accept this as a gentle reminder to send in your renewal (see related article in this issue).

We have experienced some staff changes. David Parks-Ramage, who has been the AAP administrative consultant for the past three years, will no longer be

*Turn to Co-Chairs, page 5*

# Letters

## The Use of Will in Disidentification and Affirmation

Jan Kuniholm (*AAP News*, May 2007), in his response to our article on Assagioli's disidentification exercise (*AAP News*, August 2007), has put his finger on a central issue in that exercise: the use of will in disidentification as distinct from the use of will in making affirmations.

To reiterate, we are in agreement with Assagioli's approach to disidentification in his "Self-Identification" exercise (Assagioli 1965/2000). This exercise is based on introspection, a mindful observation of the arising contents of experience which he says produces, "naturally, spontaneously and inevitably a sense of dis-identification from any and all of those psychological contents and activities" (p.103). No statement of belief is involved, no affirmation of faith is needed; one is simply asked to look and see for herself or himself. This is, as he writes, "a true scientific attitude and objectivity" (p.102).

However, Jan writes that this disidentification practice leaves out will, claiming that in order to bring will to the practice, one must move to Assagioli's affirmations ("I am not my body, feelings, mind," etc.). Quite to the contrary, we would say that the use of will is central to Assagioli's introspective approach to disidentification (experiment: try maintaining mindful inner observation for 30 minutes). Extended mindful introspection has to do with *intending* to maintain the observing attitude, *persevering* in not allowing one's awareness to be swept up in the flow of inner experience, *choosing* to return to observation after becoming lost in a daydream or thought process. Both awareness and will are here operating in a very simple, direct, and pure way—the point of a disidentification exercise, in our opinion.

The use of will in making affirmations is quite different from this. In affirmations one is actively attempting to form and mold patterns of physicality, image, thought, feeling, and behavior according to preconceived ideas. The focus of affirmations is on building up structures within the personality, a very different focus from working directly with the realization that one is distinct but not separate from these structures. And building up a personality or identification around the belief, "I am not my body, feelings, or mind," has in our experience been more an obstacle than an aid to disidentification.

We also take issue with Assagioli's implication that the statement, "I am not my body, feelings, and mind" captures the experience of disidentification. Many other conclusions could be made, from "I am distinct but not separate from sensations, feeling, and thoughts," to "I am my body, feelings, and mind, but more than these," to the Buddhist "thoughts without a thinker" conclusion—the notion of personal self as an illusion. But whatever philosophical statement one makes, choosing to repeat the statement over and over is very different from choosing to look into one's experience with "a true scientific attitude and objectivity."

So in short we would suggest that affirmations are about using will to build form, whereas a disidentification practice is about using will to engage the insight or experience (not the belief) that one is distinct but not separate from form. In closing, let us say how wonderful it is to have dialogue about psychosynthesis thought and practice in these pages!

Thank you Jan!

—*John Firman and Ann Gila*  
Psychosynthesis Palo Alto

Reference: Assagioli, Roberto. 1965/2000. *Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Basic Writings*. Amherst, MA: Synthesis Center.



Art by Bonney Kuniholm

# More

## ***Faces cont'd from page 1***

similarities between autistic thinking and animal perception.

Although this brief article barely begins to address the many faces of giftedness, it is hoped that it will stimulate interest in giftedness, since many of the people attracted to psychosynthesis are gifted, whether they have been so identified or not. Excellent resources for both parents and professionals are offered by the National Association for Gifted Children at [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org).

## **Thanks to Our Donors! AAP Now Records Service Time Too**

**Donations of time and energy are vital to AAP, since we are a member-run volunteer organization. We have been the beneficiaries of uncounted hours of work and generous out-of-pocket expenses by members over AAP's 12-year history.**

**Presently we are recording service time in order to obtain grants or endowments that focus on in-kind contributions of time and funds.**

**Thanks to everyone who has contributed to make AAP a continuing success.**

### **2007 Financial Donors**

#### **Web Site**

John Parks, Ilene Val-Essen, Al Lingo, Psychosynthesis Palo Alto, Psychosynthesis International, D.A. Tocci, Jeff Senne, Karen Pesavento, Bridget Ahern, Cynthia Bost

#### **Membership Brochure**

Karen Pesavento

#### **Archives**

John Parks

#### **Nondesignated Donations**

Walter Polt, Al Lingo, United Way of Kitsay County, IL, Hedi Weiler

If you have made a donation and your name is not listed, please email our Treasurer at **[sharonmandt@gmail.com](mailto:sharonmandt@gmail.com)** or any of the Steering Committee members. A formal tax deduction letter was sent to the donors in January. If you gave to AAP and did not receive one, please contact us.

