

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

QUARTERLY

The Digital Magazine of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

Volume 3 Number 2

September 2014

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Catherine Ann Lombard and Kees den Biesen

On Aging — Shamai Currim

Psychosynthesis and Chronic Psychiatric Patients — Michael Follman

Thinking It Through — Yon Walls

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World Awakening — Thomas Yeomans

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**AAP's 2015 International Conference in Montréal —
and Invitation for Proposals**

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Psychosynthesis Quarterly is published by AAP four times a year in March, June, September and December. Submission deadlines are February 7, May 7, August 7, and November 7.

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EDITOR’S NOTES

We’re glad to be back! The June issue of *Psychosynthesis Quarterly* (and a lot of other files) disappeared in my computer crash before I could publish it, so I am happy to say that my computer is healthy and we have a healthy issue to share with you.

It is sobering to reflect on the fragility of our presentations these days, when the click of a key can wipe out so much. A wonderful incentive for us to live in the “now.” Well, NOW is a wonderful time to be here, and we are glad to be with you.

We also have a lot of engaging articles, book reviews, announcements of books, courses and retreats, and reflections, so we hope you will find this issue interesting and useful.

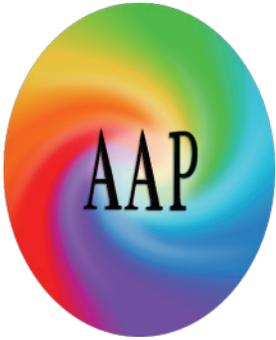
We have made the first beachhead to land the 2015 AAP Conference, which will be held next August 5-9 at John Abbott College in Montréal, Quebec, Canada. Some of the earliest training programs in psychosynthesis in North America were held in Montréal, so it is fitting that we return there to explore the Self, a fundamental aspect of psychosynthesis.

We hope you plan to join us there in 2015.

Jan Kuniholm



International Psychosynthesis Conference



Be Your True Self: Discovering Inner Resources

- In Everyday Life
- In Family and Organizations
- In Clinical Applications
- In Global Issues



Photo Courtesy Marjorie Hope Gross

The 2015 AAP Conference Montreal, Québec, Canada August 5-9, 2015



**at the Campus of John Abbott College
21 275 Lakeshore Road
Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, Québec, H9X 3L9, Canada**

<http://www.johnabbott.qc.ca>

Save the Date and Get Your Passport

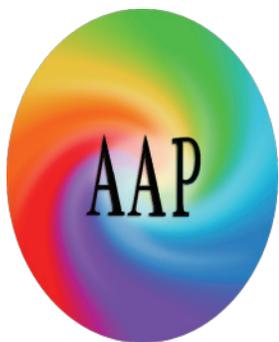
**(US citizens MUST have a passport to get back to the USA — apply early!
The process may take a long time)**

The 2015 AAP Conference will be held at a beautiful riverside campus at the southwest end of Montreal. We invite practitioners, clinicians, teachers, trainers, students and all people interested in the ongoing practice and theory of psychosynthesis to participate as speakers, presenters and attendees. This conference aspires to bring together the varying approaches to Self and the Transpersonal Dimension, with new insights and new syntheses. See the Conference Page at the AAP website www.aap-psychosynthesis.org.

**Proposal Forms and contact information will be soon available at the AAP website,
www.aap-psychosynthesis.org.**

For information, contact Jan Kuniholm, Conference Chair, at Conference@aap-psychosynthesis.org

Call for Proposals - Conference Presentations



Be Your True Self: Discovering Inner Resources

- In Everyday Life
- In Family and Organizations
- In Clinical Applications
- In Global Issues



Photo Courtesy Marjorie Hope Gross

The 2015 AAP Conference August 5-9, 2015 John Abbott College, Montreal, Quèbec, Canada

The 2015 AAP Conference will be held at a beautiful riverside campus at the southwest end of Montreal. We invite practitioners, clinicians, teachers, trainers, students and all people interested in the ongoing practice and theory of psychosynthesis to participate as speakers, presenters and attendees. This conference aspires to bring together the varying approaches to Self with new insights and new syntheses. The intent is to provide a forum for all approaches to the Transpersonal within the Psychosynthesis Community to be presented and heard, and to discover the wealth and power within these approaches to effect healing, help, and positive change in clients, families, organizations, and the world. It is hoped that this conference will provide a container for the safe discussion of differing viewpoints, presentation of new and exciting work and research, and a platform for the creation of new syntheses of thought and practice.

All presentations at this conference will reflect the focus on this fundamental aspect of psychosynthesis theory and practice: Self.

We invite your proposal for:

- Plenary Sessions Talks
- Master Classes on Clinical Applications
- Workshops focusing on:
 - Connections to Self in Everyday Life and in Psychosynthesis Practice
 - Use of Self and related topics in Education, Medicine, Addictions Recovery, and Healing
 - Self in Organizations and Systems, Business and Government
 - Self awareness; Purpose, Meaning, and Values in Life; Practical Spirituality without Religion
 - Connections to Self in Global and Planetary Action; Planetary Identity; Ecopsychology
 - Research and Theory Concerning Self, Soul, Spirit, and Transpersonal Development
 - Innovative Employment of Transpersonal Experience in Clinical Settings
 - Learning How to Work with the Mind
 - Self and the Dark Side of Human Experience
- Work/Practice groups
- Innovative group activities
- Pre- and Post-Conference Special Seminars (proposals for these must be received ASAP to reserve space!)

Proposal Forms and contact information will be soon available at the AAP website,

www.aap-psychosynthesis.org.

For information, contact Jan Kuniholm, Conference Chair, at Conference@aap-psychosynthesis.org

Reading the *Divine Comedy* From a Psychosynthesis Perspective: The Beginning of a Spiritual Journey

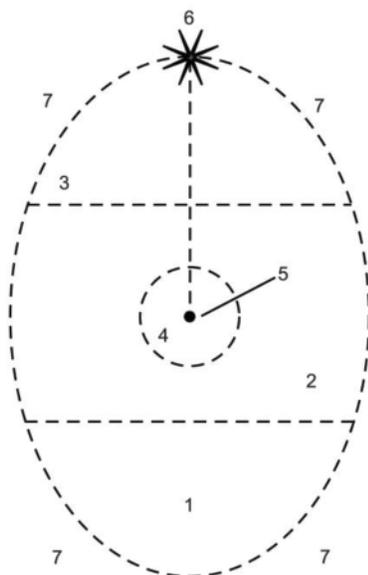
Catherine Ann Lombard and Kees den Biesen

Roberto Assagioli invites us to read Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which he describes as "a wonderful picture of a complete psychosynthesis" (2000, p. 186). Together with Dante, we can descend through the circles of Hell, climb the steep slopes of Purgatory and speed through the spheres of the heavens, to finally reach Paradise and its all-encompassing synthesis. As we identify with Dante throughout his journey, Assagioli also suggests that we learn to carefully read the *Divine Comedy* in the light of its meaning and symbolism. He continues to state that this exercise of reading and reflection can be used as a group exercise. Our busy lives may leave us little time to reflect as individuals or with a group on such a monumental work. However, we hope to encourage you in a small way to begin. In this essay, we introduce you to the first two Cantos of *Inferno* or Hell, which Assagioli believed represented the human soul at the start of its spiritual journey.



The great poet Dante
as painted by
Sandro Botticelli

While Assagioli's archives clearly indicate that he studied the *Divine Comedy* in great detail, his published reflections are precious and few. The *Divine Comedy* can, however, be viewed in alignment with Assagioli's vision of the human psyche, better known as the "egg diagram" (Figure 1). Assagioli says that Dante's pilgrimage through Hell is a symbol of his analytical exploration of the lower unconscious (1 in Figure 1). Dante's ascent up the mountain of Purgatory indicates the process of purification and "the gradual raising of the level of consciousness (4) through the use of active techniques" (2000, p. 187). And finally his visit to Paradise depicts the various stages of the superconscious (3) up to the final vision of the Self (6) in which Love and Will are synthesized.



1. Lower unconscious
2. Middle unconscious
3. Higher unconscious or superconscious
4. Field of consciousness
5. Conscious self or "I"
6. Self
7. Collective unconscious

Note: Dotted lines indicate permeable boundaries.

Figure 1. Assagioli's (2000, p. 15) model of the structure of the psyche.

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The Divine Comedy starts with:

Midway through the journey of our life
I woke to find myself in a dark wood,
for the straight path had gone lost.
(Hell, Canto I:1-3)

Dante begins by stating he is “midway through the journey of our life.” His explicit use of the word “our” and not “my” indicates a universal journey that we all embark upon. This universal journey, however, is always personal, as expressed by Dante in his second line: “I woke to find myself in a dark wood.” Dante then confesses that “the straight path had gone lost” which he later refers to as “the true path.”

From a psychosynthesis perspective, one could say that Dante’s first line represents the collective unconscious (7) journey, the second the “I” (5), and the third points to the I-Self connection that has gone lost (shown as a dotted line connecting them in Figure 1). From a psychosynthesis point of view, our life’s journey is to reestablish this I-Self connection; in other words, to seek, reconnect, and synthesize the consciousness and will of the “I” with the consciousness and will of the Self. Like most of us during our lives, Dante discovers that he is far from having a direct connection to the Self. Instead he is standing in a dark wood which he further describes as savage, fearful, and bitter—almost as bitter as Death itself. Assagioli (1993, p. 156) believes that the wild forest represents “that acute suffering and inner darkness which usually precedes the awakening of the soul.”

Further on, Dante soon finds himself at the “edge of the wood’s beginning,” an image which invokes a numinous transitional threshold. He then looks up and sees a mountain with its top “shawled in the morning rays of light.” This light immediately calms the fear held in the “lake of his heart.” Assagioli (*ibid.*) describes this decisive moment as when the soul is awakened. One could also say that the mountain top represents Dante’s vision of the Self, and the morning light is pure consciousness and will descending to touch and awaken his “I.” This awakening occurs during his darkest hour and allows him to glimpse the joyful bliss that synthesis promises.



Dante runs away from the three beasts and meets Virgil (colored drawing by William Blake)



Gustave Doré's engraving of Dante in the dark woods.

Naturally, Dante desires to receive more of this light and immediately begins to climb towards it. But this straightforward approach is not the journey he is meant to take, because a wild beast immediately blocks his way. This beast turns out to be a leopard, soon followed by a lion and then a she-wolf, which ultimately forces Dante to give up his quick ascent up the mountain. Assagioli (p. 157) states that the leopard symbolizes the “attractions and temptations of the senses,” while the lion is spiritual pride and the she-wolf “the very essence of separateness, of selfishness.” Assagioli’s interpretation corresponds with contemporary critics who see these animals as symbolizing three specific sins: lust, pride, and avarice. More recent research has shown

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that these beasts are best thought of as types of sins, which map onto Dante's three divisions of Hell. The she-wolf is the image of weakness of self-indulgence, the fierce lion of the willful sins of violence, and the leopard of the sins that involve conscious fraud and betrayal. These three animals are symbolic manifestations of will and love energy run amok, creating havoc in our lives. Such energies typically appear as subpersonalities over whom we have yet to gain conscious awareness and control. In his seminal essay, *Self-realization and Psychological Disturbances*, Assagioli discusses how once the soul is awakened, the personal ego also "re-awakens and asserts itself with renewed force" (2000, p. 43). He writes:

Sometimes it even happens that lower propensities and drives, hitherto lying dormant in the unconscious, are vitalized by the inrush of higher energy or stirred into a fury of opposition by the consecration of the awakening man.

Hence, the beasts can also be viewed as symbolic of this fury of unconscious lower energy awakened by the hilltop light of higher energy. Without doubt, they are opposed to and challenge Dante's journey upward towards this light.

The moment the wolf forces Dante "back to where the sun is mute," he sees a figure and cries out for pity. After experiencing the light, Dante is forced back to his dark wood, but now he is suffering so acutely that he cries out for help. And just as he realizes he needs help, help appears. As Assagioli so beautifully reminds us:

Help from above is always at hand; it is never denied. We ourselves are the only obstacles that make that help seem distant (1993, p. 158).

The figure turns out to be Virgil, the great Roman poet born in 70 B.C., whom Dante had studied with deep love for many years.

You are my teacher, the first of all my authors,
And you alone the one from whom I took
The noble style that was to bring me honor.
(Hell, Canto 1: 84-87)

In these few lines, we can clearly see that Virgil is a teacher who bestows honor. He is, in fact, the poet's poet. Most critics believe that Virgil is the symbolic personification of Reason; Dorothy Sayers (1949) writes that Virgil is the image of Human Wisdom. For Assagioli, Virgil symbolizes "spiritual discrimination" which is essential for guiding the personality along the right path.

