

Psychosynthesis Quarterly December 2022

The digital magazine of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis



Stepping into the Empty Space

AAP provides resources for people to cultivate peace and purpose.

Our mission is to advance the theory and practice of psychosynthesis to benefit individuals and society.

The Psychosynthesis Quarterly is published by The Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis (AAP) four times a year in March, June, September and December.

The AAP provides resources for people to cultivate peace and purpose. Our mission is to advance the theory and practice of psychosynthesis to benefit individuals and society.

The AAP was founded in 1995 and is a Massachusetts nonprofit corporation with tax exemption in the United States. AAP membership supports this publication and the other educational activities of AAP, including scholarships. Membership and donations are tax deductible in the United States.

The Psychosynthesis Quarterly accepts announcements, ideas, reviews of books and events, articles, poetry, art, exercises, photos, and letters. Tell us what has helped your life and work, what can help others, and examples of psychosynthesis theory in action.

We hope our suggestion of from 250 to 1500 words may serve as a guideline that helps your writing. We prefer that you use the APA style guide when possible, for things like punctuation and references.

Announcements, book reviews, and upcoming events are also welcome, with a request that nonmembers who wish to submit advertising make a donation to AAP. To donate, [click here](#).

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**Note: We receive submissions from all over the world. You will see the authors “native” spelling in their articles.*

With thanks to Peter Stewart for copy editing

Letter from our Guest Editor Claude Convers

It is with great pleasure that I invite you to follow the steps that our contributors have shared with us in this December issue of the AAP Quarterly: “Stepping into the Empty Space.” To be part of this unfolding process as a guest editor was a rich and expansive experience that brought me rewards I would have never suspected.

Each piece awakened my curiosity, expanded my sense of the world, and showed me how, despite our various perceptions, we all come back to a shared concept and understanding: Love. Love of the self and other, love of curiosity, love of freedom and creativity, love of life, of the past, present and future, but also, love as a force larger than us that could be perceived as the essence of our Higher Self.

This issue begins with Peter Stewart’s inspiring experience into the depth of painted caves and is followed by Marjorie Hope Gross’s delightful discovery. David England reminds us that the most crucial space we need to step into is indeed love, Ewa Bialek shares her own journey into freedom, and Richard Schaub’s words lead us into the mystery of consciousness itself. Ami Ji Schmid lets us take a peak into her special Sunday while Cristin McVey shares her collage process, and Will Parfitt offers us a special walk in the labyrinth of Chartres’ cathedral.

After this first part of the journey, Jon Schottland invites us to step into the empty page and Mario Canki illustrates how that change is never linear. Clare Goodwin invents a new image of the earth while Shamai Currim moves across the world. Jeri Brown creates a “let go list” of everything past, present and future, and Gillian McConnell gives shapes to her emotions on canvas. Julie Parker tells us of her life-changing journey starting with the opening of a door, while Eva Sanner shares how her life opened up by literally stepping into an empty space. As we come to the end, Cristina Pelizzatti brings us a synthesis story in three parts and I will close this issue by getting ready to let it all go.

I am so grateful to Marjorie Hope Gross for her warm invitation, spirit and support during this journey. Without her, nothing would have happened.

My hope is that this compilation of articles, poems, stories and artworks will bring you the same satisfaction it has brought me over the past few months. I wish you all a wonderful travel through each piece and much joy in the journey ahead.

Bien à vous,
Claude Convers

Claude Convers Bio

Claude Convers is a coach and teacher specializing in increasing joy, curiosity, and creativity through the French language. Originally from the French part of Switzerland, she lives in Oakland, CA, and in Europe for a few months out of the year. Prior to teaching she had a long international career in graphic design, which lead her to learn German and English.

She has had a personal yoga and meditation practice for over 25 years. She also studied reiki, tantra, shamanism, holistic health and the tarot. As an artist, poet, and dancer she continues to create, express, and explore.

She began to study Psychosynthesis with Richard Schaub and Bonney Gulino Schaub in the mid-90s and graduated from their CMI program in 2001. She is currently studying at the Synthesis Center San Francisco with Didi Firman and Susan Jewkes Allen to become a certified Psychosynthesis Life Coach. You can find her at www.claudeconvers.com and www.creativelyfrench.com



The Empty Space Of Transition

By Peter Stewart

A few years ago, I visited the painted caves in the Dordogne region of France. I had been fascinated for many years by the creativity of the cave paintings, which are tens of thousands of years old.

My first glimpse of this Palaeolithic cave art was at Les Combarelles, which was inhabited by our Cro Magnon ancestors 11,000 to 13,000 years ago. I felt that my experience of visiting the cave was loosely relevant to the title of this quarterly, Stepping Into the Empty Space, and I wanted to share it.

Les Combarelles is a much more modest and intimate site than the world-renowned Lascaux, which is often called the Sistine Chapel of cave painting. The polychrome images at Lascaux include those of bison, aurochs, mammoths, rock shelters, anthropomorphs, and many other enigmatic shapes that have no explanation. At Les Combarelles, the cave art is much simpler, engraved on the walls, some of the images scratched or dug awkwardly into them, and there are none of the polychrome friezes that dominate the many lavish books I had read about cave art.

I was with my friend Geraldine, who had studied with Claudine Cohen, a leading authority on the French cave art. Our visit was shortly before the Covid lockdown, which shut the caves for months after. Only six visitors were allowed at a time, and we had to queue from seven in the morning to get our tickets. Photography in the caves is strictly forbidden, and visitors are reminded repeatedly not to touch the walls, as bacteria can damage the works as much as erosion by touch and contact.

From my reading about prehistoric parietal art, I had formed an image of cavernous halls whose walls were covered with the art of ancient times. Instead, we walked down a narrow corridor lit only by our guide's flashlight. She explained that in Palaeolithic times the ceiling of the cave was barely a meter above the floor, which had only been dug out after the cave art was discovered to improve access and to allow people to walk along it.

Those who had carved onto its walls would have had to crawl along the corridor in pitch darkness, or possibly with the help of primitive torches. They would have been squeezed tight in a narrow passageway formed over thousands of years by water erosion. The first to enter this un navigated hinterland would have had no conception of what awaited them in the darkness.

At Les Combarelles, you walk in darkness for nearly a hundred metres before you reach the location of the first engravings. These are tiny and simple, scratched awkwardly in the rock walls, unsophisticated, monochrome but still true to life, unadorned by paint. I found the simplicity, and accuracy, of these engravings very moving. Why had someone risked their lives to create this?

There are many theories, but my own experience resonated with the idea that the cave paintings were used in initiation ceremonies, the ritual switch between different life stages or states of being. In his essay *Spiritual Development and Neuro-Psychological Disturbances*¹, Roberto Assagioli compares life transitions with the chrysalis stage in the life cycle of the butterfly: "What we are considering is actually a transition stage – having left the old stage, but not yet having arrived at the new one. It is like being a larva when it undergoes the transformation process that will cause it to become a winged butterfly: it has to go through the chrysalis stage, a condition of disintegration and loss of power".

Several aspects of my own experience of the caves stood out. The first was the physical separation from everyday life. There is evidence that Palaeolithic people in their daily life painted many of the rock surfaces around them, including their rock shelters and the walls of their dwellings. Art was everywhere. But the cave paintings feel different, because they involve individuals or small bands separating themselves off from everyday society. Next, how spiritual it felt, rather like being in the silence of a church after the bustle of everyday life outside. There was a concentrated intensity that I found difficult to shake off afterwards.

¹ *Transpersonal Development: The Dimension Beyond Psychosynthesis*, by Roberto Assagioli, page 117 (Smiling Wisdom, 2007)

And finally, there was the silence. Apart from occasional questions, we modern day visitors walked along in silence and the darkness was palpable, despite the flashlight. It was difficult not to feel the depth of the experience that those visiting the cave so many thousands of years ago would have felt.

I recall Assagioli's words on silence in *The Art and Technique of Silence*, quoted by Kenneth Sorensen on his website: <https://kennethsorensen.dk/en/the-art-and-technique-of-silence/>

"There are different types of inner silence, and it could be said that every sphere of life has its own silence. We all know the wonderful silence of nature on a summer afternoon, or especially during the night: the silence of a starry sky. Then there is the silence of the emotions – of desire, fear and imagination – which is a positive step toward peace and serenity. Silence at the mental level consists of slowing down the mind and curbing its activity. There is also a "silence of the will," i.e. the personal will, which means the dedication of one's will and its unification with Spiritual Will".

Many people talk of how emotional it feels to visit the French caves, and I was surprised how much I was affected by my own first experience. It was the scale more than anything that made me feel emotional; not because it was impressive and expansive, but the opposite. It felt more like being in a tiny submarine than the vast cathedral of cave art that I had expected, and when I came out of the darkness of the cave, I felt quite overwhelmed.

Walking out into the warm, open light of day reminded me of how terrifying it must have been for the first visitors to enter the depths of the earth, squeezing into a narrow and possibly structurally unstable strait-jacket of rock, with barely any light, and certainly no map. And what had they done? They had scratched out pictures of their fellow living creatures using the most basic of tools. It was mystifying, but also somehow very human.

Writing this, I feel the poignancy of our own modern-day life transitions, the courage required to make even what some might see as quite little changes, the huge leap into the dark as we make a decision, not knowing where it will lead. The moment of surrender when we give ourselves up to the silence and whatever it will bring.



Peter is a writer and coach. He works creatively with people to help them develop and strengthen their sense of purpose and will. He trained with Psychosynthesis Coaching Ltd at the IP in London (2017), and he is EMCC accredited at Foundation level (2021).

His coaching focus is primarily on work and careers, but he also provides coaching for life transitions. He believes that harnessing creativity can help people align with their spiritual goals and facilitate important life and work transitions. He is keen to develop systemic and team coaching as part of what he can offer in the future and would welcome any opportunities to do this.

Peter runs Coachcreates Ltd and Resource Economist Ltd.

Before becoming a creative coach, he was an energy journalist and analyst for many years, and he has also written some travel guides and business books. He still provides training and mentoring for companies involved in the energy transition.

Peter's creative interests include poetry, ceramics, painting, food and wine. Peter is also the newest member of the AAP Steering Committee.

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Learning To Swim

By Marjorie Hope Gross

For years, I skated on the surface of my life

afraid I would fall in.

One day, the ice broke...

To my surprise, I discovered I could swim.