## ***Co-Chairs cont'd from page 3***

with us. We are grateful for his work over this time and wish him well. We welcome David Nelson who has generously volunteered to be our Membership Assistant. Sharon Kelsay Mandt, our new treasurer, is busy setting up a system which can be maintained with the help of a bookkeeper. This will make it possible for future treasurers to provide responsible oversight without also being the chief bookkeeper and report generator.

The expanded Web site continues to evolve. Do take some time to browse and enjoy all you will find there. Aside from strengthening our infrastructure, we also are enthusiastic about the exciting developments in process for our 2008 conference in Brattleboro, Vermont, as well as the pre-conference professional development program.

As you can see, the Steering Committee is hard at work and joyfully engaged in this AAP group effort, which has so much potential for humanity. In the midst of these fast-moving times we are taking careful, thoughtful steps forward. As always, we invite your participation and input in whatever way your Self guides you.

We send you our warm best wishes for this new year.

*Carla Peterson and Hedwig Weiler, Co-Chairs*



Art by Bonney Kuniholm

# Professional Development

**W**e members of the Professional Development Committee want to introduce ourselves to you so you know who we are: Mary Kelso currently is serving as Chair of the PDC, assisted by Judith Broadus; the current Chairs of the Steering Committee, Hedi Weiler and Carla Peterson are also members of this committee, as are John Parks, Betty Bosdell, Molly Brown, Vincent Dummer, Janet Messer, Debby Onken, and Brad Roth.

We are currently engaged with the following initiatives:

- The upcoming **Trainer Development Program meeting June 26 & 27, 2008, before the AAP Conference at Vermont College of Union Institute & University Brattleboro, VT June 27, 28 and 29. Save the Dates!**
- We are planning an exciting process for a theoretical discussion that will allow everyone an opportunity to participate! We think this is one of the programs you have asked to have, and we'll give you more details soon.
- We are starting the process of investigating continuing education units for both Vermont and beyond!

Contact any of us: We are happy to hear from you about any ideas or concerns you have regarding these items.

<i>Hedwig</i> - hedwig.weiler@gmail.com	<i>Debby</i> - DSONken@aol.com	<i>Brad</i> - dancingday@earthlink.net
<i>Judith</i> - jbbroadus99@aol.com	<i>Molly</i> - mollybrown@gmail.com	<i>Carla</i> - carlapeterson@clearwire.net
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<i>Janet</i> - drjanetmessenger@yahoo.com	<i>John</i> - drjhparks@alltel.net	

**Dr. John Parks has recently stepped down as chair of the Professional Development Committee, and AAP wishes to acknowledge the vigor, care and dedication that John has brought to this work, in starting the Trainer Development Program and spearheading the work of this group for many years. Thank you, John.**

## AAP Says Thanks and Farewell to David Parks-Ramage

**O**n behalf of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis, the Steering Committee thanks David Parks-Ramage for more than three years of service as our Administrative Consultant. During those years David took a membership system that was in disarray and brought some order to it. He helped establish online registration for the AAP conferences, setting up the PayPal account to receive the fees for conference registration and membership renewal, and created the **AAP News** layout that we now use.

David connected us with his friend, Huston Smith, who gave two wonderful keynote presentations at the AAP conferences of 2006 and 2007. His quick thinking allowed us to collect donations at the first of those keynote presentations, which helped to make the conference a financial success. David also helped us think more about establishing an endowment fund, and gave us information about how to do that. In doing so, he provided a strong impetus for us to get our financial systems in top-notch shape, which we are now in the process of doing.

We are grateful for all David has done for AAP and we wish him well in all his endeavors.

***Thank you, David.***

## Thanks to Joann: Archive Growing

**J**oann Anderson has responded to the call from the Archives Committee for historical AAP materials. Thanks to Joann, we now have a 1996 Directory of Members, many newsletters we were missing, colorful pictures of members, and a couple of significant reports from when Joann and Robert Contadino served as AAP Co-Chairs during the 2002-2003 term.

Others have stated their intention to go through their papers too, so we hope to have other donations by the end of this year. An inventory of the items collected will be placed on the AAP Web site as will an email address for contacting the Archive Committee Chair.

We invite you to share any materials you have to help complete our archives: past conference programs, newsletters, pictures, and other items of interest.