In psychosynthesis terms, Virgil acts as the ideal guide, teaching Dante to be in relationship with his authentic "I." Assagioli encourages us to extensively explore the vast regions of our unconscious through various psychosynthesis methods. He further states that this search for our personality is more easily accomplished with the help of another. A key to understanding Virgil is his relationship to Dante. Throughout their journey together, Virgil empathically mirrors Dante, offering him tools and insights for achieving discernment. As Assagioli (2000, p. 187) states, "Virgil leads Dante on his pilgrimage, helping him, encouraging him, explaining to him the various phases of the [psychosynthesis] process." Through this intense relationship, Virgil not only gives Dante a sense of being but also a connection to another, which is an outer expression of Dante's own "internal unifying center" as expressed through his I-Self connection (Firman and Gila, 2002).

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Dante is “lost in tears” when Virgil explains:

But you must journey down another road.

...
if ever you hope to leave this wilderness.

...
And so, I think it best you follow me
For your own good, and I shall be your guide
And lead you out through an eternal place
where you will hear desperate cries, and see
tormented shades, some old as Hell itself,

...
And later you will see those who rejoice
while they are burning, for they have hope of coming,
whenever it may be, to join the blessed—

to whom, if you too wish to make the climb,
a spirit, worthier than I, must take you;
I shall go back, leaving you in her care.

(Hell, Canto I: 91, 93, 112-116, 118-123)

In these lines, Virgil offers his help and briefly outlines the entire journey, explaining that a female spirit, more worthy than himself, will accompany Dante for the final climb “to join the blessed.” It is clear that Dante cannot take the direct path up the mountain to the light of the Self, but first must make a pilgrimage through Hell, which represents his lower unconscious in order to understand it and bring it under control. Next he must climb the mountain of Purgatory and pass through the fires of purification in order to redeem and transform his lower nature. Only then will he be able to once more continue his climb towards the light and join the blessed in Paradise. As Jungian psychologist Helen Luke writes, the journey of individualization must be a fully conscious choice down to the center of the darkness of the soul and then beyond to the realization and acceptance of individual responsibility in Purgatory before there is the inner space to experience the intuitions of bliss. She states:

We cannot bypass the experience of Hell; and still less can we evade the long struggle of Purgatory, through which we come to maturity in love (1995, p. xvii).

Coming to maturity in love is the ultimate bliss found on the mountaintop of Paradise. But who is this female spirit that Virgil says is worthier than he? We will meet her in Canto II, but perhaps it is best to introduce her here. Beatrice was born in Florence and was Dante’s childhood friend and neighbor. A muse for his early poetry, she died when only 24. As one of the greater images in the *Divine Comedy*, Beatrice represents a personal friend of Dante’s as well as the transpersonal aspect of Divine Wisdom. We might ask why Beatrice did not accompany Dante the entire way; why did he need Virgil at all? As Assagioli states:

Divine wisdom is not revealed to Dante directly: in his impure, unregenerate state, man is unable to directly contemplate the supreme truth. Thus Beatrice

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sends Virgil to arouse and inspire the power of awareness already present in ordinary man.

Virgil, symbolic of Human Wisdom, cannot journey past the Earthly Paradise in Purgatory and into Paradise. From a psychosynthesis point of view, Virgil can only guide Dante towards *personal psychosynthesis*.

Assimilating and integrating superconscious energies requires Beatrice to guide him towards *spiritual psychosynthesis*. In other words, until Dante has harmonized and coordinated his conscious and unconscious material into an authentic personal “I,” he cannot be guided by Beatrice towards his transpersonal Self, by way of his Divine Wisdom.

At the end of Canto I, Dante begs Virgil to save him from the evil wood, and together they begin moving forward, with Dante close behind Virgil. But no sooner do they start, when, at the beginning of Canto II, Dante wavers. He wonders if he can trust himself to journey this arduous road. Assagioli acknowledges that the effort to expand the personal consciousness into that of the Self is a “tremendous undertaking . . . a magnificent endeavor, but certainly a long and arduous one, and not everybody is ready for it” (2000, p. 21). Dante suddenly has all kinds of excuses. He claims he is not worthy, claims it would be an act of folly. “But why am I to go? Who allows me?” he cries, declaring that he is neither Aeneas nor Saint Paul, two previous travelers to Hell and Paradise respectively. Dante clearly illustrates our reluctance to begin the tough, long road of psychosynthesis. Right at the start, the Saboteur subpersonality appears to repress the beginner’s initial act of will.

But Virgil, whose discernment is clear, prevails by identifying the cowardice in Dante’s soul:

Your soul is burdened with that cowardice
which often weighs so heavily on man,
it turns him from a noble enterprise
like a frightened beast that shies at its own shadow.

(Hell, Canto II: 45-48)

Dante feels afraid and projects this fear onto the journey. Virgil, however, clearly understands that Dante is really frightened of his own shadow, his unexplored unconscious. In order to free him from this fear, Virgil explains why he has come to Dante’s aid. Beatrice, his generous childhood friend in Heaven, has urged Virgil to help Dante on his journey. The initiative, however, first came from the grace of the Virgin Mary, who traditionally signifies mercy and compassion in Christian thought. She turned to St. Lucy, whose name means “light,” who then went to Beatrice, who was moved by her love for Dante to send Virgil. When Dante hears that “three such gracious ladies, who are blessed . . . in Heaven’s court” have come to his aid, his fear is released. Assagioli states that the three women, Mary, Lucy, and Beatrice symbolize divine Grace, Light (or Illumination), and Wisdom respectively. These transpersonal qualities from our superconscious are always available for our spiritual development. But, as Assagioli (1993, p. 159) asserts, to attain such qualities for our lifetime requires us to follow that “long difficult path of purification and expiation across the kingdoms of [our] lower nature.”

At the end of Canto II, Dante’s fear is banished, and he says to Virgil:

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Let us start, for both our wills, joined now, are one.
You are my guide, you are my lord and teacher.”
These were my words to him and, when he moved,
I entered on that deep and rugged road.

(Hell, Canto II: 139-142)

Canto II shows us the synthesis of love and will and the power that it can extend over our lives. Beatrice’s love activates the will of Virgil, and together love and will synthesize into a power that can dispel Dante’s fear and reactivate his spiritual growth. This symbolic synthesis of love and will occurs in complex multi-layered relationships—Beatrice to Virgil, Virgil to Dante, Dante to Beatrice. Through such life-affirming relationships, both personal and universal, we can find the mirroring that we so much need to ignite our courage, redeem our wounds, resurrect our authentic selves, and commit to our true life paths.

Much later in Purgatory, before Dante enters the Earthly Paradise, Virgil as guide and companion gives way to Beatrice. Virgil’s final counsel is:

Expect no longer words or signs from me.
Now is your will upright, wholesome, and free,
And not to heed its pleasure would be wrong:
I crown and miter you lord of yourself!

(Hell, Canto II: 139-142)



Dante meets Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise
by John William Waterhouse

At the beginning of their journey, Dante joins his will to Virgil’s and accepts Virgil as his lord. But at the end, their wills are completely decoupled when Virgil acknowledges that Dante’s is “upright, wholesome, and free,” and crowns him lord over himself. In psychosynthesis terms, Dante has become the director of his synthesized subpersonalities and has redeemed their transpersonal qualities. Able to decouple harmful images or complexes and control and utilize their freed energies, he can now follow his desires without danger. The beasts that first blocked his way have been integrated and synthesized. As he leaves Virgil and joins Beatrice, Dante’s journey continues through the ten successive Heavens towards Divine Light, Love, and Joy.

We hope this brief introduction has offered a perspective on how, in Assagioli’s words, the *Divine Comedy* can be “a wonderful description and guide for the inner life and for spiritual development.” To study Dante’s work is a lifetime endeavor just as our journey through psychosynthesis, but together they complement and reflect each other. ■

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About the Authors

Catherine Ann Lombard, M.A. has been counseling clients since 2008. She is an artist and published writer, including numerous articles on psychosynthesis. **Dr. Kees den Biesen** is an independent scholar in literature, philosophy and religion, specialized in the poetry and theology of Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 300-373) and Dante Alighieri (1265-1321). He lectures about literature, personal growth and religion at Dutch universities and leads several Dante reading groups. Catherine and Kees have been married 14 years and are now offering meditative, small-scale Dante trips in Tuscany and elsewhere in Italy. You can follow Catherine's blog and contact them at www.LoveandWill.com



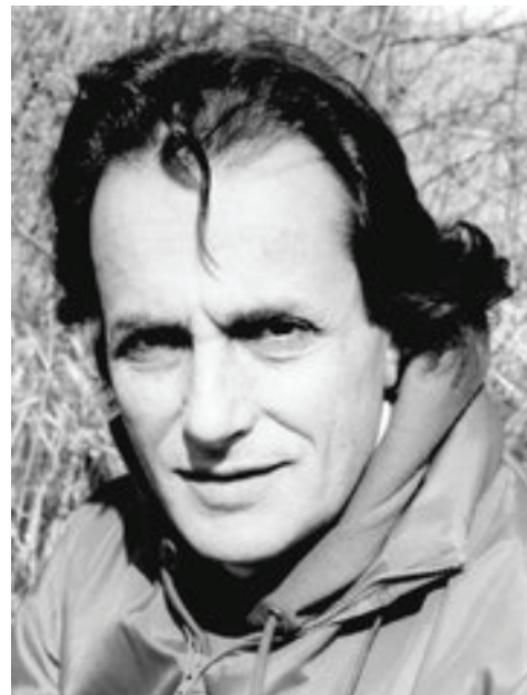
Dante shows his Comedy to Florence and points out the three stages of the journey to which he invites his readers (painted by Domenico di Michelino in 1465, the second centenary of Dante's birth):

In Memoriam: Richard Grossman *Richard Schaub*

Dick Grossman, who died on January 27, 2014, at the age of 92, was Assagioli's editor on the Viking edition of *The Act of Will*. He and Assagioli enjoyed a lively dialogue around the forming of the book, including Assagioli's comment that he'd like to re-write the book but was too old to change it. The publication of *Act of Will* in 1974 was the same year that Assagioli died.

Dick was involved in the early involvement of psychosynthesis coming to California. Colleagues with Michael Murphy (the founder of Esalen) and Stuart Miller, Dick found out about Assagioli when they returned from Italy, telling Dick that they had found a sage in Florence for the newly developing humanistic psychology movement.

After a career in publishing, which included ushering in Ralph Nader's groundbreaking book, *Unsafe at Any Speed*, Dick became interested in alternative medicine and psychotherapy. He eventually became director of the Center for Health in Medicine at New York's Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center and trained many new doctors in social, psychological and systems thinking. When he and I gave a talk in 2012 at the Integrative Healthcare Symposium at the Hilton in New York, many now-experienced doctors came up to him with great affection and reminded him that they had been in his classes. He also served on the faculty of the family medicine department at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York and was a group leader in the Washington, DC, Smith Center for Healing and the Arts program for patients with cancer. He didn't leave publishing entirely.



A tireless writer, he published many books, including two on Emerson; *A Year with Emerson* (2003); *The Tao of Emerson* (2007).

I met Dick through one of those wonderful coincidences. I showed up on the wrong day for an Ericksonian hypnosis training class and couldn't get into the locked building. Dick showed up, too, and soon enough we figured out we had both made the same mistake. We got to talking, and when he found out that I was a co-director of the New York Psychosynthesis Institute, the Assagioli conversations started to flow. Dick felt a lifelong connection to Assagioli and the promise of psychosynthesis, which he strongly felt still could be fulfilled. He would speak to me about it often. In his writing den in Salisbury, Connecticut, photos of Assagioli were prominently on the wall.

I deeply miss the conversations we had. I heard about his death through his wife, Ann. She called me and said that Dick had done "what a 92 year old is supposed to do – die," and added that he had breathed in, breathed out, breathed in and then passed on. I'm sure, in his strong bond with psychosynthesis, that his inner practice was guiding the way. ■

[See also a N.Y. Times obituary at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/02/books/richard-grossman-crusading-publisher-of-1960s-dies-at-92.html?_r=0]

ON AGING

Shamai Currim



I am at a crossroad of life, and I hesitate, fearing the road chosen will be the truth path. Life has been difficult and I wonder how much inner strength is left to climb the boulders and swim the seas. As I age, I think differently, and understand life through different eyes. I am no longer looking forward to many years of learning and growing. Yes, that will be there, and I am balancing that movement with the wetness that has been my life.

When I was growing up there was no mention of death, or aging. Our elderly were hidden away in homes and we dutifully visited them once a week on family day. I don't remember a warm arm around my shoulders or a pat on the head for a job well done. We sat quietly, dutifully, until our parents took us home. We couldn't play noisily as we did at home. We couldn't run around boisterously with good intention. We dressed up, as if our lives depended on how we looked, and how we behaved.

My life with my grandchildren is one of lively engagement. Life has a way of filling us with more, if only we allow ourselves to indulge. Yes, my grandkiddies tire me out, and in a way that I wouldn't exchange for anything in this world. They remind me of my vulnerability and my compassion. They give me a chance to fill my pot of love and allow it to tip over. They encourage me to learn new skills and to admit defeat. My grandchildren give me a mirror to what was, and in turn I am able to see what lies ahead of me. Aging can be both a kindly and difficult process. I do believe our head space and health play a big role. Keeping healthy in body, mind, and soul is the essence of acceptance. I know I am aging. It isn't difficult to see the wrinkles and the slowing down of my body and mind. My grey hair gives credence to the wisdom of my living, for in having lived I have learnt. I give away my books, clean up my drawers and cupboards in anticipation of my children doing a thorough cleaning when I no longer am able. Do I hide my past or revel in my sins?