Marjorie Hope Gross left a 25-year long (soul sucking) career as a Fashion Designer to pursue her life long dream of being a mental health counselor/therapist. However, at the ripe old age of 50, going back to get another degree seemed daunting, so instead became a certified Psychosynthesis Practitioner in 2004 through the Synthesis Center in Amherst, MA going on to become certified as a Psychosynthesis Life Coach in 2008 as well. As a practicing Buddhist with the SGI (<https://www.sgi-usa.org/about-our-community/>) since 1974, I have found the tenets of both systems mesh very well together and have allowed me to guide my clients to a more self-empowered way of healing. I have a full time counseling practice and serve on the AAP Steering Committee as Vice-Chair.

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Filling the Encircling Void with the Light of Love

By David England

IN THE BEGINNING

In the beginning, the universe was without form and void. The universe was no more than a speck, poised to fill the encircling void over billions of years. I—or rather the universe—shall deal with God later.

In its first 13.7 billion years the universe has evolved ever more complex forms, each new form built from what already exists; *evolution means that the universe is Self Creative*. It has created life, a myriad flora and fauna, human beings. And throughout this 13.7 billion years, beyond everything that the universe has created, there remains the void. The created universe, perpetually poised to fill the encircling void.

Humankind evolved 3.2 million years ago, *Australopithecus afarensis*, called affectionally Lucy when unearthed. Lucy-kind had a small brain, and beyond it a void that evolution gradually filled for 2.8 million years, to create *Homo sapiens* around 400,000 years ago. Since then, something amazing and unique occurred; *the human species has come to embody the creative capacity inherent in the universe*, beginning simply with the creation of tools; the ground of human creativity is an ability not only to act instinctively but also thoughtfully, to have an ability to think, and to do so creatively.

Between 3.2 and 2.8 million years ago, hominid evolution was about brain capacity. With *Homo sapiens*, it's evolution has been more about brain capability, the ability of the mind to expand its creative intelligence, not only about making things but also about seeking to understand life, the universe, and everything, a creative process greatly enhanced by the evolution in humans of a conscious mind.

THE CREATIVE CONSCIOUS MIND

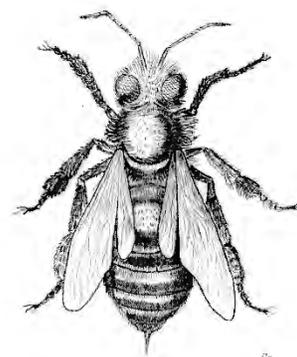
We see a flowering of the creative conscious mind—both head and heart—in literature, art, architecture, engineering, science—astronomy reaches ever deeper into the origins of the universe—and in philosophical, psychological, and religious thought. We need also to mark, millennia of conflict, slaughter, heartless cruelty, slavery, forced migrations, xenophobia, domination and abuse of women, as products of the conscious mind.

From earliest times, with our capacity to think, we have reflected about the world we see about us. Then something wonderful happens, over time there emerge myths and tales—regarding observable natural phenomena and the powers that control them—about gods and creation of the world. Every ancient community conceived its own creation myth to describe the earliest beginnings of the world.

Tales like the creation myth of the San people, genetically the closest surviving descendants of our original ancestor, creating rock paintings 26,000 years ago. Their creation myth must be one of the oldest in the world:

In the time before time, when the whole earth was covered with water, Bee carried Mantis over the water, searching a place of solid earth to set them down. Bee flew, and saw no dry land. Just as she grew so tired she was not sure she could continue, Bee spied a flower on the water, its petals reaching out like welcoming arms. Bee flew down and gently placed Mantis onto the flower, after planting a seed in Mantis' body before dying of exhaustion. The seed grew to become the first human. So began Mantis, the First One, the Maker of Fire, the Keeper of the Dream.

Deceptively simple, this short and ancient creation myth is full of meaning. Bee is the first cause, the creator. Bee sacrifices her life for her creation, itself a not unfamiliar theme. Here, at the beginning of creation, the myth introduces the cycle of death and rebirth, Bee sacrificing her life so that something more, the human race, shall be brought to birth. As this creation myth illustrates, “creator” and “god” are ideas conceived by the human mind to explain the meaning of the world and its earliest beginnings. We can argue till the end of time about whether God exists, but the only inescapable fact is, “God” is a product of the human mind, itself a product of evolution. “Well, that about wraps it up for God.” (Douglas Adams, 1979, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*)



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LOVE

Not so! Now, as much as in ancient times, humans need to hold on to ideas that serve to explain the meaning of the world, its earliest beginnings, and the cycle of death and rebirth, a need that is met by religious thought. Putting aside the—often divisive—differences in dogma, what religions have in common is a belief in the power and importance of love. *Love is present in diverse religious texts: you shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself; none of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself; love is a gift of one's innermost soul to another so both can be whole; "Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance."*

Love is a product of the human mind—both head and heart—a profoundly significant psychological product of evolution. Whatever we may or may not believe about God, we can unite in a belief in the power of Love, we can apprehend God—rather than as a being—as an experience, Love as the essence of godliness.

THE FLAW IN THE CONSCIOUS MIND¹

Neuroscience research shows that left and right hemispheres in humans have very different functions (Iain McGilchrist, 2009, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain*). Major motivational systems—attachment, fear, sexuality, play, shame, and disgust—are located in the right hemisphere. With its overall perspective, the right hemisphere is dominant for: the reception, expression, and communication of our feelings and passions; our ability to regulate stress; our sense of self, our relationships with others, our empathy with others, our compassion for others, our sense of morality; our understanding of metaphor and our sense of humour; our insight, intuition, and creativity. Everything, in fact, that marks the human spirit, the self-aware, living, feeling, relating, human being who is able to apprehend life in others within the context of the lived world. A world of individual, changing, evolving, interconnected, implicit, incarnate, living beings, but in the nature of things always in flux, never fully graspable, always imperfectly known.

In contrast, the left hemisphere is dependent upon language to name objects and understand their construction. It has the clarity, focus, and power to manipulate things that are known, fixed, static, isolated, taken out of context, explicit, disembodied, general in nature, but ultimately mechanical and lifeless. Everything in fact that has enabled the human species to dominate the world. McGilchrist states, “an increasingly mechanistic, fragmented, de-contextualised world, marked by unwarranted optimism mixed with paranoia and a feeling of emptiness, has come about, reflecting, I believe, the unopposed action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere.”

This is the evolutionary flaw in the human species, the left hemisphere is dominant over the right, worst case being the crushing of the human spirit. We see the global consequences, dehumanised cruelty and production-line extermination of millions of men, women, and children, and devastating wars, as well as the actual use of nuclear weapons, the ongoing threat of nuclear conflict.

FACING THE VOID

The future is a void. Evolution never stops, has always followed its own path. The difference now is that a species has evolved which embodies the creative capacity inherent in the universe, meaning *we can participate in the unfolding of our own evolution.*

Of course, there may be no future at all if we fail to tackle climate change. Then again, we can imagine what might emerge if we leave it to others, the ultimate triumph of the left hemisphere: the world isn't short of actual and aspiring despots, capable of marshalling the technical resources to crush the human spirit; big money financing human enhancement research might turn our species into robots.

Or else, we can envisage an advance in human psychology whereby the functions of the right and left hemispheres are fully synthesised, human values being embraced by everyone, the needs of people and all planetary life being acknowledged, the articulation and planning of ways to fulfil those needs without

¹ Taken from my article, *The Great Dilemma—Evolve Or Die! or a Psychosynthesis of Heart and Mind* <https://soulfulness.co.uk/psychosynthesis-of-heart-and-mind>, this paragraph briefly summarises McGilchrist's insight of the Divided Brain.

regard for self-interest, disputes resolved with mutual respect and understanding, based on Right Relations, a synthesis of Love and Will. (Assagioli, 1974, pp100-103)

I call this advance in human psychology *trans-consciousness*, its realisation being based on three ideas:

1. The human species embodies the creative capacity inherent in the universe.
2. Love is a product of the human mind, a profoundly significant psychological product of evolution.
3. There are in this world plenty of people who embrace human values, who express Goodwill and Love in serving many vital causes: saving the planet; caring for the environment, all creatures and species; the rights of women, ethnic minorities, workers, etc; the education, care, and protection of all children; enacting just laws; working in various fields of physical and mental health and spiritual wellbeing ...

Nothing love cannot face! No limit to its faith, hope, endurance! Love is a sustained Act of Will! Love is a tough call. Love has not, so far, been the guiding principle in human affairs. Yet, it remains a demanding and radical foundation for human conduct: mutual respect, honesty and clarity, fairness and generosity, cooperation and conciliation.

What if all people of goodwill—"ironic points of light"—see themselves as one, poised to fill the encircling void—evolution of human consciousness—with the light of Love? Trans-consciousness!

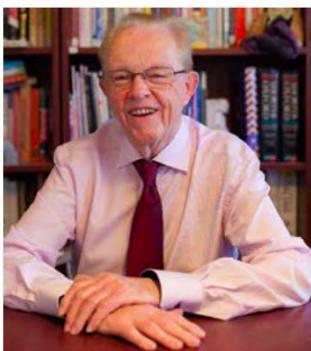
As psychosynthesis therapists, we are part of this psychospiritual challenge:

Act of Love and Will Triangle



Defenseless under the night
 Our world in stupor lies;
 Yet, dotted everywhere,
 Ironic points of light
 Flash out wherever the Just
 Exchange their messages:
 May I, composed like them
 Of Eros and of dust,
 Beleaguered by the same
 Negation and despair,
 Show an affirming flame.

W. H. Auden (September 1, 1939)



*David England is a UKCP Registered psychosynthesis psychotherapist in private practice in the grandly named Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. He trained as a psychosynthesis psychotherapist at The Institute of Psychosynthesis London, receiving his MA and Diploma in 1998. For four years—alongside his psychotherapy practice—he worked with a colleague providing psychosynthesis based personal development coaching and training for business organisations, then for seven years he worked as a course tutor at The Institute of Psychosynthesis London. He trained as a Shamanic Practitioner at Eagle's Wing College of Contemporary Shamanism. Impressed by the synergy between Psychosynthesis and Shamanism, he wrote *Soulfulness, The Marriage of Shamanic and Contemporary Psychology* (Karnak Books, 2017). He has successfully integrated Shamanic thought and practice into his psychosynthesis psychotherapy practice. He is also a professional storyteller and a member of the actors' union Equity. He is the co-author of *Berkshire Folk Tales* (The History Press, 2013) and *Lancashire Folk Tales* (The History Press, 2014).*

Is There An “Emptiness” In Us That Can Become A “Fullness”?