Please contact Sharon Kelsay Mandt at sharonmandt@gmail.com

# Join us in June in Vermont!



## The 2008 AAP Conference **Healing and Transformation in the 21st Century: Creating Personal and Global Change**

at the Campus of Vermont College  
of Union Institute & University

Brattleboro, VT  
June 27-29, 2008



Ready for an exciting get-together with others from the worldwide psychosynthesis community? Then join us in Brattleboro Vermont in June for a keynote address by **Abby Seixas**, author of ***Deep River Within***, and workshops (we hope) with Tom and Anne Yeomans, Didi Firman, Molly Young Brown, Walter Polt, Cynthia Lashley, Brad Roth, Judith Broadus, Deborah Onken, Phyllis Clay, Peter Stonefield, Lenore Lefer, Bob Anderson, Ilene val Essen, Raul Quinones Rosado, Cynthia Russell, Mary Kelso, Betty Bosdell, Nick Young and other faculty from Vermont College, Neal Klein and Jan Wall from Lesley University, Eva-Louise Hamer and Marcel Rheault from Canada, Svante Bjorklund from Sweden, and a special presentation by Sasha Badkhen and Mark Pevzner from the Harmony Institute in Russia—and many others—if (if we can fit everyone in!). AND—before the Conference, the Trainer Development Program June 26 and 27.



Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis – Cosponsored by The Synthesis Center, Amherst, MA  
**Conference Registration Online at [www.aap-psychosynthesis.org](http://www.aap-psychosynthesis.org) or**  
**Phone Registrar Shamai Currin at (203) 820-9416**

## **Reflections on Steering Committee Retreat—and Wind Hitting the Sails** *by Carla Peterson, AAP Co-chair*

Eight of the ten Steering Committee members met at Techny Towers near Chicago, IL, from October 25 to 29, 2007. After having first met as a Committee in July, we were geared up to proceed on our mission: completing some organizational work, streamlining our membership renewal process, and finding innovative ways of advancing psychosynthesis. We began with a group meditation led by co-chair Hedi Weiler. Some of the imagery that emerged in that meditation included a star cluster, hand on heart, a psychosynthesis library, a firmly established enduring path, a partially melted candle (one of many), a candle that brings our souls' light together making it more powerful, an experiment filled with possibility, sailing the ship together, creating shining relationships, getting things shipshape, and learning the ropes.

We decided we wanted AAP members to know about the images that had come to us as we worked on their behalf. The images that emerged suggest that we take our responsibilities quite seriously, yet there is also a sense of peace and excitement about the work we have undertaken. We affirmed that some of our deepest values guiding this year of serving on the Steering Committee include openness, transparency, respect, boundaries, and empowerment. We want to be very open to the membership and conduct the operations of the AAP in a transparent way. We are eager to have suggestions and feedback from the membership. Just send us an email at [cochairs@aap-psychosynthesis.org](mailto:cochairs@aap-psychosynthesis.org) and we will share your thoughts, concerns or other comments with all the members of the Steering Committee.

In personal terms, I am just learning the ropes of being a member and co-chair of the Steering Committee. My own goal is to help us achieve a "shipshape" operation so that we can build the psychosynthesis community. As a community, we need to reach people who desire connection with Self but may never have heard of psychosynthesis. Reaching these goals requires working cooperatively with other members of the ship's crew, which is a joy and yet sometimes challenging. When the wind hits the sails and we move as one to steer the ship through the seas and weathers of change there is such exhilaration!



## AAP Goes to Annual Renewal

In case you have missed the news that AAP is moving to annual membership renewal, here is another short recap. In the past, renewal notices were sent to the members four times a year. In order to streamline this process as well as to make it less costly, the Steering Committee decided to move to annual renewal.

Presently we are planning the changeover so that all of the 2008 memberships will expire on December 31, 2008. To accomplish this, the amount of dues for 2008 renewals will be prorated according to the times they are due during the year. For example, if your membership comes up for renewal July 1st, you will pay only half the annual membership amount.

Beginning in January 2009 everyone will be on the annual renewal cycle, which will start at the beginning of the year. Thereafter, the whole renewal and record-keeping process will be much more simple and easy to manage. The purpose of this change is to use your membership funds and our staff members' time more wisely. Your support and patience are appreciated very much.

*Hedi Weiler, AAP Co-chair*

## Welcome to David Nelson

Even though many of you have already been in contact with David, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome him. He has generously volunteered to become AAP's membership assistant. As those of you who attended the Minnesota conference a couple years ago know, he is very enthusiastic, hard working, and committed to Psychosynthesis. He will be dealing with membership information and concerns related to renewing and joining. In your contacts with him you will find him very responsive and eager to serve. We are grateful for the light he brings to our work. Welcome David.

For further membership information, see the Members section of our Web site at [www.aap-psychosynthesis.org](http://www.aap-psychosynthesis.org)

**Please Use the Enclosed Ballot  
Vote for New Members of the  
AAP Steering Committee**

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



PO Box 414  
Somerset KY 42502

### Explore This Issue:

- **Ballot Enclosed: Vote for New Members of the AAP Steering Committee**
- **Update on the Faces of Giftedness**
- **Disidentification and Affirmation Discussed Further**
- **June 2008 Conference: Some Coming Attractions**
- **Goings On at Psychosynthesis Centers, Web Sites . . .**

. . . and much more . . .