I write to remind us all, old and young, that age comes. It's meant to! It's a reminder of our past, our present, and our future. It's nature's way of telling us that nothing lasts forever. It's a way for us to create, and enjoy the time of creation, for that too will pass. I am both young and old, have the ability to contain both, and have the wisdom to know the difference. You won't find me wearing mini skirts anymore, and another tat won't hurt my image. I am . . . all that I was, all that I am, and all that I hope to be. In my image I am surrounded by all of me, and we laugh and joke about how seriously we used to take life. The beauty of aging is that I can now laugh at myself, with joy and wisdom. ■



Shamai Currim, PhD, received her psychosynthesis training at Psychosynthesis Pathways of Montreal, and credits much of her early work to its founder and trainer Olga Denisko. Shamai is a retired therapist, educator, and educational consultant and trainer as well as a mother, grandmother, and wife. She is author of the book Meaghan's Story as well as numerous articles in professional journals, and has presented at many conferences, the last presentation being called The Essence of Time. Shamai is currently a cochair of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis, along with Dirk Kelder. She is an initiate of Sant Mat/Shabd Yoga and a disciple of the current living master, Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj.

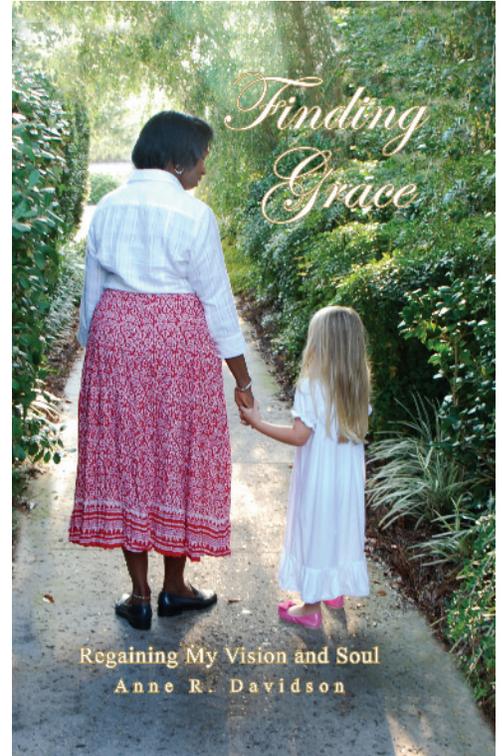
book announcement

FINDING GRACE by Anne R. Davidson

What happened to the little girl left by Aibileen in *The Help*?

AAP member Anne Davidson gives you a possible answer to such a question with her powerful new memoir, *Finding Grace—Regaining my Vision and Soul*. With the departure of Grace at age five, Anne lost the “Brown Mother” who had saved her from her birth mother’s physical and mental abuse. Anne hid her grief in a withdrawn personality until she was healed in psychotherapy at twenty, regaining the ability to find joy in love, dance, raising children, and intentional living. While doing African-based choreography in her Dutch studio, she had riveting flashbacks that forced her to begin a challenging journey to truth and her black roots. With the help of therapists and the teachers of Contemplative Dance, she was able to overcome the PTSD that remembering the violent truths of her childhood created.

In the chapter entitled “Psychosynthesis and Feeling Black,” Anne describes the pillow-talk role-playing taught by Didi Firman in her summer intensive that helped her isolate the different parts of her personality, using this tool to imagine an amazing conversation—in dialect—between her white and black selves. Anne has joyfully reengaged with her black side, joining an African-American club where she lives and has found warm friendships. As well, Anne has embraced the spiritual quality of forgiveness that her nanny Grace had possessed and which has helped her heal. Anne’s Introduction demonstrates the way decisions of the present are programmed by unconscious influences from the past. Her Epilogue illustrates the unconscious psychological split in our society that allows white citizens to treasure the gifts and talents of black culture while simultaneously treating black people as if they were lesser citizens. ◼



After working with Anne for many years, I find her story to be a remarkable one. As a child, she suppressed the sight in one of her eyes in order to distance herself from the real world, flattening it and seeing it in 2-D rather than 3-D. As an adult, Anne looked into that eye and found scenes of abuse which had been stored there for nearly forty years. *Finding Grace* will be of great value to optometrists, psychologists, and all those suffering from visual misalignment.

—Dr. Phyllis Liu, OD, FCOVD
Behavioral Optometrist
specializing in Visual Therapy

http://www.amazon.com/Finding-Grace-Regaining-Vision-Soul/dp/1492767549/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1399677676&sr=1-2&keywords=Finding+Grace+by+Anne+Davidson

A Reflection on “Inspiration on the Spiritual Journey”

Judi White



Table Top on the horizon
as the sun rose in its full glory

Hedi Weiler’s Spring retreat, “Inspiration on the Spiritual Journey,” was held at Wild Acres Retreat Center, on a mountain top in North Carolina near New Switzerland in the Blue Ridge Mountain range. The view was an endless, breathtaking panorama, overlooking mountains all around and trees beginning to bud. Mount Mitchell, the highest peak in the Appalachians, stood in the distance one way, while Table Top stood out boldly in another direction. Rhododendrons filled with buds were everywhere, beckoning a return visit sooner rather than later. The sun was shining every day, even though rain was forecast, warming the otherwise cool, crisp air.

Travel to the Retreat Center meant a drive up the mountain, spiraling round and round, the first clue of the journey for the four days ahead. The driver, Marilyn Wedberg, picked up Janet Messer at the airport in Charlotte, and then me in Hickory.

The group numbered fifteen, including Hedi. Some had participated in every retreat Hedi has offered; a few others had attended some before, and the rest of us were there for the first time. The group met in one of the “cottages” designed for group meetings. We all sat in a circle each time we gathered, in a group which included four couples. Among us, some were psychosynthesis practitioners and some were new to psychosynthesis.

Each morning after breakfast, we began with a different Hindu chant, which proved to be a powerful way to bring the group into a common center around the circle. We then participated in a process of receiving a word, such as “courage” or “seeds,” followed by consecutive reflective meditation, receptive meditation, and creative meditation. We then shared our insights with another



The tulips in the center piece opened widely
when the group was in session...,



Apple blossoms spotted on an afternoon walk.

and with the group. Each day included a time of silence from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. Some of us took walks and hikes, some took photos, some rested, and others created art forms such as making beads.

Each evening we participated in a spiraling process of focusing on creating plans to manifest our purpose for attending the retreat. The process was a meditative form of life coaching—envisioning the outcome, determining the obstacles, bringing in allies to support success, and naming practical next steps. I wanted to be inspired to

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finish writing the story of recent life-changing events—having written extensively about them already—but needed a solid framework for completing my work. During this process time, I sourced the “aha” I needed to do this. The “aha” was anything but pragmatic; it was the purpose of Soul, centered in the Heart of the Divine, which we were experiencing as unfathomable and infinite.

Each day, Hedi spun a short course on the basic premises of psychosynthesis—simple, yet easy to understand. Through these short lessons, Hedi’s mastery of psychosynthesis became evident as she guided us through each session. I would venture to say that it has been years since I have been in a group where the leader was so completely in tune with each person’s heart and soul. Every night ended with singing, which continued when the group dispersed, leaving the day’s end with a warm glow, as if we were sitting around a campfire.

As Marilyn, Janet, and I wound our way back down the mountain at the end of the Retreat, we were different. Coming up the mountain, we were professional colleagues bonded in psychosynthesis practice; coming down the mountain, we were sisters of the Soul, intimate colleagues who now shared a common heart. We are the light workers of this time in history, born to sit in a circle and move out from the circle to be of service to the highest good in all.



One of the many scenic trails through the 600 acre estate.



The 15 participants in the Retreat.

Judi White is a former cochair of AAP.

I was privileged to sit in a circle of the Higher Self, in which fifteen Souls supported the great potential in each and all. I was—and am—so proud to be among those of you who practice psychosynthesis, taking this wellspring of unconditional love to the world in so many different ways.

These spiritual gatherings are so important for psychosynthesis. There is something miraculous in the energy that is released by meditating together, traveling to the Higher Self—and beyond—and returning to share the Wisdom received.

I sit alone in meditation in the village where I live. I have a circle of light around me now, those with whom I shared sacred space from April 21 to 24, 2014 at Wild Acres Retreat Center in the Blue Ridge Mountains. ☐

AAP AWARDS MINI-GRANT

The Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis (AAP) is pleased to announce the awarding of a \$500.00 mini-grant to Catherine Ann Lombard to support a research project titled “The contribution of psychosynthesis to the culture shock and post-traumatic growth research: A new perspective in the scientific literature.” Ms. Lombard is working on a paper she hopes to publish in a peer-related journal in the coming year. AAP has additional funds available for another mini-grant to support psychosynthesis research. Contact the AAP Cochairs for further information.

Email cochairs@aap.psychosynthesis.org.

book announcement

The Dance of We: The Mindful Use of Love and Power in Human Systems *by Mark Horowitz*

In his new book, *The Dance of We*, Mark Horowitz draws from his many years of work in psychosynthesis and as an organizational development consultant to explain the powerful systemic forces that impact us in our families, our workplaces and our social and political systems. Using humor, current events, and stories from his own life, including his early years in a cult, Mark describes four characteristics of dysfunctional human systems and four principles for balancing love and power in order to make those systems more Life-affirming. *The Dance of We* is available now through Mark's website, www.newcontextcoaching.com and soon through Amazon and Barnes & Noble, and by nagging your local booksellers. You can also sign up for Mark's mailing list at his website, or contact him about his teaching or workshops via email at mark@newcontextcoaching.com. ◻

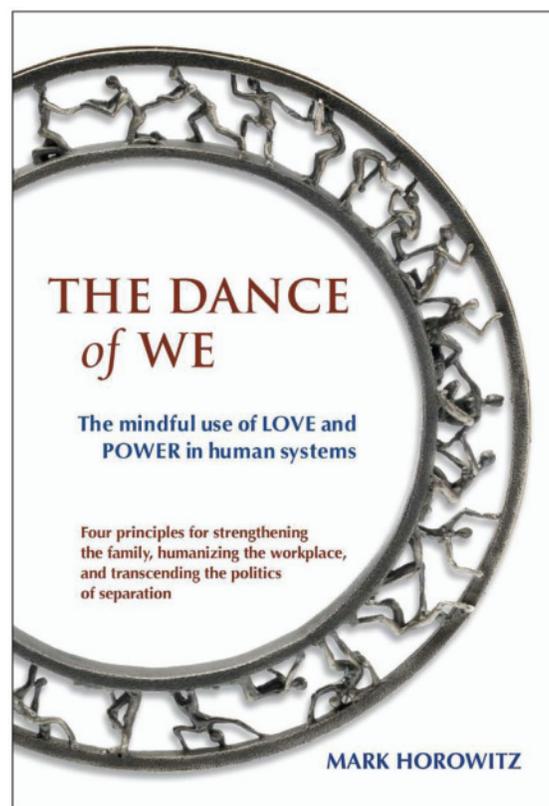
Some early praise for *The Dance of We*:

This is a book that every helping professional should read, because if we delude ourselves into thinking that any client has a problem that is theirs alone, we are not doing our job. Every client, every diagnosis, every move towards health is embedded in systems. As we turn our eyes to the bigger picture, we can help our clients, and ourselves, to take a just and rightful place in the world. —Dr. Dorothy Firman, president of *The Synthesis Center*, in Amherst MA, director of its *Transformational Life Coach Training*, professor of psychology, and the author of a number of books including, most recently, *Engaging Life: Living Well with Chronic Illness*.

In reading the *Dance of We* I experienced both relief and insight: relief, because it makes complex predicaments simple; insight, because it discloses connections between widely different situations, and it clearly explains a variety of difficulties we must face every day. But that is not all. This book had a subtler, deeper effect on me, and I trust it will have the same on other readers: its beauty is that it removes the obstacles between you and your heart.—Piero Ferrucci, author of *The Power of Kindness* and *Your Inner Will*

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Mark Horowitz does a remarkable job in this insightful and practical book, helping us to see and understand the system dynamics and dysfunctions of our families and organizations. Mark demonstrates how we can transform our human systems into Life-affirming ones, through the power of Life itself as it manifests uniquely through each of us. —Molly Young Brown, author of *Growing Whole: Self-realization for the Great Turning*, and co-author with Joanna Macy of *Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to the Work That Reconnects*.



Psychosynthesis and Chronic Psychiatric Patients *Michael Follman, New York Psychosynthesis Institute*

The staff I trained with at the New York Psychosynthesis Institute had extensive experience in in-patient and out-patient hospital settings, and so it always seemed clear that I could apply my training to my work setting—an in-patient, long-term state psychiatric facility. The patients, frequently treated with large dosages of medication, also had in them the potentials for “consciousness and choice,” which I viewed as the core of Assagioli’s teachings. There is the suffering that comes with mental illness, and then there is the compounded suffering that comes with feeling helpless. I believe that finding a creative way to bring “consciousness and choice” to people in states of even severe suffering can reduce the pain of their experience.