By Ewa Danuta Bialek

Having worked half my life in the field of science, I never once came across the use of methods such as mind cleansing or developing creativity. It was the 1970s and 1980s and scientific research was narrowly focussed on the replication of results. While this expanded the “horizontal space” occupied by science, hardly anyone sought to expand what I call the “vertical space” of science, by exploring their knowledge of themselves and of the world.

After more than 20 years working as a medical scientist, I experienced the symptoms of burnout. Although I loved research, I was searching for answers to questions that had preoccupied me since I was a child: why am I sick and yet have had no effect from treatment for years, and why do people get sick when there are so many medications available for different problems?

I did not find the answer to these questions in medicine, because I was looking only for symptoms at the physical level. But then I discovered the techniques offered by managerial and organizational psychosynthesis and the practice of “self-management”. I practiced Psychosynthesis for the next 27 years, and it showed me huge spaces within myself that not been developed despite years in education, and even more so working in science. By practicing Psychosynthesis every day, using John Cullen's educational materials, and then those of Vivian King, I realized that I could free my mind from the rush of thoughts, my first sensational and revolutionary discovery in achieving an “empty mind”. I was surprised by this discovery – this ability to clear the thoughts and hold an empty mind, without letting it be filled with the constant flow of thoughts or inner dialogue! Being in this state of emptiness, not longing to fill my head with the incessant chatter of reproductive thoughts from the past, was like reaching enlightenment.

And then something extraordinary happened! Questions, thoughts, inspirations, ideas, and new associations, without censorship, came to me automatically. When I realized that this was happening, I started writing them down. And so I created dozens of my “Travel Journals” or “Diary”, which then became the canvas for my numerous books. If I needed a title for one of

them, all I had to do was achieve this state of “emptiness” and I had the answer ready. When I checked it against the content or the theme of the book, they fitted together like hand and glove. This seemed to happen serendipitously and without effort.

So psychosynthesis has become invaluable to me. It is indispensable for my work as a writer, my scientific search into the causes of auto-immune diseases, and also when I need deeper insight for my work with clients. Before I reached that insight, I always had the feeling that there was something missing and that there was more I needed to see and understand.

So the “emptiness” is waiting to come into being for us, to create space for the “fullness” : direct knowledge without censorship, ready to be used for the good of ourselves and the world. And psychosynthesis, practiced daily, helps us to reach this, to open this space and to liberate its infinite expanses.

Having worked half my life in the field of science, I never once came across the use of methods such as mind cleansing or developing creativity. It was the 1970s and 1980s and scientific research was narrowly focussed on the replication of results. While this expanded the “horizontal space” occupied by science, hardly anyone sought to expand what I call the “vertical space” of science, by exploring their knowledge of themselves and of the world.

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***Ewa Danuta Bialek Ph.D** - a scientist in the field of medicine (1969-1995) (doctoral dissertation in immunology, specialization in clinical diagnosis). She completed postgraduate studies in psychology (Summit University, J.W.Cullen) and a number of courses in Psychosynthesis (J. W. Cullen, V. King, J. Truch, M. Petersen, R. Kea), Psychosynthesis Coach Training and Coaching for Personal Well-Being (D. Firman).*

Ewa Bialek has practiced psychosynthesis firstly on herself to discover inner possibilities of maintaining wellbeing and health, having suffered from the earliest childhood on various health ailments. Psychosynthesis has become her philosophy of life – pursuing inner harmony and well-being in herself and the world around her.

Basing on psychosynthesis techniques, which are still unique in Poland, as well as years of research in medicine, and presenting an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to human health and development, she offers unique counseling, mentoring and coaching. They lead to the discovery of inner qualities of the individual, healing primal wounds supporting of the immunology of the Soul), discovering spiritual aspects of humanity, and thus effective and fulfilled personal life, family managing as well as professional fulfillment and the service of one's talents to others.

In 1997 Ewa Bialek founded Association "Education for the Future" and in 2004 – Institute of Psychosynthesis in Warsaw, Poland. She is an author of 52 books and dozen of scientific articles, concerning application of psychosynthesis, as well in education, science and healing autoimmune diseases.

Consciousness And Choice: Psychosynthesis In A New Context

By Richard Schaub



Photo: Donn Ring

Psychosynthesis is an approach to psychological health that emphasizes a deeper center of identity beyond the patterns of our personality. Everyone without exception has this deeper, precious element in their nature – consciousness itself.

Lights Out or Lights On?

In recent years, consciousness itself has become a focus of brain research, and a debate has developed about its actual source. Is consciousness a product of the brain - an intra-brain event, or is it external to the brain - the brain merely a receiver and participant in a universal field of consciousness? We could say it is a debate between a materialistic (product) vs. a spiritual (receiver and participant) view of consciousness. The implications are life-changing: if our consciousness is produced by the brain, then our consciousness dies when the brain dies (lights go out); if our consciousness has its source in something universal and is participating in that source, then it doesn't die when the brain dies (lights stay on).

St. Francis

There is another curious wrinkle in trying to understand consciousness. It enables us to perceive everything from the weather to the odd thoughts in our minds, but we can't perceive consciousness itself.

We can't perceive the perceiver. St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) put the dilemma this way: "What you are looking for is what is looking."

St. Francis was not using a riddle. He meant it literally. In Francis' context, "what is looking" is consciousness itself. Talking to a Buddhist teacher, he said the essence of their practice is to enter "awareness of awareness." It is a crucial discovery known to both Eastern and Western meditative, spiritual and prayer traditions. When you look at some of the popular spiritual teachers nowadays, such as Eckhart Tolle, they are saying the same thing (Tolle calls it "presence"). It has been a discovery made over and over again. But following the lead of the author of the *Varieties of Religious Experience* and the "father" of American psychology, William James, Roberto Assagioli in Italy was the first doctor to actually use the living energy of consciousness itself for specific therapeutic purposes. This puts his school of psychology, psychosynthesis, in an entirely new context as a consciousness-based theory and practice.

Psychosynthesis

What is therapeutic about the experience of consciousness itself? It can be described by the qualities that happen to you when you identify with this aspect of your nature: freedom, openness, purpose, light joy, presence. Deeper into the state of consciousness itself, your experience becomes bliss, interconnectedness and oneness. Freedom, openness, light joy, presence, bliss, interconnectedness and oneness certainly constitute remarkable states for anyone's life, and especially so if your daily living is affected by anxiety and/or depression. These are good reasons why meditation, one of the paths to consciousness itself, has increased as an attractive activity.

As the first modern doctor of consciousness itself, Assagioli modified meditative, spiritual and prayer techniques to be useful and teachable in the psychiatric clinic and psychotherapy office. In this work, his psychosynthetic approach still remains far ahead of its time. (For a summary of these techniques, see Schaub & Schaub, 2013).

Freedom, openness, purpose, light joy, presence, bliss, interconnectedness and oneness are *transpersonal* qualities, that is, they are *beyond the personality*, but they clearly bring a positive benefit to the personality. Using and adapting the consciousness practices of various traditions, Assagioli helped to guide his patients into these beneficial transpersonal experiences as a counter-balance to their suffering.

Case Example

One of Assagioli's consciousness techniques proved extremely helpful in the following case known to the author. A 60 year old physician and recovering addict, in the hospital following hip surgery, was hooked up to a self-administering Dilaudid (a form of morphine) intravenous machine in his hospital room and was left free to administer as much as of the pain killer as he needed or wanted. He stared at that intravenous hookup as both the friend and the enemy. Here was the chance, sanctioned by the hospital staff, to indulge his old addictive habit and to use as much Dilaudid as possible as often as possible. At the same time, here was the chance to retain and reinforce his two years of recovery from his drug addiction. A "normal" person would use as much pain killer as needed and would then stop. The client, however, knew that when it came to drugs, he was not a "normal" person.

Lying in the hospital bed, struggling with his conflicting impulses, he remembered an Assagioli technique. Briefly, the technique asks you 1) to realize that you have feelings, and that you are more than you feelings, 2) to realize that you have thoughts, and that you are more than your thoughts, 3) to realize that you have a body, and that you are more than your body, and 4) to realize that you are a center of consciousness perceiving feelings, thoughts and body.

The client had experienced the technique months ago in his therapist's office. When he got to Step Three and the realization that *I have a body, and I am more than my body*, he went into a state of quietly pervading joy. He did not cause it: it simply happened to him. Now in his hospital bed, he closed his eyes and guided himself back to that joyful memory in the therapist's office. He felt a taste of the experience again, realized it was still available to him, and promised himself to keep using the Assagioli technique often throughout the rest of his hospital stay. When he opened his eyes, he looked at the Dilaudid intravenous hookup and asked the nurse to unhook him and take it away. Later, discharged from the hospital and making good progress in physical therapy for his new hip, he volunteered to teach

meditation, including Assagioli's consciousness techniques, at the very drug rehabilitation program where he had started his recovery two years ago. It was both a symbolic and a heart-felt commitment to stay on the recovery path.

Choice

As we've said, consciousness is a living energy which allows us to perceive our experience of being here, being alive, and its importance brings up the crucial question of how to take care of this living energy. We don't create consciousness itself, but we can learn how to utilize it properly. Assagioli called the choice of how to utilize consciousness an *act of will* and said that we can develop a *skillful will* (1974). Do we mindlessly let our consciousness spend time in negative and harmful thoughts about ourselves or others or about life itself, giving those thoughts increased living energy? Or can we learn to be aware of this misuse of our consciousness and instead deliberately direct it toward creative and life-affirming thoughts and actions?

There is nothing new in these basic questions. What is new from neuroscience is the knowledge that transpersonal qualities are innate in our higher brain and can be awakened and energized by our consciousness practices (principally meditation, imagery and energy). The task is to then become skillful in knowing when, how and where to guide our consciousness.

Mystery

And then there is yet another aspect of consciousness, but it is so mysterious that we can't characterize it: without consciousness, we would have no experience at all. You only know you are reading this because you have consciousness. We only know we have an experience such as our life because we have consciousness of our life. No consciousness, no experience, no life. Consciousness precedes experience. Consciousness comes first. What can we say about this mysterious consciousness that makes our very life knowable?