Here are three case examples of consciousness and choice in action with chronic psychiatric patients.

1. A.B. was a long term patient on a ward for aggressive and suicidal individuals. He was in his late 30s and remained actively delusional and frequently heard voices. He was in a group with me where we discussed anger management techniques, with emphasis on learning to choose how to behave no matter what you were feeling or “hearing.”

The incident I vividly remember represented several that had occurred with A.B. He was standing against a wall threatening to “kill” anyone who came close to him (he was well over 6 feet and broad). The staff removed other patients from the area and slowly formed a semi-circle around A.B., telling him over and over to calm down. This seemed to only agitate him more.

Having had a therapeutic relationship with A.B., I walked forward and began to talk to him in a calm voice. I told him that I knew he was angry, and it was okay to be angry, and then I told him that even though he was angry he did not have to become his anger. I told him that I knew him well enough to know that he was much more than his anger. Despite hearing voices, he was able to hear my message and, in a relatively short time, calmed down. Recognizing and validating his anger and reminding him that he had a choice of how to react to his anger—that he was more than his anger—helped A.B. realize that he could choose, and therefore reduce his feeling of helplessness even in the face of delusionally created anger.

After that episode, I began to train the staff in using that disidentification technique and, over time, there were less violent incidents on the ward.

2. I had been seeing C.D. in therapy on the in-patient unit for a few months. He was 19 years old and very hyperactive and provocative. He had been transferred to the unit after he “aged out” of a children’s psychiatric center.

We had been discussing his fears, and the troubles he had with his parents. He had been adopted as an infant by a fundamentalist Christian minister and his wife. Though he never brought it up with me, it was apparent that this young man had homosexual tendencies and was quite alienated from himself and his family.

One day he came to my office and told me he had a recurring dream that he was dead and his family members were sitting all around his deathbed. We discussed how images can have deeper meanings than just their surface. With some relaxation and guidance, I then had him “re-enter” this image, and explore how each person in the image felt. He was surprised to find that they were all very sad and mournful. We

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then explored what would happen if—since this was his image—he became alive again. He indicated that everyone in his family was happy and they all went out to have a barbeque in the back yard (a favorite family pastime). He was greatly relieved when he realized that his family truly loved him despite their difficulties with him, most of which were caused by his impulsive reactions to people.

After this imagery session, we discussed how personal images can represent an inner truth that has to be explored beyond the obvious surface representations of the image. In our sessions we continued to explore the idea that he always had a choice on how to behave no matter what he was feeling at the time. About a month after the dream session, he came to me saying he was feeling helpless to control his impulsive reactions. He agreed to try a clinical imagery session.

In the session, he was asked to “see” himself walking down a path in a meadow, calm but alert to his surroundings. Then he was asked to follow a curve in the path that led him toward a deep dark wood. As he approached the woods, I suggested that in his mind’s eye he allow an image to form of that part of him that was so impulsive, and, as he got closer to the woods, he was asked to ‘cover’ himself in a protective white light that would not allow anything bad to happen to him. As he entered the woods, he reported seeing a dark amorphous energy field. I told him to do what was best for him at this time: this was a cue to trust his intuition. When he got close enough to the dark field, he reached out of his protective light and grabbed hold of it. After some struggle, he began to dissolve the dark field in his hands until it became minuscule and nonexistent (and therefore within his control).

When he came out of this session, he felt hopeful and could finally believe that he could help himself to learn to control his impulsivity. Over the next several months, we continued to explore ways that could help him become less impulsively reactive to his emotions and therefore able to choose how to behave. He was discharged soon afterwards. He later came ‘out of the closet’ and finished his college degree. To my knowledge, he was never re-hospitalized.

3. E.F. was a long-term patient in his late 40’s. He had been incarcerated in a secure facility, and now a local psychiatric facility for almost 29 years.

He had been sexually abused by a family member as a child. In his early teens, he tried to tell other family members, but they all became angry at him and eventually he was thrown out of his home. In an effort to survive these and other traumatic events, he began to use drugs which led to his daily dependence on marijuana as a form of self-medication. Along with his lack of trust of authority figures, his drug use triggered paranoid delusions (an underappreciated side effect of marijuana often), which eventually led him to threaten a police officer. This led to years of psychiatric incarceration within a secure facility. He went on to have many incidents, in the various hospitals, involving aggressive, threatening reactions to authority figures. These incidents only prolonged his secure status in the hospitals.

I began seeing E.F on an individual basis as part of an in-hospital Dialectical Behavior Training (DBT) program. In time, he did begin to talk about his past before and during his hospitalizations. We explored how his reactive behaviors had some ‘good’ reasons behind them and even his paranoia made sense due to his childhood experiences which generated his fearful lack of trust. These sessions began to open up E.F.’s defenses (explored through the use of modified subpersonality work) enough so that he began to pay attention to the DBT skills training which included mindfulness training. Over about a three-year period, he began to develop his self-knowledge of his own emotions and thoughts. He realized that he

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could choose where he wanted to place his attention (consciousness and choice), and he began to test out his ability to just accept his reactive emotions without reacting to them. Eventually his reduced reactive behaviors began to be noticed by the professional staff, and he began to receive privileges.

He presently has become so aware of his inner reactions that he can tell when he is becoming paranoid and can use his skills not to act from his paranoia. He has learned to redirect his attention toward realistic perceptions and/or to accept the paranoid thoughts (be with them) and not react to them.

In these three case examples, several psychosynthesis principles and practices are involved. Assagioli's model of the human psyche (the "egg diagram") allowed me to appreciate the spectrum of impulses in these patients, ranging from their fear-based aggression and paranoia to their capacity to observe (their "I" space) and their ability to choose (their will). I saw these principles begin to relax the patients because they now had new inner tools for dealing with their suffering.

From my own experiences during and continuing after my psychosynthesis training I was able to approach such chronically ill patients, especially during therapy session, as if I were speaking to the 'healthy' part of their self. I assumed that such an approach would trigger some of the energy from their higher consciousness and eventually lead toward choices that were healing and no longer helpless. ■



Michael Follman has an MA in psychology from the University of Connecticut and is a retired state psychologist who leads groups in meditation and transpersonal development. He is certified in psychosynthesis by the New York Psychosynthesis Institute.



Wednesday Evening, Oct. 29 – Sunday 3 pm, Nov. 2, 2014



HARVESTING YOUR GIFTS FOR THE WORLD in this Time of Global Crisis

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[River's Bend Retreat Center](http://www.riversbendretreat.org/) in Mendocino County**

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**With Molly Young Brown & Constance Washburn
& special guest teacher Joanna Macy**

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We face many life-shattering crises today: climate change, income inequality, environmental destruction, institutionalized greed, to name a few. These crises are more than we can bear alone, so let us come together to share our despair, our dreams, and connect with our passions to participate in the **Great Turning**.

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Molly and Constance have spent many years with me learning and exploring the Work That Reconnects. Given their understanding and experience, as well as their vitality and smarts, I am delighted that they are bringing this life-changing work out into the world—and doing it together. —Joanna Macy

Molly Young Brown, MA, MDiv co-authored *Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to the Work That Reconnects with Joanna Macy*. She brings ecopsychology, psychosynthesis, and systems thinking to her work teaching online courses, writing books and essays, phone coaching, talks and workshops. Other publications: *Growing Whole: Self-realization for the Great Turning*, *Held in Love: Life Stories To Inspire Us Through Times of Change* (co-editor Carolyn Treadway), and *Lighting A Candle: Collected Reflections on a Spiritual Life*. Web site: MollyYoungBrown.com.

Constance Washburn MA is a facilitator of *The Work that Reconnects* and has been training with Joanna Macy since 1994. She has been a Buddhist practitioner since 1968. She has over 35 years of experience designing and directing education and outreach programs. For 18 years as Education Director at Marin Agricultural Land Trust she connected people to the land that inspired the local food movement. She brings her nature connection, mindfulness training, theater and education backgrounds together to create opportunities for people to reawaken to their interconnectedness.

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For more information and to register, please contact Molly at <http://mollyyoungbrown.com/contact-molly-young-brown/>

Thinking It Through: Psychosynthesis as a *Far Road* to Something Sustainable Yon Walls

I recently discovered an insightful quote that seems to apply to many areas of my life, most specifically to the practice of psychosynthesis and what it can offer toward the sometimes long and arduous path toward the *whole self* and optimal mental health. The African Proverb says:

“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”

From my perspective, the quote points to the basic nature of the relationship between guide and client. Unlike any fast fix of a client’s “problem,” it seems the best outcome is one that carefully, joyfully—and sometimes painfully—brings about a lasting wellness. Wellness also equips the client with tools for her or his sustainable growth and insight. The personal, spiritual, and imaginative techniques offered by psychosynthesis practice are internalized by the client and can be accessed when issues and problems present themselves afresh.

I’m slowly learning some of the approaches and techniques of Assagioli’s psychosynthesis practice, and learning (as any beginning student therapist is trained to know) that all effective therapy begins with knowledge of the client. As Assagioli says in his collection of basic writings, “in order to get a preliminary picture of the patient on the one hand, and to orient him toward introspection, or self-observation on the other hand, it is well to begin with a biography” (Assagioli, 2000, p. 62). These words by Assagioli provide the foundation of any counseling profession, while implying that any client has a history: past, present *and* future. This knowledge of the client is fodder for *going far*, and with a guide, *together*.

The *going far* relationship between the psychosynthesis guide and client offers the client the best potential for a robust hopefulness, the most vivid insights and lasting resilience. As a student and future Marriage and Family therapy practitioner, I’m excited by applied psychosynthesis as one therapeutic practice among a few that rises to the top as being both holistic and achievable. As an inclusive practice, it seems well fitted for our times and for “going the far road” for the client toward something sustainable. ■

Notes:

Assagioli, Roberto, MD, 2000. *Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Basic Writings*, Amherst MA, The Synthesis Center.



Yon Walls serves as student representative on the AAP Steering Committee, and is a first year student of counseling psychology at Sofia University, formally the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. She’s working toward a counseling specialization in Expressive Arts Therapy. As an author with an MFA in English and Creative Writing from Mills College, she currently works with individuals and groups as an Expressive Writing Coach. She’s also currently working with bereaved children and their families at a local hospital under the direction of an experienced Art Therapist.

book review

Engaging Life: Living Well With Chronic Illness

by Dorothy Firman, Ed.D.

Review by Jan Kuniholm

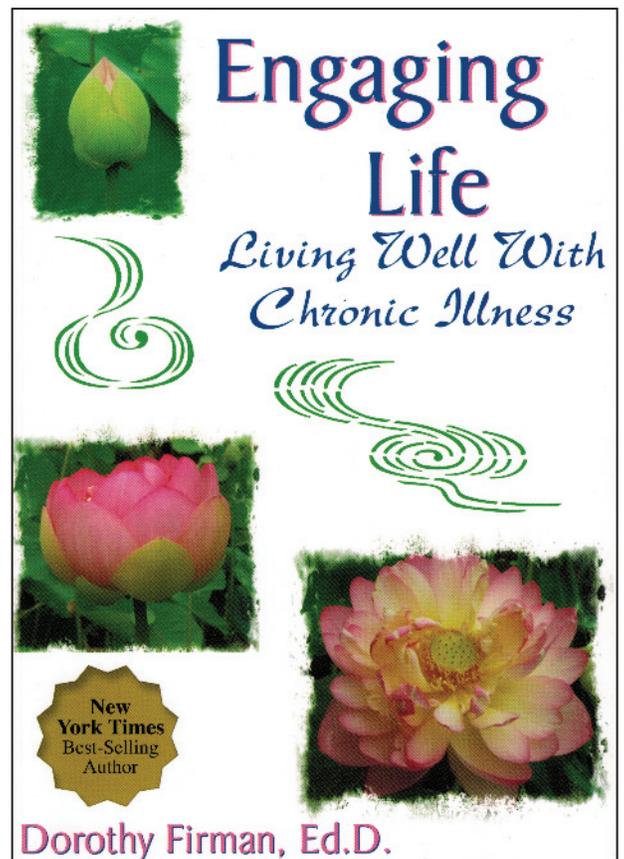
Dorothy Firman has written a wonderful book about living *well*. Its title suggests that it is directed toward people who are experiencing chronic illness, but it is also written for caregivers, family, friends, and others who experience the challenges associated with chronic illness. If truth be told, it provides beacons along the path of life that can light the way for all of us. She writes in an easy colloquial style that can be read alone, or aloud with others, as if she were just sitting beside you, talking person-to-person, gently but with power.

The author provides a way for the reader to open up, to counteract the tendency to shut down that often overcomes people with illness. This book provides a pathway that helps a person move beyond the limitations, confusion, hopelessness and despair that people with chronic illness may fall into by uncovering and strengthening the essential qualities of personhood that are the foundations of living well—with or without illness.

In fact, sadly, it is often the case that a person with an illness *becomes* a patient . . . Every person is more than that . . . The gift of being a person is never taken away. It cannot be. And you—the person you were before the diagnosis, the person you are now, and the person you will become—you are the most important element in this new and frightening equation. (p.20)

Firman takes us on a brief tour of some of the many unhelpful patterns through which a person may get lost in the *role* of patient, but then immediately begins to guide the reader toward a new understanding of how one can choose to have a good quality of life. The book then takes the reader along a winding path with suitable variations that can include almost anyone in such a situation, unfolding insights and providing exercises to practice living fully—and *well*—even when one's life includes a chronic illness.

I myself have been a cancer patient and have acted as caregiver to several members of my family who have had chronic illnesses, and I—along with some other reviewers of this book—can say that my journey might have been easier and better if I had had this book at the time. Its gifts are there for caregivers as well as patients, and the perspective it brings to the concerns of illness and wellness will be helpful to the professional who works in the medical and other helping professions. Living well arises out of both personal and interpersonal perspectives, out of acceptance and action, and finally out of “saying yes to life.” Good caregiving includes making time and space for such perspectives in the life of one's client or patient. Dorothy Firman's beautiful new book is a companion along the way for all of us who are touched by illness—personally or professionally—and a guide to engage fully as we go. ■





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Rebooting the Conflict-Brain: Three Coaching and Counseling Skills

Walter Polt

This article is about a workshop where I presented three ideas that we all can use with clients and ourselves. Reactions such as annoyance and concern are constantly derailing people's trains of thought, draining their energy, interrupting their conversations, and weakening their relationships. Although you may have clients with "anger problems," this article is about accepting and updating *normal* inner reactions and overreactions of annoyance and uneasiness hardwired into our clients' brains and all our brains. They're ordinary reactions, but they lead to wearying tension. We can simply and routinely turn natural, automatic instinctual reactions into advantages.

People could be using these moments every day to strengthen the ties that bind them to the people around them while steadily building brain power. First, they have to start recognizing them. Every time these moments appear, we can be aware of them without judging them. Once we and our clients learn to spot the tiny alarm bells whenever they go off inside and be gently mindful of them, we give ourselves new freedom for active exchanges, not only in ordinary interactions with our life partners, colleagues, and friends but also with foes and with people we don't even know.

I haven't noticed in the neuropsychology literature anyone explicitly highlighting, as I do, that over the centuries primitive survival instincts have been universally menacing normal, daily human interactions. However, many ancient teachings focus on normal, day-to-day experience, not just disorders. Examples are Buddhism as for example taught by Thich Nhat Hanh (Hanh, 2001) and Sufism as seen in the Rumi poem "The Guest House" (Rumi, Barks, 1997). They teach ordinary people to use mindfulness to radically transform the problems of day-to-day living. As for brain studies, they show that hardwired neurological mechanisms complicate the lives of people with severe disorders such as those related to anxiety, anger, and depression. One such mechanism is "negativity bias," the tendency to stay on guard for and remember forever any hint of a threat, but not watch for and treasure moments of blessing and safety (Siegel, R. 2010, p. 105). Another is the way the alarm bells can turn off brain centers of thought and empathy (Siegel, D., 2010, p. 214). Conceivably, in accord with these findings, these survival reactions may also be constantly complicating ordinary daily interactions for the average person at work and home.

Life coaches and counselors can alert their clients about identifying these as instinctual, automatically triggered oppositional reactions. Then clients can learn to routinely recognize those reactions in themselves without shame. Essentially, we can teach them about mindfulness. Mindfulness, now part of many kinds of therapy, is abundantly documented as physically enhancing the brain: it increases the density of the gray matter in crucial regions of the brain (Holzel, 2011), and it is useful for taming a wide range of serious disorders (Siegel, D., 2010, P. 85). For centuries, people have had to bravely but blindly sort out and manage as best they could the involuntary inner reactions in their bodies and souls, every day. The time has come to coach ordinary people to shine the gentle, non-judgmental light of mindfulness on all their normal, "scaled-down" versions of ancient, troublesome reactions.

What to Watch: Recognizing Inner Guard-Dog Instincts That Never Sleep

You see it happen all the time: not only clients but ordinary people around you tensing up about normal, small differences. Do you know those little moments of frustration? Of distrust? Times you're irritated; concerned;

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ready to correct somebody or give up on them? True, “small” is a relative term. To me, neuroscience is clearly demonstrating that we can benefit from watching for these small frustrations, and thinking of them as key moments for mindfulness. These are the low-hanging fruit, ready opportunities for change and inner relief.

Every moment is a good time to be mindful (non-judgmentally aware or self-aware). But the polarization resulting from these frustrations is not a trivial problem, because it causes such hard feelings and keeps so many things separate unnecessarily. People love their own perspectives, so when a contrasting perspective flashes in their brain as “opposition” or “wrong,” they often automatically push it away. We all can be part of the solution by starting to notice gently our inner reactions to seeming opposition and accepting ourselves with awareness whenever we see ourselves caught in the polarizing trance of having to be “right.” We can transform every one of those small moments into a big discovery moment. Not only are these reactions constantly available for practice; they’re also doable, because they’re small: everyone from beginners to masters can be mindful of them. If and when we do, it’s “hello” to a new future, because these small transformations are priceless in themselves, plus they are an excellent rehearsal for desperately needed big transformations.

Remember that the brain is hardwired to react with fear or hostility. So this wiring kicks in—not just in big confrontations, attacks, and challenges, but also in normal daily-life differences. Remember that these reactions are not just momentary thoughts or ordinary emotions; they are hardwired instincts that trip before we can think. They are our day-to-day varieties of survival devices such as “fight or flight.”

It’s hard to notice normal routine inner reactions to perceived opposition, because they are familiar—they are normal and routine! They have always been with us just below ordinary human radar. These inner guard-dog instincts are ancient but still in us, staying on the watch for hints of opposition or danger. And what have we been doing with these guard-dog instincts all these centuries? Acting on them—or trying to squelch them.

Because inner reactivity is a natural part of us all—yes, including nice, successful people—it could be a breakthrough to be coaching people to start identifying and calmly noticing their small but hard-to-calibrate reactions to small issues. That breakthrough might then even lead to routine successful mindfulness of larger, less manageable reactions—reactions even to “unmanageable” tragedies, misguided political movements, etc.

How to Watch: Making Mindfulness Routine

Know that we can habitually identify our small reactions. We can also notice them gently. Do we know that mindfulness can help? Neuroscience has been showing in multiple ways that it does. Experience it regularly for a while, starting this moment, and decide for yourself.

Mindfulness is an ancient, vast topic. So the focus here is on an easy form we and clients can have as a ready tool—not just to use in the meditation room like a stationary floodlight, but on the go—repeatedly, regularly, like a flashlight. I mainly think of mindfulness as simply being calmly *in the moment*, briefly and non-judgmentally—whether the moment is painful (experiencing grief or anger), joyful (being alive), pleasurable, or whatever. It is not acting in the moment, but rather noticing what is happening. It is being aware of what is happening in the “here and now.”

We’re focusing particularly on being mindful of the stresses that come from “normal differences with normal people” (NDNP). We’ve probably all seen how focusing on politics or world problems can derail the learning process in a workshop or coaching session.

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The objective is to make transformation routine. As an introductory experiment, or as a reminder if you already use mindfulness, take a moment now to be mindful (aware with acceptance) of your breathing. Check out what happens for you. (For example, my shoulders just relaxed.) Next, remember a time someone said something you wanted to challenge. Be gently mindful of that inner reaction of wanting to challenge. Do you recall the bodily or emotional feel of it? As you warmly accept that memory, see if you notice any change in your present experience. (For example, just now for me it was a grin of compassion for myself.)

That may remind you of ways that you and your clients already have been transforming some day-to-day reactions. Once you coach someone in regularly recognizing and flagging all such irritations and anxieties, the person can with a little persistence develop a habit of being gently mindful whenever these inner experiences occur, whether they're related to past memories or to immediate events.

Roberto Assagioli, founder of psychosynthesis as an educational and therapeutic worldview, was writing about this a century ago (Assagioli, 1999). He taught self-identification, or identifying with the Self, instead of with various feelings or parts of oneself. He put together ancient mindfulness practices and self-identification. Assagioli singled out our impulsive patterns (and here I'm including the minor irritation or anxiety we've been talking about) as part of a larger picture. When we are caught up in a grudge or dread or hatred, it is only *part* of our world, even while it discolors our whole world. Assagioli saw thoughts and instincts as connected but distinct psychological functions. This distinction is important. It explains why it's hard to *think* yourself out of instinct-process problems and why it takes something like mindfulness for people experiencing a stressful stimulus to move on and generate a caring response.

Holding Double Benefits

The overarching good news is that as mindfulness quickly restores surface calm, it can also be “rewiring” the underlying ancient, instinctive, “on-edge” neural pathways if used regularly and frequently. So the process keeps on giving and makes the following additional step easier. Once people notice their automatic urge to eliminate differences as if they are irreconcilable or in competition with each other, once they notice their scanning for “bad things,” they can see opposite good things more clearly and start to pull them together.

The Workshop

I presented a workshop at the Psychosynthesis conference in Burlington, VT, in June of 2013, on three coaching and counseling skills for rebooting our “conflict brain.” Readers of this article can immediately apply the concepts personally and in their work. Two cautions: First, mindfulness could take certain clients away from reality or overwhelm them emotionally. For them it may not be appropriate, at least without special help such as the remarkable work Michael Follman of the New York Psychosynthesis Institute described elsewhere in this *Psychosynthesis Quarterly* issue (pp. 18-20). But that's not usual. Since this is an article, not therapy, I encourage you to use this information wisely.

In the workshop, participants guide each other in three doable counseling and coaching tasks:

- (1) Regularly detect and identify normal inner instinctual reactions to differences and perceived opposition. The focus, again, is on reactions to normal differences with normal people.
- (2) Regularly be “mindful,” gently aware, of these reactions to NDNP. Participants practice guiding clients in a form of calm awareness to use routinely.

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- (3) Regularly put together the “opposite good things” that become easier to see on both sides. This opens the possibility of eventual synthesis. Many day-to-day irritations and arguments are opportunities for the synthesis process, which can convert unlikely pairs into unexpected possibilities.

The purpose is to help coaching and counseling clients practice “rebooting” or resetting what I call the “conflict-brain.” That’s my term for the complex brain activities we talked about that kick in automatically, repeatedly (and often unnoticed) in daily life like faithful guard dogs. The following are three activities from my workshop.

Activity I: Identifying instinctual inner reactions

In pairs, participants first take turns coaching each other in simply *recognizing* and *identifying* various normal but annoying or concerning happenings from their daily lives, and their instinctive self-defense reactions to these happenings. (This is a good opportunity for each person to start developing a pocket list of inner reactions they may want to get used to staying on the watch for.) Then they help each other select one event and reaction to use for practice in the rest of the workshop.

If any choices seem too political or global or intense for immediate workshop use, participants guide each other to find something *familiar and easy*. In particular, they’re identifying a reaction sparked by an NDNP to avoid turning the workshop into therapy or trying to handle serious diagnoses or mental disorders or anger management problems in this setting. Those may be extremely important, but are not the focus here. This practice is about coaching people to notice daily events and the *reactions* that tend to color or discolor their understanding of the events. (In the second step they will mindfully make use this heightened awareness.)

Examples of differences and reactions

Normal differences

with normal people (NDNP)

A spouse leaving socks around

Someone interrupting for the 15th time

“Customer service” putting you on hold again

Inner reactions

Irritation

The urge to give up in exasperation

Wanting to roll eyes in disbelief

Thoughts about this activity

While the reaction from someone’s inner guard dogs is often much more intense than seems warranted by the event or difference, the kind of reactions we’re looking for here are the following: the urge to correct or argue; a grudge; a pet peeve; expletives; a sigh; a feeling of something at stake (whether it is or isn’t); the urge to give up on someone; irritation; nervousness; wanting to control; needing to please (the “boot-licking” urge); the urge to close off or turn away, or withdraw, or leave; a groan; wanting to yell or hit; “That’s totally wrong!”; Going

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blank; feeling at a loss; mentally “demoting” a friend; blame; self-blame; self-devaluing; pain; “This is too much!”; “Oh, for crying out loud!”; seeing only your side as right; seeing only the other person’s side as right. Any one of these, whether a reaction or an overreaction, is always a prime reminder to take the next step: be mindful.

So once each participant has chosen an urge or inner reaction to focus on, it’s time for that next step. *It’s not important here whether or not the chosen reaction seems appropriate or useful in the person’s life.* Nor is the next step, mindfulness, intended to eliminate the reaction. It’s to give more choice—about whether to take action or about what action to take.

Activity II: Being mindful of these inner reactions

In pairs, each person gets a shot at being coach, as the other mentions aloud the daily-life internal instinctual reaction he or she chose in the first exercise. For example, “I get angry at a family member leaving boots in the hall.” Or “I get frightened and furious when another driver abruptly cuts in front of me.”