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Bonney and Richard Schaub were co-founders of the original New York Psychosynthesis Institute in 1980. They have taught clinical meditation and imagery (CMI) and psychosynthesis to hundreds of professionals internationally. Their latest book, The End of Fear: Vulnerability as a Spiritual Path for Realists, is an updated reprint of their 2009 Hay House Book.

<https://huntingtonmeditation.com/>



Life: Loving, Breathing, Living Art

By Ami Ji Schmid

I randomly designated the first Sunday of every month as *Inspirational Sunday*! This Sunday, I wanted to sleep more but my body wanted to move. So, I let it.

What happened was a body scan kind of meditation meets ecstatic dance. I placed my focus on relaxing the eye sockets, then the jaw... the skull... the skin off the bones... the bones in the neck. My focus moved to how the neck connects to the spine... the hips, legs, feet, toes... how the toes and fingers connect the parts between them. And my body began to dance with the mattress below, the sheets and blankets around it, the air. Dancing with the air was like moving through honey... through water... through sitting... through standing... through one room to the next.

My focus was nowhere in the vicinity of stretching out morning stiffness. My focus itself was dancing. Waking up felt like art. Moving in and out of the bathroom felt like art. Turning on water to boil felt like art. Filling the watering can to prep tomorrow's watering-the-plants felt like art. Carrying the full laundry basket downstairs, squatting to throw each item of clothing into the washing machine, measuring laundry soap and pouring it in, closing the door till it clicked, turning the knob and pulling it out... every chore, every movement, every thought, every emotion - felt like art.

Spinning from one chore to the next felt like connective art. Breathing felt like art.

While typing these words, Kenzie-cat is purring on my lap, stretching up to look at me. I stop to pet her. I look down and watch as she closes her eyes. I'm feeling her skin under her fur move under my fingers. I listen to her "murp" and hear the subtle sounds of the heat kicking on and the refrigerator kicking off. I hear the washing machine downstairs... cars on a distant street. Sky is a day blue and clouds are white and purple-gray. My neighbor's houses are colorful and angular. The leaves on the trees are still green; turning orange, red, and yellow; fallen - forming New England's autumn landscape. The air looks cold and I'm warm.

Being and breathing and experiencing life in this way feels like living inside a moving, art form.

Living inside art, as I'm feeling I'm doing now, fills my emotional heart to the brim, to overflow, to tears of aesthetic beauty and appreciation. This feels like love. I think *this* is love.

When I slow down and tune in to the nuances of what's happening right now, I'm tuning into love.

May you slow down. May you consciously enter your living-art-life. May you know love.



“Ami Ji” is a Radical Self-Acceptance and Trauma & Grief Support Coach, and is accessible through: [TLC Coaching and Consulting Services](#) and [The Compassionate Revolution](#) (TCR). Ami teaches a 16-week online course: “Release Stress, Heal Trauma, Accept Loss, Allow Grief.” She collaborates with Walter Polt, focusing and co-facilitating a 7-week online course: “The Plus Side of Anger in Relationships.” Ami holds a master’s degree in Mental Health Counseling (with a focus in Contemplative Therapies, Positive Psychology, and Cultural Awareness), and studies and practices Psychosynthesis psychology and transformational life coaching. She has over 40 years of study, work, and experience in the field of Metaphysics and integrated healing. Ami uses and teaches Mindfulness (as a path to Chronic Pain Control, Emotional Self-Regulation, Self-Acceptance and Inner Peace); guides both an online “[Meditation Family Group](#)” (via [MeditationChapel.org](#)) and online “[Movement Group](#)” (moving the energetic, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual bodies); and shares her blogs, vlogs and podcasts via “[Waking Up with Ami](#)”.

Esperanza (2021)

By Cristin McVey



Artist Statement

My exploration into the medium of collage began six years ago as a creative exercise in psychosynthesis, a psychospiritual program created by Italian psychoanalyst Roberto Assagioli and more recently popularized by his student Piero Ferrucci. The practice of psychosynthesis involves using the active imagination to explore the subconscious, bringing subconscious imagery to the surface, and in the process, making them real. Each collage, in that sense, contains its own living essence. Fragments of paper come together to form a synthesis, whose nature could not have been known by considering the fragments alone.

This process of synthesis is visible everywhere: words become novels, notes become a symphony, plants become meals, stars become galaxies. Once formed, they cannot be separated again. Similarly, the process of creating a collage is taking fragments of paper that seem random, meaningless, and insignificant and breathing new life into them. In the act of creating these collage, various fragments become whole, mirroring the inner work of creating wholeness (dare I say holiness) within ourselves.

Layers upon layers, piece by piece, day by day, a new image constructs itself. There are no mistakes, only creative solutions.

In these collages, I attempt to draw the viewer into this dream space. Each collage resists a single interpretation. There is no one meaning or story. My intention is for each image to evoke a feeling, sensation, memory, or moment of introspection. Why is this image appealing to me and the other not? What entices, what offends? And why now, in this moment? In this spirit, each viewer offers their own experience of the artwork and through this process the integrity of the image remains intact even amid the multiplicity

The driving force behind my artwork is an enduring interest in exploring the subconscious; in the probing its depths; investigating what lies just below the surface of the conscious mind. Much like dreaming, when the mind temporarily rests, imagery in my art floats up spontaneously, temporarily free from my everyday thinking mind. A meditation. An invitation into flow. A shift from the real to the surreal. My first encounter with art as a vehicle to explore the subconscious came as a teenager when I met a Jungian psychologist who showed me how to draw and interpret mandalas. Over the years I have had many teachers—artists, astrologers, Buddhist monks, academics, theosophists, yoga teachers—who taught me various techniques for understanding the subtle aspects of the mind, the vital energies that flow through the body, the joy of being conscious and the awareness of my small part in relation to the greater whole.

Being surrounded by books as a librarian and my love of thrifting make it easy to find the materials for collage. While I have studied art history, I am not a trained artist. I am, however, a highly visual person, and I can sit with an image or artwork a long time, absorbing the elements. I am especially attentive to color and composition. I love the Surrealists, for their rebelliousness and the juxtaposition of darker themes and humor. Why collage? Why now? I really cannot say. All of these artworks were created after I moved to Borrego Springs, where I live and work. I am not alone. Many other artists have found inspiration in the desert, a place that is quiet enough to let the muse be heard. So here is my song and enjoy the experience.



The Labyrinth

By Will Parfitt



LABYRINTH IN CHARTRES

The cathedral was open and as Marie stood before the entrance to the labyrinth she felt as though she was entering a dream. Leaving Jan asleep in their hotel room she had ventured out alone to look at Chartres Cathedral. She didn't know whether it was going to be open or not, but she didn't mind, after all the outside alone was astonishing. She had felt disappointed the night before that by the time they arrived and made love it was too late to do sightseeing, but now one of her wildest fantasies was going to come true – to walk the labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral. She was alone, or certainly seemed so.

She had been to Chartres twice before, once with a French friend when she was about twenty and the other time with her parents when a child. Both times she felt her spirit soar, more at the grandeur, the size of the structure than at any of the windows. On both those visits the labyrinth had

rows of chairs placed over it so it wasn't possible to walk on it. This time it was cleared and here she was stepping onto the path. She felt wonderfully alive as she walked, almost danced, along the spiralling pathways, sometimes seeming to be heading for the centre then being diverted back outwards, even back to the periphery.

Images of Jan broke her concentration at times and she really wondered if going on holiday with a new friend was such a good idea after all. Mostly it felt good but at times she didn't feel she could share as deeply as she preferred, and, well, it had endeared her to start with ... Marie caught herself in this reverie and brought her attention back to the labyrinth. She felt momentarily upset that her concentration had wavered and she told herself to focus harder. She wasn't sure but it felt like she would soon approach the middle of the spiral, the centre of the labyrinth. Feeling her hands tingling almost as if they were floating away from the rest of her body, she followed the path as it turned to the right and walked the short distance of the last section. She stood at the centre of the labyrinth, thrilled, and wondering, and trying to be silent and just be receptive to what she felt.

Marie felt a slight sense of disappointment, the experience was somewhat of an anti-climax. It was not that she expected something particular, but she somehow expected more than this. She raised her arms upwards as if to embrace the whole vast space that the cathedral occupies. Bringing her hands into a prayer over her heart, she closed her eyes. Nothing. Just emptiness. Still nothing.

She opened her eyes. "This is okay," Marie told herself. "It feels good just to be here, and it's not as if everyone gets to walk the labyrinth alone."

Realising that since entering the centre she had been facing in the same direction all the time she turned clockwise to her right, then again until she was facing the opposite direction. She was now facing the rose window.

"Not so big," she thought, "it isn't really that amazing. It's quite dark in fact."

She focused harder, but couldn't really see the window properly at all. It was strange, she couldn't understand her experience. It wasn't still dark outside, yet hardly any light seemed to be coming through the window.

Marie heard a rumble of thunder and realised there must be storm brewing up. Just at that

moment, with no warning, the window lit up brightly, almost crackling with light. The colours were the most splendid Marie had ever seen, more splendid that she could ever have imagined they could be. Then immediately a mighty clap of thunder followed the lightning that had lit the window. It was dark again but the after-image of the window, now with the colours reversed, floated before Marie's eyes. She was glued to the spot. She knew the cathedral was safe, yet the sound of the thunder rumbling through its vast cavernous space made her quiver with excitement. Her whole body trembled and, as the sound abated, she started to shake. More lightning and thunder followed, more distant, but Marie hardly noticed. She was transfixed, blinded by the light still, the decaying after-image of the after-image of the after-image of the window still floating before her eyes. She felt high, she felt dreamy. This whole experience was so astonishing, just when she felt nothing was happening. This was better than anything she could possibly have imagined.

Marie was coming back to herself, starting to think again, and to realise how momentous her experience had been, when she sensed that she was not alone. Next to the entrance to the labyrinth, a man stood looking straight at her. His eyes were compelling, so much so she felt she could hardly make out the rest of his features. He started to walk into the labyrinth, and then broke into a run. Marie was surprised and a little frightened, but he was running so fast now as she tried to follow his movements, always expecting him to miss a turning in the maze, but his step was very accurate. Fairly soon he was spurting round the last turn before stopping dead in his tracks as he came to stand before her.

"Please excuse me," he said, bowing slightly, "I didn't mean to alarm you. Each time I do this labyrinth I try to go a bit faster than the time before." He laughed slightly. "Ha, that's before death makes me run so fast, I don't manage to catch up with myself. But I speak in mysteries. Excuse me again, I haven't introduced myself, my name is Michael, Madame...?"

Slightly bowing again, he stretched out his right hand, almost too formally, for a handshake.

Marie was still in shock from her experience, and now this man appearing, it was too much. She was trying so hard to compose herself, to stop shaking, to stop feeling shit scared.

"Uh," she said, with hesitation, "I mean no, you didn't frighten me, I was just ... well I just had

this experience.” She didn’t continue, she didn’t know what to say. She didn’t take his hand, still outstretched.

“Again, my apologies for startling you, Madame.” Michael withdrew his hand and smiled broadly. “Are you alright? Do you need assistance?”

Marie started to feel stranger than ever and wanted to extricate herself from the situation. Feeling quite resentful of this man, she smiled pointedly, and told him she didn’t need his assistance at all.

“Remember,” said Michael, “everything is part of an unbroken web.”

“Thank you for your kindness, Monsieur,” Marie firmly said, turned and walked away without a moment’s hesitation.

She felt her breathing start and realised she had been anxiously holding her breath. Purposefully she slowed and deepened her breathing. “It’s good to take deep breaths,” she told herself as she turned to leave the cathedral.

She wanted to get back to the hotel room, to come back to normality after all this. She wanted to tell Jan about her amazing experience, and she wanted to share about Michael, the strange exciting man she had met, but was already deciding not to say anything, feeling it might evoke jealousy.

“Jealousy of what?” she asked herself, feeling her face flush as she strode out of the cathedral and into the street outside.

There were many more people about than when she had entered.

“Some tourists,” she thought, “but mostly French people. Citizens of Chartres going about their business.”

The storm had passed away, the sky was blue and the light was delicious. She felt elated, happy, wonderfully grounded in her body as she walked back to the hotel. She smiled to herself. It felt like she had had a big orgasm. She felt light and happiness radiated from her energised young body. She didn’t know why, but she felt it was as if she had met and spoken with an Angel.



Will Parfitt has explored personal and spiritual development for more than 50 years, trained in Psychosynthesis and is a Kabbalah teacher. Retired from a psychotherapist practice, from running distance learning courses, and from leading group training courses in the UK and Europe, Will is enjoying the time he has to devote to writing and other creative pursuits. He can be contacted via his website [will@willparfitt.com] where you can also explore his books on Psychosynthesis, Kabbalah and related subjects.

If you enjoyed this short story, you might like the ones with a similar style in Will Parfitt’s collection of short stories, “Rose of Heaven” [PS Books, 2022]



Daily Pages: The High Art Of Living

By Jon Schottland

There is a brief empty space, somewhere between the unconscious reverie that carries us through the night and the dawning of a new day, where we begin anew. In those first moments upon awakening, in the as yet un-lived minutes and hours of the day ahead of us, there is an opening where we might dwell in the awesome emptiness and creative potential of what the day might bring.

Much like a painter before the blank canvas, or the solitary writer facing the empty page, this emptiness greets all of us before the habits, patterns and well-worn treads of yesterday reassert themselves with their own momentum. If we can bear the doubt and uncertainty that come with stepping into the unknown, the murmurs of insecurity and resistance, here is where the deeper wellsprings of our own soul can begin to yearn for creative expression. How will I inhabit this day with intention, purpose, meaning, connection and direction?

As we discover in the process of psychosynthesis, each one of us has the daily opportunity and responsibility to script another day in the life of being a self, a day that will reveal a little more about what lies within us and what wants to emerge and be expressed. We see that each day is another blank page in the journal called “Your Life”. You are the architect, the designer, the creative impulse made manifest. It is said there is something extraordinary coded within each one of us, and each day presents another chance to crack that code.

When you come to recognize that at the core of your being there exists an essential self with the power to choose, then you begin to come alive to the extraordinary opportunity to fashion a life of substance and beauty. You begin to embrace the high art of living, or as Piero Ferrucci once coined it, “your life, your masterpiece”¹. Oh, to be a self with life as the canvas! Each of us with the creative potential to fashion the brushstrokes and lines, color and form, words and stories that will become our lived experience. It all begins with an empty space that awaits you in the early dawn.

You may notice that from this quiet, calm chamber of the empty space springs a source of inner knowing and guidance. It can call you to begin something new, take some action or attend to certain things that have meaning for you. At the same time, you may also notice there can be hesitation or even resistance to these very same impulses, though they may resonate with and express the vital energies of your unfolding self. Sometimes we recoil and turn away when presented with some inner promptings of the self, as though we have an aversion to the very idea of heeding its call. Maslow referred to this as the Jonah complex, named after the biblical character who tried to escape his fate after God instructed him to deliver a message to the people of Nineveh. We are drawn to express the vital energies and essence of the self, yet we also allow ourselves to drift, to become distracted and ignore what we are really capable of being and becoming.

In this sense, we might say that “resistance precedes essence.” What this means is the resistance itself is an indication that the essence of the self is near, that we are on the right track so to speak, and that just on the other side is something of our own essential nature that wants to be known, experienced and expressed. From this perspective, we can welcome the resistance as if a marker on a trail that has our name on it.

What we are talking about here, of course, is the resistance that creeps in when there is an inner prompting to move towards some meaningful expression of self in the world. It is the whining of the personality (“do I *really* have to do this?”) in the face of the soul’s longings and imperatives. This is not the same thing as what we might call “necessary resistance” and non-cooperation with evil, those malevolent and destructive forces in the world which must be vigorously opposed.

It is worth experimenting with different strategies when faced with this resistance to the call of self. My own response lately has been to turn this challenge on its head, which is to say that rather than putting off or deflecting the very thing I am being called to do, I have started to search for little windows and opportunities to turn towards the call of self with a greater feeling of immediacy and urgency. Like a surprise attack at dawn, I find myself with pen and notebooks soon after sunrise ready to get started on my writing life. Even just a single page, fifteen or thirty minutes at my writing desk, moves me from resistance to essence. Later in the morning, there may be another hour when I can devote more of my vital energies to the work, thereby rendering the resistance less of an obstacle. The key is not to let the resistance gain any traction.

The high art of living one’s life as a creative expression of self has been wonderfully captured in a quote from Gandhi. When he was once asked to describe his message, Gandhi paused for a moment then replied: “My message? My life is my message.” Let his example be inspiration and fuel for all of us to seize the day and get busy with our own messaging! And not just on social media but through our own daily pages and the high art of living in alignment with the call of self.



¹ Ferrucci, Piero. *What We May Be*, Chapter 15. Penguin Group Publishing, 2004. New York, New York.

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Changes

By Mario Canki, Ph.D.

After years working in finance, I was burned out and lost. Time for change.

Back to School

Decision to go back to school was exciting and I couldn't wait to start, but shortly after, the reality of such life-changing decision set in. I couldn't quit my Wall Street job immediately. First, I had to figure out all the logistics of this transition, including money, and finding the right school for my newly-envisioned career in teaching. But having made the decision, there was hope on the horizon and I felt alive and motivated as never before. With my initial interest in teaching science, I soon realized that I needed a degree in biology with a minor in chemistry, which in fact turned out to be a pre-med curriculum with heavy emphasis in sciences - including advanced courses in biology, physics, and math, that were all new to me.

I also realized that I first needed to acclimatize myself by taking evening courses during this transition time, before quitting my job and starting school full time. Researching different schools led me to Hunter College, which had extensive science courses offerings in the evenings, and was much less expensive than private colleges, as it was part of City University of New York (CUNY) University system. Hunter also had an excellent reputation for pre-med studies, so I started taking couple of basic science courses in the evenings. Hunter student body was a melting pot of different cultures and languages, just like NYC itself, and I felt at home. It was obviously a very different environment of Wall Street foreign exchange trading, with its hustle of winners and losers. I had to rush from work to be on time for lectures, and would often eat a snack on the go, so not to be distracted during lecture by an empty stomach. Tired from work, it was hard to pay attention and absorb new material that I had no previous exposure to. I kept dozing off. It was all new and difficult. Courses were well attended with younger and bright pre-med students. The environment felt competitive and I felt somewhat nervous and questioning my scholarly abilities. It was a long road ahead and a steep climb. Will I make it?

Coming home late in the evening I had no energy to study most of the nights, but I did manage to meditate before going to sleep, and that helped me

feel more energized and confident that I was on the right path, and just needed time to adjust to the new life. My Wall Street job and life began to recede in my mind and body, although I continued to work for the time being. My new found purpose started to crystalize and align itself with my original vision and desire of a career in teaching science. There was no turning back, only forward towards exciting - although somewhat uncertain - future.

After one full year and two semesters attending evening courses at Hunter, I felt more confident at my abilities to continue my studies full time, which I did with enormous pleasure. Quitting my job felt like lifting a heavy burden off my existential angst of not knowing what I am meant to do with my life. The daily grind in a meaningless job was beginning to recede from my consciousness. Now that I had a vision and a purpose aligned with my spirit and energies, there was more of a feeling of inner peace and freedom. There was only hard work ahead.

The AHA moment

Not everyone is visual or auditory in their perception, however, as we strive to connect to our inner wisdom, over time we will start noticing inner changes in perception, and awareness of new energies and possibilities within and around ourselves. We may also see images or hear words not with eyes and ears, but through our inner senses of seeing and hearing. Roberto Assagioli, MD, the father of psychosynthesis, described the sensation of connecting to one's higher self in a way that resonates with some of my own experiences: "energies descend down into images, and images descend down into words" (personal communication from Dr. Richard Schaub).

During a lecture on the subject of HIV and AIDS by a professor that I greatly admired for his passion and clarity, I heard a slight buzz in my ears and everything else in the lecture hall went silent - I felt like a bolt of energy pulsating through my body. It lasted only for a second, and then it was as if I woke up with new awareness - saying "pay attention", and reality of the moment came back into focus.