The person coaching slowly says one or all of the following:

“Be mindful of that memory and your inner reaction to it.”

“Without judgment, be aware of that reaction, and accept the inner experience as a natural instinct.”

“Notice what happens as you internally accept that reaction with compassion.”

After a silence, the two discuss any inner relief or changes noticed after the experience. Then they switch roles and repeat the process.

Thoughts about this activity

The point is to be able to guide or coach people in being accepting and kind to their internal instinctual reactions in daily life. Accepting their internal reaction gives them more choice about reacting or not reacting outwardly (for example, going with the urge to argue, close down, use profanity, etc.). If people react outwardly before they catch themselves, they can be accepting as soon as possible, even after the outward action. It’s never too late to be mindful. They’re entering a long-term practice of simply noticing and being mindful. This can even include imagining future events and rehearsing for them! Part of the habit is recognizing that these instincts are natural, and even bathing in gratitude that the instincts are working normally. A key is being lovingly attentive to the internal reaction, rather than fixating on the triggering event. This can be a life-changing routine: regularly integrating the powerful energy of instincts by welcoming them with acceptance or “loving attention!”

Mindfulness of self-preservation instincts is often effective. Things get better. More movement comes from mindfulness than from reacting to reactions! Typically people dislike reactions (at least other people’s). And so when they see adults or children reacting with exasperation, they feel inner reactions themselves. And no wonder: these are all instinctual reactions. Caring awareness, or mindfulness, breaks the chain, cuts the stress. And everybody can do this. Mindfulness is doable for the average person because it starts with gentleness to self.

The effects are immediate. We often feel a big internal change—plus, mindful behaviors can begin forming new neuron passageways that continue to grow with time. As Assagioli said long before the recent mindfulness research, “repetition of actions intensifies the urge to further reiteration and renders their execution easier and better, until they come to be performed unconsciously” (Assagioli, 1999, p. 57).

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The change (or rebooting) is generally relatively rapid—provided the relief, pleasure, and satisfaction that frequently follow mindfulness make it enjoyable enough to continue, or the person forms an intention and sticks to regular practice. That’s the key. It’s true that the brain sometimes is drawn to novelty, but in the words of Rosalind Till of the Connecticut Psychosynthesis Institute, “The brain *loves* the familiar!” Repeated mindfulness leads to familiarity and positive change.

The changes from mindfulness spread outward, like waves. Students of Assagioli have been among the many therapists and other leaders who have long been helping spread mindfulness practices by their mindful, gentle way of interacting with feelings, sensations, and subpersonalities. They were feeling the positive effects of mindfulness long before neuroscience caught on and started pinpointing these effects. That included me, but from neuroscience reports and mindfulness coaches I have come to understand better how to use this process frequently, minute to minute. I don’t wait for a coaching session or evening meditation.

Activity III. Discovering opposite good things and holding them together

In pairs, participants help each other identify a beneficial quality or intent in each of two internal instinctual reactions, one from each participant. (It’s great if they find opposite qualities, but “different” is good enough.) Then together the pair focuses gently on *both* qualities at the same time. That is, they are mindful of both. Three times alternately each in turn softly repeats his or her chosen quality, very slowly, allowing time for silence as they both hold the expanded focus on both with gentle acceptance. (For example, “Efficiency”... “Safety”... “Efficiency”... “Safety”... “Efficiency”... “Safety”....)

Afterward they stay silent as they make notes on any sensations, ideas, and imagery. As they share experiences they’re not just observing *similarities* between the two opposites but also appreciating the *differences*—and any hint of surprises to come, such as the possibility of the qualities merging into a third unexpected new reality.

Thoughts about this activity

The outcome hoped for is to carry forward the benefits of the calm that resulted from being mindful of reactions earlier. It’s an opportunity to identify the positive qualities underlying the differences that originally sparked the reactions. Naturally, participants can keep looking for “common ground.” (This would mean areas where they and the other person agree.) But I suggest they not settle for common ground but look in a calm, mindful state for “*uncommon* ground.” (In other words they look for different but valid elements in the two “territories” where they might not at first have found agreement.)

Participants may frequently enjoy the creative tension (or “electricity”) created by opposite good things—and enjoy being open to this kind of tension and to synthesis. So the original “triggered” tension about differences in life becomes like a flag, one that is waving at us and saying, “Here! Look! Don’t miss the good things showing up in these opposites.” While sometimes opposites may be ready to merge with very little back-and-forth, at other times synthesis is far off. But whether quick or slow, we know that new, dazzling combinations are waiting, ready to be born!

A look at the future

It doesn’t matter now how someone handled differences with others in the past; the future holds new promise. I wanted to emerge from this workshop with new allies in a common purpose: all of us “humanizing” our inner lives at home and work. For example, we might be gentler with our reactions to novelty (meaning anything

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different from our “established wisdom”). We might be mindfully noting our urges to argue, and replacing them with treasure hunts for *pairs* of values and preferences.

But wait. There’s more! As we’ve been seeing, mindfulness can not only raise us above differences within ourselves, but also above the differences and contradictions outside ourselves with other people. It becomes easier to see worthwhile elements on both sides. That’s a catapult from inner synthesis into social synthesis. What has always seemed so impossible becomes possible—enjoying new notions that at first seem incongruous. And another exciting thing about any synthesis is that it’s more than compromise. Instead of dumbing things down, it plunges us through a sort of wormhole and opens up surprise possibilities we couldn’t have predicted.

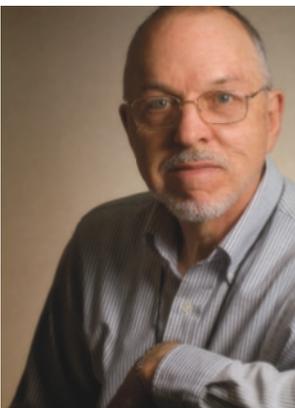
So if your clients make mindfulness a regular habit, they first open to excitement about their side of issues, and then about both sides. Noticing their own reactions non-judgmentally opens them to unique, remarkable talents. And because gentleness spreads, they can then more gently observe the other person’s reactive process too. Now they can see newly visible values and preferences gleaming like gold nuggets through the “sand” they previously thought was the whole of the other person’s argument. That changes everything. It raises the additional rich possibility of putting the opposites together. That can create sparks of excitement and anticipation of unpredictable creativity, because instead of trying to demolish or banish one of the options, they’re holding both options.

As we go forward, we will still react instinctively to differences and conflicts, but we will see more clearly how differences can expand our prospects. We will see how tension, held gently, may point the way to new alternatives. In other words, every time we remember to use mindfulness, we have better choices, fresh opportunities.

What is the next step, the vision of what is to come? Can we hope, for example, that after we start to see these specific changes in these few specific ancient practices dealing with small daily-life differences, we can move forward and look to the larger vision that Jonathan Haidt inspires: improving the worldwide system of participatory democracy (Haidt, 2012)? Everyone has visions for the future. This may just be the beginning. ▣

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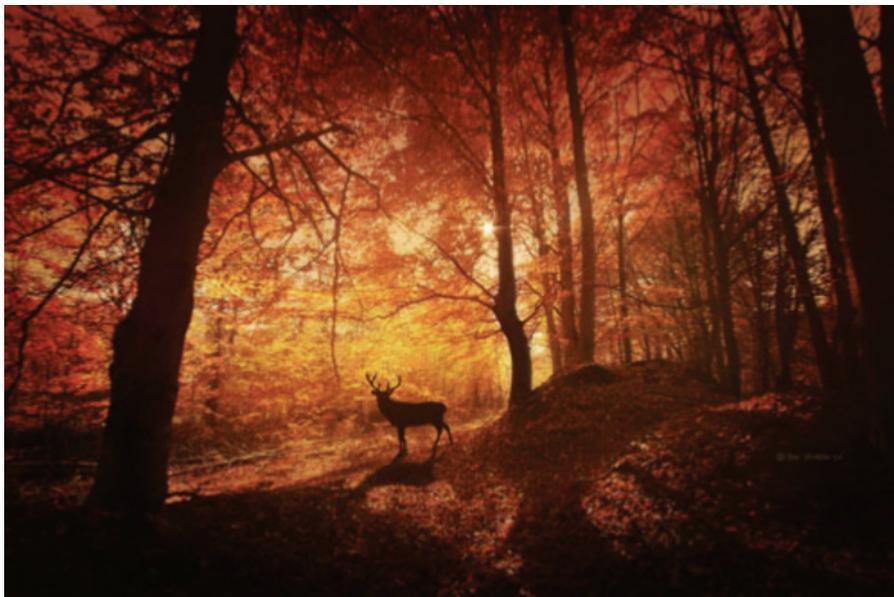
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The Dance of Life...and/or the Reconciliation of Opposites

Abigail DeSoto

How do we dance in this life of ours? We are reminded in popular parlance that life is not a dress rehearsal and we only get one chance (at least in this lifetime), and that chance is *now!*

Carpe Diem! Live in the present moment and live with awareness. Starting there, I ask again, *how do you dance with what each moment offers you?* Do you focus strongly on your desires and needs to ensure they are met and satisfied? Are you closer to the other extreme, focusing predominantly on the needs and desires of others and letting your own slip quietly under the carpet? Do you swing from one extreme to another, or have you learned the art of tacking (a sailing term for facing into the wind and moving from one side to another to allow your vessel to move forward)?

As we advance in life with accrued awareness, wisdom and (hopefully) patience, thanks to gifts and practices of psychosynthesis or other personal and spiritual paths of awakening, we become skillful at centering ourselves, returning to a position of 'I'—what Roberto Assagioli defined as a “center of pure self-awareness and will.” We step more easily into the role of the orchestra conductor, to acknowledge every orchestra player in our extended inner families (subpersonalities), and their way of moving with or against the world of polarities in which we live.

Through awareness we experience the seemingly irreconcilable opposites of our world where ‘both/and’ exists, not ‘either/or’. We realize much of what we flee or run towards, is part of an interrelated pair in need of both poles, like the inhale and exhale of our every breath, the vital force or “*prana*” as breath is called in Sanskrit. Instead of being caught in pendulum swings, we start to explore the ‘dance’ with polarities, such as a need for both *solitude* and *community*, desires to *control*, *initiate* and *take action* as well as *stepping back*, *trusting* and *following*. We learn that both *effort* and *rest* are necessary for well-being and fulfillment.

As part of this experiential awakening we become conscious that through projection we ultimately only ever push against our selves, or seek what we believe is outside us in the world, qualities such as ***acceptance, love, joy and peace***. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, American 19th century poet who in later life spent years translating Dante’s *Divine Comedy* wrote, “*not in the clamor of the crowded street, not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng, but in ourselves, are triumph and defeat.*”

If you realized that every judgment you make against another person is an unconscious fear to acknowledge the knife of judging retribution you hold above your own head, would you be so quick to anger and harsh words...or thoughts?

What if you realized that self-acceptance is the realization ***you are what you seek***, but have lost contact with that part of yourself?

Victor Frankl, author of *Man’s search for Meaning*, said: “*my definition of success is total self-acceptance.*” *Acceptare* in Latin means *to receive willingly*. How willing are we to receive the lessons life sends us (through situations and relationships) to release anger, judgment and the need for outside approval? Freedom lies not in controlling events but in the choice and decision we make in how we dance with life. We can choose to *confront*, *oppose*, *hate* and *argue with*, or *surrender*, *trust* and *open* to lessons hidden in the flow of our experience. This does not mean we lie down to be walked upon, but it does mean learning to release judgment and criticism in favor of tuning to higher emotional frequencies such as *kindness, allowing, compassion, and forgiveness*.