I sat up and listened with renewed attention and curiosity. What was he talking about that was so important? He was explaining the biological life cycle of the HIV and how the virus causes damage to the human body, eventually resulting in death. There was no cure, but only very urgent need for scientific research into new drugs that might ease infection and its devastating consequences. For preventing infections, vaccine research was the ultimate goal and the prize to be had. Many people were suffering and battling the horrible illness that was ravaging especially the most vulnerable gay community in NYC, and people throughout the World. AIDS was at its peak and was claiming many lives of some of the most creative individuals in the arts. As the lecture continued, the professor explained how the virus invades the individual's own protective immune system, eventually causing complete collapse of this protection, and death. This was a seductive metaphor of how the virus turns around our protection against ourselves. The immune system as a double edge sword! I immediately recognized the challenges posed by this problem, and found it fascinating – I was hooked.

At that moment I had the realization that in addition to intellectually-captivating challenge, I also wanted to make a contribution to solving this problem, and hopefully, in the process, to alleviate some suffering. There was no hubris in my intention, just honest realization that I wanted to contribute, and that this was my calling. This feeling was not imposed on me, but it was organic, and I felt it with my whole inner self, knowing it was totally right for me. I had always wanted to make a difference, not in any grandiose way but just a desire to help, to be of service, and this felt as the right opportunity presenting itself. Once again, my higher self, my higher mind and heart, understood more than I did, and alerted me at the right moment to pay attention.

This type of organic feeling and knowing is different from only feeling of intuition, which is part of the higher self, but by itself, intuition leaves one with a lack of clarity and confidence. On its own, intuition can come from our desire-body and ego, from our lower nature. However, when intuition comes from our higher self, and the two are integrated, there is a feeling of knowing that is beyond doubt. Whenever I was not certain about my feelings, I would always take them into my meditation, and would also analyze the question with my rational intellect and my higher mind. In the end, doing this process always left me with no doubt of the correct course of action to undertake.

This experience was far different than the original teaching objective I had in mind, which started with a magazine I found in the bookstore, showing the science of biomedical imaging. That initial experience started me on the right path of quitting my job, going back to school, and acquiring new knowledge. Now I wasn't thinking about teaching anymore - as the ultimate goal had changed from teaching to biomedical research, and yet I had no clear idea of what the end game was going to be. But it didn't matter, I just knew that I was on a clear path towards my life's purpose and meaning.

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4. "Finding my Higher Self: Mario Canki", by Mario Canki, PhD. <https://higherselfyoga.org/finding-my-higher-self-mario-canki>
5. "Climbing the Mountain: Change Your Life with Higher Self MeditaNon", by Mario Canki, PhD. <https://higherselfyoga.org/change-your-life-higher-self-meditaNon>
6. "Spiritual Oneness: What It Is, How to Reach It, and Why Humans Are Wired by EvoluNon to Seek It", by Mario Canki, PhD. <https://higherselfyoga.org/spiritual-oneness>



Dr. Mario Canki is a teacher and a writer. Curiosity about merging of science and spirituality inspired him to pursue a Ph.D. in molecular virology, and to study Higher Self Yoga (HSY). His academic work concentrated on the scientific study of HIV infection and discovery of novel drugs for AIDS prevention. Led by his interest in the spiritual, Mario has studied and practiced the HSY teachings for over thirty years. He also

undertook psychosynthesis analysis and training in Clinical Meditation and Imagery (CMI), with the co-founders of the New York Psychosynthesis Institute, Dr. Judith Bach and Dr. Richard Schaub. The intersection of these areas continues to give his life meaning and purpose. As a scientist and a teacher, Dr. Canki believes in coaching and mentoring people interested in developing their inner higher self potential – both intellectually and spiritually. He aims to teach the skills you need for the practice of self-discovery that will guide your life's purpose. mario.canki@gmail.com

Fresh View

By Clare Goodwin



Am I willing to step across the threshold from routines of the past into a fresh new world?
What would it be like to open my heart to something completely unexpected, with devotion and love?



Clare Goodwin
Intuitive Guide ~ Transpersonal Therapist ~ Artist

Clare has been blessed with deep intuition and a strong connection to the spiritual realm since childhood. These gifts inform all of her work whether it is counseling or her inspirational art.

She received her Psychosynthesis counselor & teacher certification from The Synthesis Center in Amherst, Massachusetts in 1994. She served as Counselor Training Program Assistant from 1994 through 2004. During that time she painted *The Star Diagram*, *The Egg Diagram* & the popular Psychosynthesis Evocative Word Cards. Prints are available at: <https://clare-goodwin.pixels.com>

Life Has A Way Of Creating Meaning

By Shamai Currim PhD

We move along on a trajectory of which we have little knowledge. It's only in retrospect that we can comprehend what our life journey can mean. Having been born in the 1950's life's meaning was so different. We were the 'baby boomers' who came into a life after a world war, when the financial picture was positive and we were raised on wealth in so many different areas.

So many were raised during these times and yet, many different directions were experienced in this generation. One has to question why such unique outcomes can occur when environmental beginnings are very similar. What is it that guides our lives, gives us hope, helps us to find what life truly means?

I've been told that to look at a child's play can reveal what their future will look like. When I look back at my childhood I remember reenacting the life of Native Americans, imagining my long braids and fringed clothing. Where did this world view come from? And, amazingly enough, it actually became a part of my life as I eagerly followed an Apache elder for many years. Was it possible that my future was guiding my past?

George Orwell, in his book 1984, states: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past." ¹Written in 1949 Orwell was referring to the consequences of totalitarianism, mass surveillance and repressive regimentation of people and behaviours within society. He felt that if we looked to past experiences we could move into a place of wisdom and not repeat past behaviours. But what if past behaviours were actually the results of the future reaching out to us and guiding us to completion?

George Land, in his remarkable book: *Breakpoint and Beyond: Mastering the Future Today*, suggests that our future is already known and that it is guiding us to be who we are meant to be.²

Roberto Assagioli talks about the adventure of life. He reminds us to let the will of the Self guide and direct our lives. He states that, "It is necessary, that our will should be good, as well as strong and skillful. Only this is the true, the whole will; only such a will can give us both practical success and the highest inner satisfaction"³.

So, how do we achieve this will of succession? What is the role we play in creating, not only our beginnings, but also our future end? If we look at the stages of life, according to a Psychosynthetic mode, then we will see how progress creates change. Assagioli talks about survival, awakening and inner

¹ Orwell, George: 1984 1949, Secker & Warburg

² Land George, Jarmen Beth *Breakpoint and Beyond: Mastering the Future Today*, 1992, HarperCollins

³ Assagioli, Roberto , *Psychosynthesis Research FoundaNon*, Issue No. 17, 1966

searching, deepening the sense of self and the awareness of the 'I', and moving into a personality that is increasingly harmonious with a deepening awareness of a greater Reality. As we move from a life consumed by addictions and compulsions we are awakened to a greater awareness of life and what it has to offer us. We move from the repressed realm that holds our pain and suffering to an awareness, exploration and recognition of our unique qualities, gifts, and talents that have been repressed. We learn to let the will of the Self guide and direct our lives.

I read these words and I recognize myself and the life I have lived and continue to enhance, the inner knowing that guides my every thought, my every action. I am on a projectory of time, a movement towards self/Self. I know, and yet I know nothing, and I move forward.

In September of 2022 I, and my soon to be husband, are moving to a country that deals with war, sometimes on a daily basis. I have bought a house that has a bomb shelter built into my second bedroom...and I am happy. I am living my dream. Would/could my mind have dreamed up such lunacy?

As a child I lived Zionism (returning to Zion). I belonged to youth groups that taught us the Hebrew language and way of being. Being Jewish meant that I never belonged in the land I lived. My thoughts, my attitudes, my beliefs, and my lived experiences were different from those around me. Trying to fit in, to integrate, is a lesson of my people who have wandered for so many years, a bond with my Jewishness. Yes, I'm a third generation Canadian, and yet, I am different, never to be the same because of my birth family and life beliefs. I watched as the world around me was changing and saw the ever strengthening of the struggle of prejudice. In my last life I died in the gas chambers of the Third Reich believing in the importance of the retention of Jewish beliefs, traditions, and rituals, so it was only natural that the strength of that conviction would follow me into this lifetime. I watched as the State of Israel grew and became a country to be reckoned with. The anguish of the 1967 war in Israel and the later scud missiles of 1990 only strengthened my resolve to become part of the solution of a Jewish State. Israel was created as a safe haven for people of Jewish origins. It has become a home for Jewish people coming from many different countries that hold high levels of prejudice and hate. Israel is composed of those who follow a one God belief and have for over 5783 years. In the Torah, the book of the Old Testament, there is a story of Jacob blessing his twelve sons 1

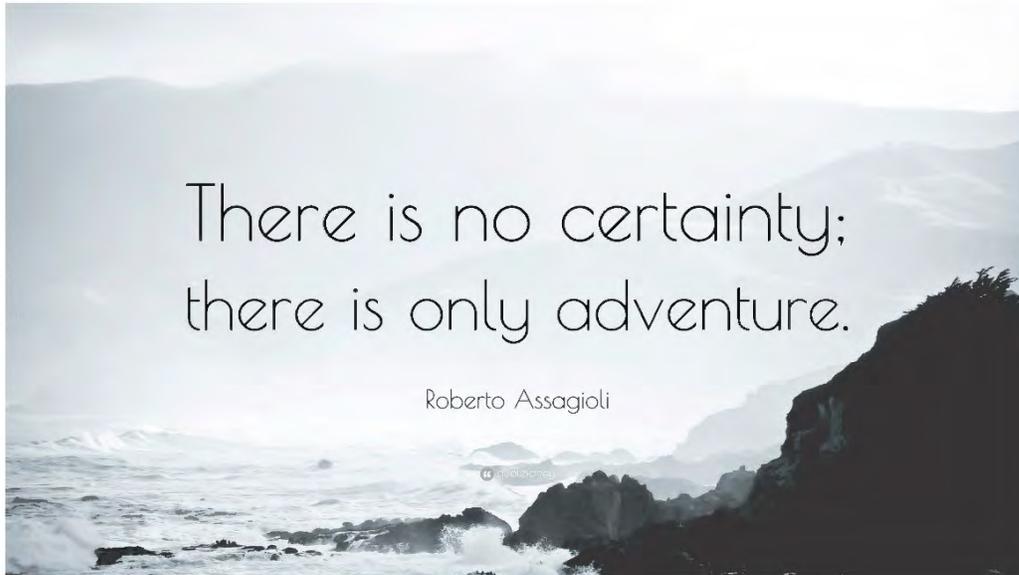
Each one is sent on a different path with each tribe holding a specific attribute (Reuben – The First, Simeon – The Aggressor, Levi – The Cleric, Judah – The Leader, Dan – The Judge, Naphtali – The Free Spirit, Gad – The Warrior, Asher – The Prosperous One, Issachar – The Scholar, Zebulun – The Businessperson, Joseph – The Sufferer, Menashe – Reconnection, Ephraim – Transformation, Benjamin – The Ravenous Consumer). The belief is that we must conquer all of these states in order to return to our self/Self. Many are feeling the call, the pull to return. Aliyah (rising up as opposed to returning) to Israel has increased by 31% in 2021 with a record number of 20,360 olim (new immigrants). As the prophecies have said, the children of Israel will return, and I will be one of them. It is to this land that my soul considers itself to finally be 'home'.

I have learnt to live from my heart, from my soul, from my inner knowing. I trust that which is beyond the human knowing and understanding. I know there is a higher power and that that higher power knows what is in my best and highest interest. How do I know this? Because I have grown. I have gone through the pains of angst and transformation and I have come out, very humbled, on the other side. I know there is a higher purpose and I am eager to play my part. I can see the pattern over my lifetime that has guided and supported that which I am supposed to be and I understand that this life is not mine, it belongs to the Universe, that which created and can destroy; that which knows what my small mind cannot comprehend. I have been given all the tools needed to enact that which is to be. I have lived, and continue to live in the now, knowing that the past is over and the future yet to come. In living in the present I am aware and conscious, I can act rather than react, and I can choose and have been given the gift of discernment. I am, and have always been me, only now I have moved from judgment to acceptance. I no longer feel the need to change, knowing that all of me is perfect just the way I am. I surrender to my destiny, and I am in love...with life. 1

https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/arNcle_cdo/aid/1717386/jewish/Twelve-Tribes-Twelve-Paths.htm



Shamai Currim, PhD, lives in Karmiel, Israel returning to Canada for the summer months. She is a graduate of Psychosynthesis Pathways of Montreal and has served for many years, in many varied positions, on the Steering Committee of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis. She is a retired psychotherapist, educator, and educational consultant and has done volunteer work in hospice and home care services, prisons, and senior's residences. Now in her senior years, Shamai has immersed herself in the arts and has had her work displayed in many local shows. Shamai has presented at numerous conferences, has been published in many peer review journals, and is the author of Meaghan's Story.



Treasure Troves: Freedom Of Letting Go

By Jeri Brown

In a history of world relics, of cavemen in a land of Flintstones, man has sought to savor and reminisce their past through personal treasure troves. Mementos of crowns and precious stones, furnishings earmarking family treasures have been passed on to younger generations...a legacy.

Coffee Pot

My sister kept and still uses grandmother Cuz's old coffee pot, decades since her passing, a pot that still creates a sense of empowerment whenever she makes her cuppa, as she starts her day on a positive note.

Peering Inside

The process of opening elaborate cabinets with glass doors, peering inside decorative gift boxes, looking and choosing treasures, provides a memory of touch between hand and object.

Identity Preserved

We preserve our stuff, personal artifacts from inherited masks, carvings, beaded embroideries, photos, books, costumes, tools—why? Our life cycle beckons a stiff upper lip to separate in large measure personal treasures from our pasts, art, specially selected objects, disseminating items found around us in closets, cellars, attics, garages, bins, distinguishing us from past and future generations.

Future Resettlements

Nature disrupts as we age causing both collapse and inheritance, passing memories of how collectibles came to be. Once useful history in our lives, we no longer store properly, no longer avoid their decaying.

Pandemic Cleanup

I browse sorting for signs of wear, classic clothing, sun damaged first editions, browsing through old jewelry boxes, tools no longer useful, extinct cooking appliances, unmicrowable dinnerware, torn-scratched albums, ripped edged silk scarves, cardboard and wooden boxes filled with handwritten letters, photos and certificates, traces of once visible usable significance.

At a thrift shop wearing a mask I sift, staring...reflecting at ornate evening gowns, some like mine—a bit too flashy for proms and weddings, more suitable for stage.

I examined stitching, beading on the front panels, inspiring to see such handcrafted details.

With great effort, I release my past, hauling much into recycling containers at thrift stores and charitable collection drop-off bins.

Who would want any of this now?

Where should they go?

Aging Transforming

Transformation summoned my process, selectively sorting, consulting on rehoming, gifting, donating, cleaning up and letting go.

Porcelain Cats

Inherited Mom's collected porcelain cat figurines, now ten years since receiving them in her Will, although I never liked cats. From our complicated mother-daughter relationship what were her illusive reasons to pass me those cats? What to do with them now, still a mystery.

Singer

Gave the Singer to a mother, needed to mend and create for her infant and toddler, the right thing to do. Wept for days.

Elixir

From purchased, sold, bartered, stolen, retrieved or lost origins. People have always been given gifts. Both inside and outside a home, gifted items can set things right. I give because I love you... because it was given to me...because I bought it somewhere special...because I know you will care for it...because it will make you happy. How and why the gift is given creates a memory, creates a wellness balance.

Electricity of Life

Choosing and touching memorable treasures, provides electric experiences of hand and object, of something special I have been attached to...reasons others might not grasp.

Glow Lost

Although I try to keep some collections fresh, many grow stiff and stale over time, losing their audience.

Scanning

Storing and copying, popular today, require technology. Contemporary solutions of cell phones, laptops and apps don't work for everyone. Virtual clouds store and provide links with emotional limitations: emotional...bearable.

Wool

Many items collected during travels infested with clothing moths have to be destroyed. Woolen rugs, mats, sweaters, scarves and mittens. I pass on what I can.

Seth

Passing on my wooden Seth Thomas metronome in this age of digital technology is logical but difficult to part with.

Stories

I recorded some stories of Auntie Eunice, along with narrative accumulations from family before and after their transitions. Great-Grandmother Callie, Grandmother Emma, Aunts Eunice and Thelma, Uncle Virgil, Cousin Winfield, Aunt-in-law Dana, Mother-in-law Mary Ann and Mother Vera are invaluable, currently stored on cassettes.

Full Circle

Family. Kin. Simple treasures. Simple pleasures. Soul satisfying memories of good times, bad times and all in-between times, along with pandemic inactivity have expedited my slowing down. I have begun plans for getting in shape again, contemplating moving to a smaller space or aging in place. I think ahead, preparing to better handle changes in health and mobility, assessing risks and benefits of selling my home and moving to a smaller one, financially cutting back, creating my to-do list, embracing upcoming edits that will happen. I marvel why I didn't start sooner. From years accumulating life's treasures and heirlooms I celebrate the freedom of letting go.



*Jeri Brown (Missouri, 1952) is an African American writer, jazz vocal artist, producer, Emeritus professor and recluse residing in Canada. A native of St. Louis, Jeri Brown has completed a 25-year global path while juggling a busy multifaceted career teaching fine arts performance in jazz, opera and gospel; a published author, arts researcher, music adjudicator, arts journalist, distinguished international soloist, composer and arranger over the course of an illustrious career. Her young adult fantasy book *A Necessary Family: Cosmo Gumbo* launched July in 2022 along with her poetry book, *Skin Folk* launched in 2019.*

Looking Into The Abyss Of An Uncertain World

By Gillian McConnell

Artist statement: I have been asked what does my art represent? What is the process through which the images emerge?

Upon reflection, I do not engage in the process with any particular intellectual premise or direction but rather I operate from what I would contend is a place that is guided by reflective spontaneity, fueled by expressive energy.

I feel driven in my work to give expression to certain layers of our society and to reflect the feelings of lack of control over the lives they are experiencing. All of this is simply a reflection of a world that is out of control, out of order. A world where nothing is as it seems. Recently I've been painting many faces and it's the sub personalities behind the faces that I like to ponder. The two faces I've submitted are looking to the future with a certain amount of apprehension.





LOOKING INTO THE ABYSS OF AN
UNCERTAIN WORLD



LOOKING INTO THE ABYSS OF AN
UNCERTAIN WORLD 2

Edith Stauffer Opened A Door For Me

By Julie Parker

(a chapter of a coming memoir, *My Enemy, My Teacher*)

One day in the mid 1970's, walking in dependency to my car from the home of a Pasadena friend, I noticed a sign on the lawn of a neighboring residence. The appealing script stated "High Point Foundation." Smaller print below added to the mystery: "*Psychosynthesis Training*." I stopped for a moment, studying the words. The sign, suggesting academia yet out of place due to its posting on a home lawn, aroused my curiosity. I decided to ring the bell. A short, white-haired woman with an unmistakable presence answered the door.

"Come in, my dear. I am Edith Stauffer, founder of High Point Foundation. You have been brought here for a reason."

Taken aback, I hesitated, then entered the front hall and was ushered into a den-office where Edith sat me down. In a desk chair opposite mine she asked questions with an engaging smile and slight Texan drawl. "No one comes here by accident. Tell me about yourself."

Under her motherly yet commanding bearing I started numbering off my recent projects, feeling suddenly awkward.

"Well, let me see...I've taught high school French and English for several years. I've written an east-west column and have worked for a newspaper. Oh, and I've just started teaching yoga in our home. We spend summers in Vermont, my husband Peter and I. Two of our daughters are in high school and one in college."

Edith studied me as I ticked off these accomplishments. She didn't seem to be listening. She waited until I finished.

"You are wonderful, Julie." Her eyes smiled on mine a moment, relaxed, assured. Then her chin lifted and took on an angle of authority. "But you are not centered. You need grounding."

These two words struck an inner bell. No one, least of all a stranger, had ever used them to sum

up how I come across. But the sound of ‘centering’ and ‘grounding’ appealed; these were Peter’s qualities. Edith had zeroed in on my basic short suit in five minutes.

“Hmmm. Interesting,” I murmured. My reflection was all the invitation this seventy year old needed.

“I am starting a new series of Psychosynthesis training next week. Your timing is perfect. I suggest you sign up and join us, dear. You will find a wonderful group of colleagues, most of them psychologists and therapists.”

And thus I was introduced to Edith Stauffer and a body of transpersonal psychology founded by Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli, a colleague at first of both Freud and Jung. But his work with patients had caused him to depart from both famous men in a more transpersonal direction. Edith, having taken training with him, had created a certification program in the doctor’s work. She offered it right there in the rented house we were sitting in. The bungalow served the purpose of living quarters for her and her husband as well as for offering the sessions.