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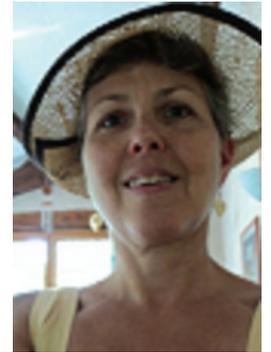
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If as *A Course in Miracles* suggests, Higher Self (ultimate Teacher and Guide), were standing beside a door to which forgiveness were the key, and to experience peace and freedom in your life all you needed were to give the key to Self to use instead of you, **would you do it?**¹ ◉

*After working 18 years in international leadership and management training throughout Europe, **Abigail DeSoto** studied psychosynthesis in London at the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust, and individually with Molly Y. Brown.*

*She published *L'Amour Déraisonné: Reclaiming Self, Transformational Teachings from Psychosynthesis and A Course in Miracles* in 2010 about her own healing journey from trauma and repressed pain to transformation. Her book explores the encounter of multi-faceted sides of "self" in a woman's search for the right to exist, using psychosynthesis and spiritual teachings from the Course.*

Transformational & wellness coach, psychosynthesis guide, teacher and author, Abigail offers coaching and personal development training worldwide. Passionate about living life in flow, she practices Argentinian tango, swing dancing, meditation, yoga and her own mind-body practice, Yin Dance –Your Inner Dance™. For information on Abigail's work, visit www.inner-discovery.com



Abigail DeSoto, M.A. is offering her **Life T.A.N.G.O.S** workshop
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¹ Extrapolated from *Supplements to A Course in Miracles, The Song of Prayer*, Foundation for Inner Peace



Transpersonal Development: Cultivating the Human Resources of Peace, Wisdom, Purpose and Oneness

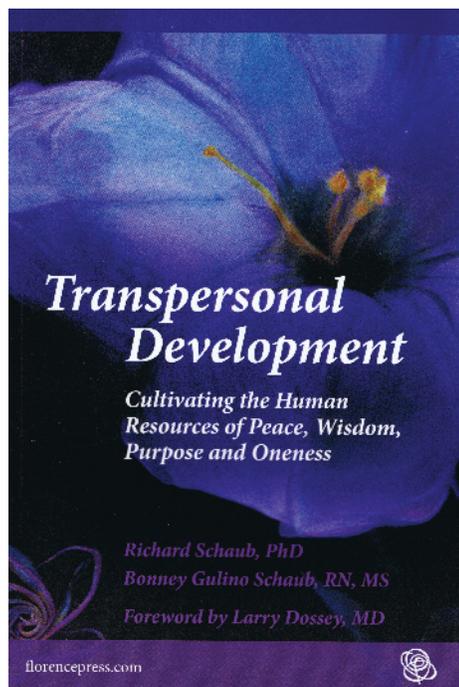
By Richard and Bonney Schaub
Reviewed by Jan Kuniholm

Richard Schaub, PhD, and Bonney Gulino Schaub, RN, MS, have followed in a long line of practitioners and theorists who have sought to heal the split between spirituality and science and have used the term “transpersonal” in their work, including William James, Carl Jung, Roberto Assagioli, and Viktor Frankl. The Schaubes have brought transpersonal work into hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, training programs, wellness programs, counseling and coaching. The book’s title carries the same name as one published posthumously by Roberto Assagioli, and is a worthy successor. This work is intended to demonstrate for the professional practitioner how to use transpersonal work in a clinical setting using the “Huntington Method,” which they have developed. This method is a synthesis of concepts and methods for the professional, which are practical and easy to teach, designed for people in the helping professions—practices that they themselves have used in a variety of settings—which can also be used by the individual seeker for inner development.

They present a five-stage process:

- 1) Establishing a state of inner peace which clears the way through the mind’s usual activities;
- 2) Learning to work with the mind’s troubling thoughts in a new way;
- 3) Gaining access to guiding inner wisdom;
- 4) Realizing your life purpose and stabilizing it in your mind and feelings;
- 5) Experiencing oneness and the energy of awareness itself.” (p.47)

Transpersonal Development is a book of resources. The heart of the book presents a detailed explanation of how the process can be used, together with illuminating case studies and 14 practices that the reader—or the reader’s clients—can use to make the process effective in real life. The book’s presentation is very straightforward: the challenge will be in the reader’s application of the process.



The Schaubes present transpersonal experience as an objective fact—a valid aspect of living—and successfully show how one need not be immersed in a religious tradition in order to access this aspect. They discuss various paths (such as arts, service, social action, meditation, physical training, ritual, knowledge, devotion and prayer) that provide access to transpersonal experience, and also discuss obstacles which may block transpersonal discovery. Lastly, they summarize the three general phases of transpersonal development: moving from fear to choice, the opening of the personality, and moving from separation to oneness.

It is quite amazing how the Schaubes have taken a topic that has traditionally been reserved for spiritual “schools” that developed very particular ways of understanding and proceeding on their own particular spiritual paths, and have distilled practical concepts and steps that are available to anyone. They have presented this distillation in a form that can be used to help people in a practical way in clinical settings to promote mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Highly recommended.



WORLD AWAKENING: Psychosynthesis and Geosynthesis

Thomas Yeomans, PhD

[This article is a transcript of a talk given in 1988 - see author's note at end—ed.]

World Awakening

Let us begin with planet earth, one of nine planets that circle a star which in turn wheels within a galaxy of millions of stars in infinite space. This planet sustains what we call Life, has done so for eons, and in this is different from all others we so far know. It is therefore a rare and precious place in the universe, perhaps unique, and bears on its body an incredible abundance of life forms, all of which are linked in ways designed to support both the individual life and the Life of the Whole. For most of the earth's existence, and ours as a species, we have been unconscious of this miraculous system of mutual exchange and have simply lived with it, drawing on its resources for our betterment. However, in the last two decades, since the first photographs from space of the whole earth were made available, some members of the species have begun to wake up to the fact of the aliveness of the earth as a living organism and to recognize more clearly both our place and our responsibility in this vast living system.

What they have seen has been both wondrous and disturbing, for as we have quickened to the beauty that surrounds us, we also have become more aware of the suffering and dysfunction, the dis-ease of the planet as a whole, and the degree to which we, as a species, are out of balance in our relation to the earth. We have discovered, in fact, that we are depleting her resources at an alarming rate—resources on which we and the other kingdoms of Nature depend for our continuing existence. More and more people are awakening to this fact of imbalance—economic, ecological, political, social—and it is no accident that, in the last twenty years, simultaneous with this awakening, there have been major movements in all parts of the world to right the injustices and alleviate the suffering caused by this situation. These "liberation" movements, outer and inner, are, I believe, the unconscious symptoms of the stirrings of a fuller expression of love for this planet, which we recognize more and more clearly as our common home, and for Life, which we share with all members of the plant, animal and human kingdoms. I think it is important to recognize, although the means and ideologies of these movements and counter-movements differ greatly, and what we most immediately see is increased conflict and dissension, that the underlying force in every heart is an awakening to a great awareness of the unity of the whole earth and a love for all life. We don't yet know the sure means to express this love, we feel the pain and frustration of the means of living that no longer work, we strike out at those we imagine to be our enemies, because they seem to oppose us, but at a deep level this love of the whole, this earth love, keeps growing and we struggle to find a way to respond to its demand for expression. The very intense suffering we experience at the end of the twentieth century is, I believe, rooted in the deeper connection we are experiencing, now more consciously, with the earth as a whole and with a love for all beings on it. As we open to this earth love more, we see more clearly what is out of balance; we suffer, and in time, act to restore balance and health.

Of course, to acknowledge the beauty, the suffering, the love we all share as a species can be very frightening, and we all experience as well resistance to this awakening in and around us. This resistance is expressed in many ways, both individually and collectively, and appears as much in overzealous revolution as it does in the dogged affirmation of the status quo. We are used to being in polarized relationships, and the very separation provides an experience of distinct boundary and identity. This is not easily surrendered. As the recognition of underlying unity grows, we find a strong reaction in the insistence on boundary, whether national or psychological, and even in those groups that most seek change, an antagonism toward, and

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rejection of, their adversaries. Conversely, we see another reaction—the premature merging and loss of boundary between people, or peoples, as a way, ironically, to resist awakening to a fuller experience of, and acceptance of, difference. This, too, constitutes a block to world awakening, for the denial of difference, the richness and beauty of difference, in individuals and in cultures, further perpetuates imbalance and dysfunction.

So, the first thing to say is that one way of looking at all that is happening in the last decades of the twentieth century is that we are waking up to where, and with whom, we live, and what is for all of us hearth and home, and are being called, whether we like it or not, to a planetary life and planetary responsibility. The severe disruptions of life we experience worldwide, I believe, are symptoms of this awakening, and the context for this change is an underlying unity of humankind seeking at this point in our history a fuller expression in all areas of life—economic, political, social, ecological, psychological, and spiritual.

A Shift in Identity

This awakening is complex and multidimensional, involving as it does all aspects of Life on earth, but a useful way to focus our thinking so that we can begin to consider its dynamics more precisely is to point to a basic shift in identity that is occurring in human beings. This is a shift from a national to a global identification, much as in earlier periods of history shifts occurred from tribe to city, and then later from city to nation. It is a shift in which the larger social unit, or context, is acknowledged as the focus of prime allegiance and all other identifications are subsumed under it. Prime allegiance is automatically given to the larger unit and the deepest meaning and value are drawn from it. People obviously continue to belong to the smaller groupings, but they now see these groups existing within a larger context, and accept this. One way of seeing the difficulties we are having is to realize that national identity is now obsolete as a context. In this world awakening, the context of identity is becoming global, with the national, regional and local identities subsumed under it. As this shift occurs, it makes possible the experience of planetary citizenship and an identification with the survival and well-being of the species as a whole, for in this context all humanity becomes "my people."

Interestingly, this shift appears to be as pertinent and inevitable for the new as for the old nations, for it is the idea itself of national identity rather than any particular form that is obsolete. Therefore, nations of the First, Second, and Third Worlds are equally confronted with the limitations of a merely national identity. Certainly, for the last four hundred years the nation has been the guiding and compelling idea underlying the further development and differentiation of the earth, but it is increasingly clear that we have outgrown the efficacy of national boundaries as the context of identity. Again the image of the earth from space has been instrumental in bringing this obsolescence to our attention, for from there it is clear there are no boundaries, and that Life is not divided along these lines. There are also many recent examples of these boundaries breaking down in the face of human contact and exchange, as well as of the boundaries being maintained by keeping people strange to, and afraid of, each other. The most evolved souls on earth have always pointed to this larger identity which we share with all people, but humanity as a whole is now being challenged to make this shift.

From a spiritual perspective, it can be said that we are awakening to an experience of Self that is explicitly individual and global, a Self that is in touch simultaneously with both personal and global conditions and responds to both equally with love and compassion. Evidence of this awakening lies, for example, in the growing citizen diplomacy between the US and USSR, the worldwide response to the famine in Africa, transnational confrontation of apartheid in South Africa, and planetary concern for ecological deterioration.

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More recent examples are the attempt at *rapprochement* between the Turks and Greeks after decades of enmity, the journey of Eskimos in Alaska across the Bering Straits to visit Russian relatives not seen in fifty years, and the fierce determination of the Korean students, North and South, to march to their common border and meet in solidarity, ironically, against the will of their respective governments. More and more people are experiencing a responsibility that crosses national boundaries and has at heart a concern for the earth as a whole, not just their particular country. Increasingly, people are realizing that their personal welfare is interdependent with the welfare of all peoples and are beginning to make choices for their personal lives that are rooted in this recognition of global interdependence.

Of course, there is expectedly much struggle with this shift of identity in all of us, struggle which is often reflected in a deeper entrenchment in personal, family, ethnic, or national values. This is obvious, for example, in the general orientation of the Reagan administration in the United States to date, or the politics of the South African government. It is also expressed in the decimation of Lebanon over the past years by various fanatic, ethnic, and national groups, by the struggle between the Hindus and the Sikhs in India, and the war between Iran and Iraq. In all cases, though the content differs, the underlying refusal is to see oneself as part of a larger unity and to come into a harmonious relationship with others within it. Rather, the dominant attitude is one of separation, isolation, pride, and then enmity—an orientation which now threatens the earth with the extinction of Life itself.

There are many good reasons for this refusal, and the process of opening to this experience of love of the whole is very complex. Conflict, misunderstanding, distrust and fear are very real and cannot be leapt over to a premature affirmation of unity. Rather, they need to be embraced and utilized as the basis for dialogue, increasing contact, and the meeting of mutual human need. Through this process of dialogue and reconciliation, the love of the whole emerges and can be expressed. The so-called resistance to an experience of global identity exists in all and in this stirring and awakening to global life it is highlighted, not so much as a sign of failure, but so that we can see more clearly what is in the way of a fuller life for all of us and for the earth. The problems are something to pay very close attention to, and work with, as part of the process of world awakening. Accepting them will, paradoxically, show us the way to respond and will bring to our attention those patterns we need to deal with in ourselves in order to make the shift. In dealing with them we will gain the experience and understanding we need in order to live a planetary life. We cannot jump over them, or get rid of them. They need to be lived and integrated as we awaken to this new reality.

A New Mode of Thinking

We are, in short, in the midst of a crisis of identity, where how we see ourselves and each other is changing drastically, and with it all the institutions of our living. In embracing both the stirrings of this change and the resistance to it, what can help is to see the whole process as one of awakening to a new level of awareness of who we are on the planet earth, an awakening that touches all of us, as we are all part of the body that is waking up, so to speak. There are many ways of speaking about this, but what is central is that the shift is happening in people's minds and hearts and souls. It is not being imposed by government or law, but is emerging from within our lives as we struggle to respond to the actual challenges of living in the late twentieth century. A more global sensitivity is stirring within us, and is changing inexorably who we are and how we act.

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying that since the development of the atom bomb, everything has changed "save the mode of our thinking." With the emergence of our capacity to destroy humanity and all life on the planet as we know it has also emerged the necessity to rethink every aspect of the way we live. If we go on

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with "business as usual" sooner or later we will destroy ourselves, either through a nuclear holocaust, or through the slower time bombs of economic imbalance, ecological destruction, or over-population. Conversely, if we can develop a "new mode of thinking" that serves to reorganize our social, economic, and political lives along lines of global harmony and cooperation, then we have every chance of surviving this crisis and renewing Life on earth. At root this means a fuller realization of our collective human destiny and capacity for love, but there is much in and around us that opposes this development of new thinking, and we need to cooperate consciously with this process, and make specific choices, if it is to succeed.

A more recent call for new thinking comes from Mikhail Gorbachev's book *Perestroika*. In it he urges the development of new thinking and spiritual awakening, both in Russia and in the world. This book is addressed to the citizens of the whole world, not just the Russian people, and it is clearly written from an intellectual and political context that is based in an experience of planetary identity and global interconnectedness. I would like to quote one paragraph that speaks to the necessity, for all of us, of new thinking and spiritual awakening.

Today our main job is to lift the individual spiritually, respecting his inner world and giving him moral strength. We are seeking to make the whole intellectual potential of society and all the potentialities of culture work to mold a socially active person, spiritual rich, just and conscientious. An individual must know and feel that his or her contribution is needed, that his or her dignity is not being infringed upon, that he is being treated with trust and respect. When an individual feels this, he or she is capable of accomplishing much. ¹

Certainly "a new mode of thinking" is needed, for it is impossible not to see that life is not going very well for anyone, whether you are a Central American Indian, or Cambodian refugee, whose homelands are being decimated by civil war, a Russian worker struggling with social inertia and alcoholism, an Ethiopian mother whose child has died of starvation, or many North Americans, and perhaps Europeans, who are psychologically isolated and alienated from their peers and troubled with hidden loneliness. As conditions are, few are truly happy on earth, rich or poor, and suffering, either inner or outer, is epidemic for the species. This is very painful to see and to admit, but if we can accept it, it can lead to change for the better for everyone, precisely because we are all interdependent and quite literally need each other in order to survive. No one problem can be solved without all being solved. We may work on one and then another, but basically our fates are inextricably interwoven, and each of us carries a responsibility, whether we admit it or not, for everyone else. We are, as a planet, and a species, dying, and, if we go much longer on the same track, we will die. Conversely, as we recognize our common suffering and fate, we have everything we need to heal ourselves, each other, and the earth, and can go forward together into a new way of living that will satisfy us more deeply and restore vitality to the biological and social systems that support us. A shift in our experience of identity, and our way of thinking is essential for this to happen.

I want to emphasize that everyone has a part to play in this awakening, that this is how it is constructed and will happen. This is not something that can be left to the experts. That very attitude is part of why we are so out of balance. Everyone is needed, and the question for each of us is only how specifically to respond. A refusal to respond is a response. There is no way to avoid the responsibility of being alive at this point in the history of the earth, and, given this, the best thing is to take a good hard look and then pitch in to make the needed changes. As Martin Luther King said, "We will either learn to live together as brothers and sisters, or perish as fools." Every human being has a part to play in this transformation of consciousness in the human family; the question is only what part and how to do it.

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Psychosynthesis and Geosynthesis

This concern for the fate of the earth is at the heart of Psychosynthesis, for the experience of the Self holds this love of the whole, an interconnectedness with all life, and the instinct to make a contribution to the world through the giving and receiving of this love in some form. This is a deep need in all of us, perhaps the deepest, and that it is so severely blocked in so many is the source of deep suffering and an intense spiritual starvation. Further, the specifically stated purpose of Psychosynthesis is "to release, or let us say, help to release the energies of the Self" so that all that we do, in whatever field, and at whatever level of development and consciousness, needs always to serve the release of this love of the whole. This we do both by affirming its existence and power and by confronting and dealing with the resistance to its expression which exists in all of us.

Until recently, the major context for psychosynthetic work has been the individual. However, in recent years there has been increasing interest in the group, or organization, and its social issues as a context—what is termed interpersonal, or social psychosynthesis. And now the planet and global issues are emerging as a context for the release of the energies of the Self and the expression of this love. Underlying this development is a process I have called *geosynthesis*, the attempt and struggle of the planet as a living being to survive, to heal its imbalances, to reorganize its life-systems, and to break through to a fuller expression of its spiritual maturity and capacity to love. We, as humanity, as the human species, are involved in this macrocosmic process, and our individual lives are a microcosmic reflection of it. On the macrocosmic level this means that we need to connect with and address the "big" issues as well as our own "little" ones as part of our spiritual unfoldment. We cannot grow apart from the earth; we live, or die, with her. On a microcosmic level it means a new level of spiritual responsibility, or maturity, one that holds the fate of the earth as yours, or mine, and one that is grounded and practical in the alignment of our individual and social behavior with the love of the whole within our souls. Quite literally, it means bringing heaven to earth through our bodies and behavior, so that the energies of the Self, both Higher and Universal, become rooted in our flesh, blood, and bones and are released through all the practicalities of everyday life. This means fully embracing all aspects of our personal and collective lives, dark and light, and in the midst of our suffering and joy, to find the courage and will to love each other and the whole earth as one. Nothing short of this will do, and each of us has a part to play in this process.

The theme of this conference is the rebirth of the soul. This rebirth is in each of us, in all humanity, and in the planet as a whole. It is a rebirth that requires of us patience, labor, and faith. And as the birth process proceeds, on both microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, and the world awakens, we can anticipate the increasing release of the energies of love that can heal and nurture all lives and the planet herself. Each of us, each soul, harbors a seed of this needed love and so each of us is an agent of world awakening. There is no time to leave this to another generation, to go on with "business, or life, as usual." The time is now and the opportunity ours. How we choose, individually and as a species, will shape, if not determine, the future of the earth, our common home. This is, in fact, a privilege and spiritual responsibility we share.

Therefore, in the light of this, I would like to close with two challenges and a quotation from Assagioli. The first challenge is to each of us to examine how here in this both diverse and kindred group we have failed to love each other, to accept and respect each other in our differences, and so contributed to the suffering of each, and all. This means feeling the pain of this separation, and then embracing the complexity of the process of reconciliation by acknowledging the conflicts and differences and beginning, through contact and dialogue, the work of reconnection. For each of us here there is a first step we can take now (silence). The second challenge is to us as a discipline within the world today, to reflect together, over these days, on how, as an

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international community, we can help with the process of geosynthesis as well as psychosynthesis and how some of our attitudes are perhaps hindering both (silence). From both challenges springs the invitation to choose differently and anew, in our personal and professional lives, so that more love is released among us and into the world.

I would like, in this spirit, to close with Assagioli's expression of this invitation.

I make a cordial appeal to all therapists, psychologists and educators (and now we can add activists, political and organizational leaders, and environmentalists) to actively engage in the needed work of research, experimentation, and application. Let us feel and obey the urge aroused by the great need of healing the serious ills which at present are affecting humanity: let us realize the contribution we can make to the creation of a new civilization characterized by a harmonious integration and cooperation, pervaded by the spirit of synthesis.



Author's Comments 2014

I gave this plenary speech at the International Psychosynthesis Conference, held in Italy in June, 1988, on the 100th anniversary of Roberto Assagioli's birth. It is full of the vision and confidence of that time, and in re-reading it now, twenty-six years later, I experience a profound sadness, as well as an awareness of my naiveté. In these intervening years I have come gradually to accept that the process of world awakening described here will take much longer than I, and others, originally thought and hoped.

We imagined at that time that global transformation was close by—and indeed there were signs of its emergence—but what is clear now is that the forces of resistance are far stronger than I, in my youth, realized, and that the shifts in consciousness the talk describes, though still in progress, are not as pervasive as I envisioned then.

We all know the details of this resistance, and we are struggling with it still. As we look around the planet we see everywhere global conditions worsening, enmities growing, and climate change now presses on us as well. Certainly we are in a dark period as a species, and old polarities and projections persist. National and ethnic identity is intransigent, and religious identity, as a colleague of mine, Paula Green, pointed out recently, is also playing its part in the conditions of war, environmental degradation, and human suffering that are present between nations, peoples, and faiths. And yet the drive to awakening is also still present, and there are countless examples of this positive force at work on the planet that express the possibility of peace and global synthesis.

One way of looking at these seemingly adverse conditions that have persisted is to hold them as a necessary emergence into human consciousness of our collective resistance to world awakening, and that we need to see, accept, and work directly with these in order to transform them. Our work now is to confront the shadow elements, in ourselves and in our species, and contain and/or transform them toward species maturity. We cannot leap over them into some new world. All dimensions of our human experience need to become conscious in order to be integrated into whole human being, and we need this revelation in order to make choices to live in another way and to relate to neighbor, citizen, stranger, with a “new mode of thinking” and feeling. The challenges are the same; it is only that this has turned out to be a work of many generations, not just of a few years, or even decades.

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I have left the speech just as it was given in 1988. It is therefore both “dated” and still very relevant, and new events can be easily substituted for the ones mentioned here that exemplify both the movement of, and resistance to, world awakening. It is clear that we have a great deal of work to do, both within ourselves and in the world, and there certainly is no guarantee that we will come through. However, new generations have joined in now, and they bring both creative vision and new energy to the work, and perhaps a more realistic sense of what is required.

I am grateful to have spoken these words twenty-six years ago and to be still at work, in my own way, on the process of geosynthesis and world awakening.

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¹ Gorbachev, Mikhail S., *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, HarperCollins, 1987

Thomas Yeomans, PhD, *has been involved with Psychosynthesis and Spiritual Psychology for over forty years. He studied with Roberto Assagioli, MD in the early 1970's, and has trained professionals in Psychosynthesis and Spiritual Psychology since then, in individual and group work, throughout North America and in Europe and Russia.*

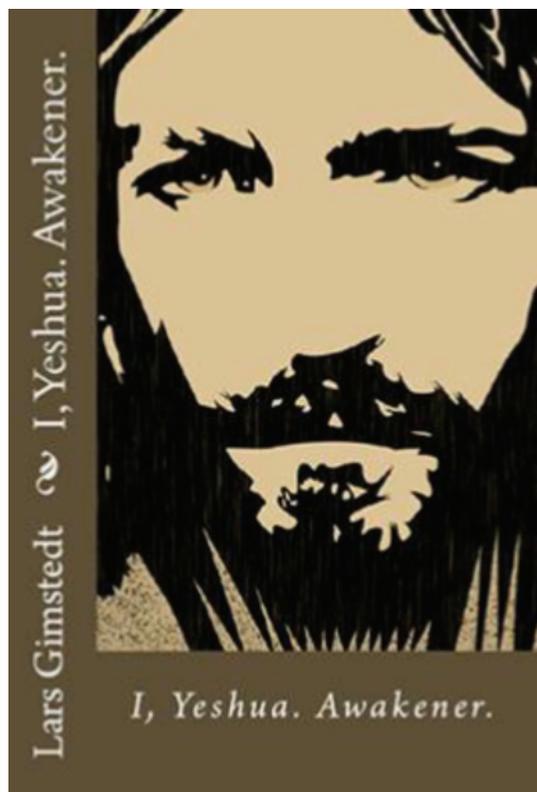
He has published writing on Psychosynthesis and Spiritual Psychology as well as three volumes of poetry and a children's book. He is founder/director of the Concord Institute and cofounder of the International School in St. Petersburg, Russia. He is also a painter and musician.

Currently he is writing a book about the soul and spirituality in our present time of global crisis and transformation. He also maintains a private practice in psycho-spiritual consulting and mentoring in Shelburne Falls, MA.



book announcement

I, Yeshua, Awakener *By Lars Gimstedt*



I was a non-reflecting atheist the first forty years of my life. Just before my birthday, my former wife—who at that time was enthusiastically discovering New Age material, and was reading *A Course in Miracles*—provoked me to read it. We were living in Seattle at the time (somewhat of a New Age Mecca in 1986), and she attended many gatherings with mediums, channelers and the like. I read the book in order to prove to her that it was a hoax—a strange decision in itself.

This led me into a long period of personal and spiritual transformation, which eventually led me to change my career from a physicist and manager in the aerospace industry to becoming a psychosynthesis therapist and supervisor.

At the beginning of this year, after having worked as a psychotherapist for more than twenty years, I was inspired to “go back to the roots” of my decision to learn psychosynthesis. To that end, I put together an e-course, *A Psychosynthesis Perspective on A Course in Miracles*, (http://psykosyntesforum.se/courses_ACIM.htm).

I also wrote a book about Jesus, the “author” of *A Course in Miracles*, entitled *I, Yeshua, Awakener* (<http://psykosyntesforum.se/Yeshua.htm>). This is my attempt to show what a “gospel” written by Jesus Himself might have looked like. Of particular interest for the psychosynthesis community is that I have used many psychosynthesis concepts in describing the psychological implications involved in the stories of Jesus. For example, when He describes His time alone in the desert, He confronts hidden subpersonalities, and finds a way to inner healing.

The book diverges rather much from the “official” descriptions of the life of Jesus. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, modern historical research has revealed new data. Secondly, I believe original narratives were written by other than His disciples, with an agenda of proving His divinity rather than describing actual facts.

It is my hope that the book will inspire the reader to re-evaluate the message from Jesus, a poor woodworker from an obscure little village in a distant province of the Roman Empire, whose message and deeds have influenced mankind for more than two millennia.■