Edith had set up High Point independently of any university system. But Edith offered something invaluable to those searching transpersonal techniques for their counseling practice. For me, it was a question of personal growth. Roberto Assagioli was known, if not widely, and had not surrounded his life teachings with legal barriers to control how it could be spread.

To prepare for the training Edith handed me the major theoretical works in paperback by the founder. Within a 15 minute visit this High Point director had sold me two modest volumes, *Psychosynthesis* and *The Act of Will*, by a doctor I’d never heard of. There was a compelling quality about her directness. The training might help me thread together all the conflicts I was feeling and weave a new tapestry, a tapestry of partnership, out of the one between Peter and me that was lopsided, beginning to fray again.

Excited, I went home to tell Peter about this discovery. But the training was not cheap. As I shared the details of my encounter over dinner Peter reacted with caution.

“What do you know about this Edith, and how is she connected to this...what is his name?”

“You know, I can’t answer that but I feel something concrete about Edith. I feel drawn to the concepts she explained to me. Dr. Assagioli is

a medical doctor, a psychiatrist. Edith says I need grounding. I think she’s right.”

“Well, you’re taking a chance on some kind of training given in a rented house rather than in a college classroom. Does that tell you something?”

“I know. I have my doubts too. If this Psychosynthesis turns out to be flaky, I’ll quit, and that’s it. But I don’t want to miss out on what could be valuable without giving it a try.”

I was present on that first day sitting among about eight psychologists as Edith and a therapist assistant shared Assagioli’s theories. The initial hour was spent explaining concepts. Edith had drawn a diagram of the different layers of an egg-shaped concept of our human consciousness with a little circular Higher Self sitting on the top. In the founder’s words she explained Assagioli’s basic presentation of “the seeming duality of the self,” belying “the real unity and uniqueness of the Self.” The work to be done in Psychosynthesis was to build towards a higher life, a *true life*, by following an inner program of techniques.

All of us began to shift in our folding chairs. We were eager for techniques, not theory. She then led us through the first guided meditation I had ever experienced.

Edith Stauffer was an enigma. In this rented house she had brought to life her High Point Foundation and it was attracting licensed psychologists. They, like I, had accepted her credentials that hovered on the fringe of academic rigor despite offering training sessions internationally in both Psychosynthesis and her specialty, unconditional love and forgiveness. Her trump card was having trained with Roberto Assagioli directly in Italy. Still, few of us would have stayed for Session Two if this imposing senior had not had the presence to impart clearly to our group the psychiatrist’s teachings.

During a second summer of my training a group of us had gathered in a retreat center on the outskirts of Los Angeles. I will never forget one of two episodes in particular. It stood out for me as convincing evidence that we do indeed have a Super-conscious or Higher Self, scientifically observable under certain triggering circumstances, especially if one’s mind state is slightly loosened from anesthetizing daily routine.

We trainees were all sitting on the floor or in chairs, in the large living room around the sofa in silence. Not a person stirred. Our colleague, the volunteer, lay on his back on the couch with a

small cloth covering his eyes. Edith, sitting on the floor beside him, asked him to look at the screen before his closed eyes. Edith whispered, "What do you see?" He answered, "Nothing."

Edith waited, then asked again. "What do you see?" 'Nothing' was the response for several minutes to Edith's repeated question.

Suddenly, the despair in the voice of the attendee touched all of us. He began to describe the disgusting image he now saw. Edith continued, "What is it?"

He described a pile of dung. It represented the dung heap of his life. He was stuck here and it revolted him.

Edith encouraged him to 'stay with it,' asking what he saw now.

The individual moaned and shifted his limbs. He hated his 'shitty existence.' He couldn't stand his life.

Edith remained motionless, asking him what he saw now.

Plowing through the manure, maggots and all, scratching at imaginary itches, we supporters stayed with our fellow participant for 15, 20, 25 minutes as insects tunneled through the muck. Edith's quiet voice kept up her refrain, 'stay with it.'

Then something happened. The man on the sofa gave a surprised little, 'Oh.'

Edith responded only with 'What do you see?'

He saw a seedling sprouting. It was growing. It was putting out leaves!

The question came again, 'What is happening now?'

Our colleague described the plant growing taller and bigger, and now it had buds. In amazement, he reported that the buds were opening into a flower.

As he described the burst of green and color, his

voice transformed. He now addressed himself as if a prophet were within, talking to himself in wondrous language using Thee and Thou, giving counsel, comfort, painting a vision of joy and rebirth. The session ended.

Slowly our colleague sat up, blinked his eyes, and looked around at us. He said only, 'Oh my god. Where have I been!' Then he laughed; the circle witnessing laughed with him.

I never finished session three of Psychosynthesis training. The first two series had strengthened my self-image, in a way setting me on a path I would need in the coming years to make it through challenges and setbacks of midlife crises, menopause and retirement. Edith will live on in my memory as one of my greatest mentors.



*Julie Parker has spent a lifetime on an inner journey to heal the psychosis that sent her to a psychiatric hospital after the birth of her third daughter. At 90, she has finished a manuscript, *My Enemy, My Teacher, a Memoir of Love Educated by Mental Illness*. Deeply healed after 40 years of exploring body-mind-spirit modalities, and teaching both yoga and French continually, she realizes a great portion of her healing can be attributed to her loving, faithful partner Peter and treasured daughters, grandchildren and a great grandchild. But the main wellness work has been her determination to unmask the character flaws that operated in her and in each of us, cunningly, that play dysfunctional roles, not wanting to die. Psychosynthesis, with its concept of subpersonalities, played a major role in her healing process. Photo by Laura Parker lauraparker.com*

The Fear Of Nothing-Ness

By Eva Sanner

When I was twenty-two years old, and still quite new to the path of Siddha Yoga, I was visiting an ashram in South Fallsburg, USA. About 1500 people met every evening for *satsang*, a program which involved us coming up one by one to greet our teacher, Swami Muktananda. With so many people lining up, the importance of having the queue move forward smoothly was obvious. Now and then, a voice on the loudspeaker asked: “As soon as you see an empty spot in front of you, step right into it.”

The stay at the ashram was an important first part of my spiritual journey; however, I do not remember much about the talks Muktananda gave. But I will never forget those words on the loudspeaker. To step into the empty space, be it with courage or fear, out of my free will, or forced by circumstances, has fascinated me ever since. I can see moments in my life where I dared to step into the unknown, and moments where I chose not to. I can see it in the processes of my clients, and the challenge and gift it presents. In this article, I share my fascination with the concept, as well as putting it into the context of personal growth and therapeutic work.

Being a writer, first as a journalist and later as an author, I have connected an empty space with an empty *page*. The creative process and the psychosynthesis model of the different stages of the will, have given me several important pieces of understanding. When manifesting a creative process, the importance of awareness and choice is pertinent. “Where am I? What is the next step? What helps me to take this step – and what stops me?”

To realize that I do not need to know the outcome but can *start with the intention* of my goal, has helped me take on challenging creative projects. To stay in the *present moment*, with what I am doing or creating right now and not let the vastness of the text or book scare me, has also been supportive. I saw early on that *using the will* or Intention to move from one stage of the creative process to the next, was crucial. The cycle starts with the urge to create, goes through all the different stages of creating, and then leads to the letting go of the project, the final stage of returning to the emptiness. The fear of the empty space follows like a shadow through the creative process. “What if it all comes to nothing?” And still, the concept of *nothing* also awaits all creators at the end of every process, when the cycle or the circle comes to a closure and there is a letting go, a stepping into emptiness or rest. It is even described in the First book of Moses, when God rested on the seventh day.

The fear of nothingness stops many of us from expressing our creativity. It makes us listen to the critical voice which says it is impossible, unnecessary, or just plain stupid to start our endeavor. The fear of emptiness can make the creative force stop and wither, and we might project our creativity onto others – celebrities, professionals and other people whom our inner critic finds better suited to be agents of transformation.

As therapy is a creative process, some of these principles are also present in the therapy room. For the client, every session is part of a creative process in the evolution of a new self-image, a growing self-awareness or even a new way of being in the world. The will is present in the choice to show up for the sessions, to dare to be present with what comes up and to choose the new instead of the known. Often, it is the relationship with the therapist that makes it possible to hang in there and not give up, even when it is difficult.

A deep therapeutic process often includes a phase where new awareness exists, but the destructive patterns are not yet changed – a frustrating struggle connected with a new kind of pain. “What is there on the other side? Who am I without this pattern? Can I exist in another form, more free, more alive, more *me*? Can I let this old form go?” Standing on the edge of the unknown with patience and courage and having the support to do so, will make it possible for the larva eventually to turn into a butterfly. As Roberto Assagioli himself puts it: “it is like the state a larva is in when it undergoes the transformation process that will cause it to become a winged butterfly: it has to go through the chrysalis stage, a condition of disintegration and loss of power.”

For the therapist, the creative process is different. Not knowing what the client will say or do, we are

constantly on the edge of the unknown, albeit in a less threatening way. However, I have noticed that some clients evoke in me a greater fear of making mistakes, of not being able to hold them or of not being capable of finding the “right” way. I am aware of the projective identification aspect of this; nevertheless, I still need to hold myself and overcome the fear of us not getting where the client needs to go. I need to be present and alert, willing to go into the unknown with the client and find out what is needed, and what wants to emerge. If the client seems to be ready, I must be too.

The fear of the empty space, which is there both in the client and the therapist, also exists in the collective, in the basic fear of not being met or connected, and ultimately of not existing. In nature, death is always connected to new life. The squirrel is eaten by the lynx, so the latter can survive. The plants die in the fall and decompose into soil where new seeds can grow. For us humans, connection to the natural cycles of the changing seasons, the moon’s waxing and waning or the sun rising and setting, seems to be crucial not only to align us with our own natural cycles but also to understand the deeper meaning of emptiness.

In the creative process, finishing and letting go is sometimes connected with celebration or in some cases with grief. However, this phase is also connected with all that will be created in the future. I associate it with what the Taoists call the “pregnant void” or the Tao. It is the beginning and yet not the beginning, the ending that is the start of everything, thus being beyond time – the “perennial potentiality”. Taoism in turn is born out of the older Shamanic worldview, where the void is often described as the fifth element, with the power to connect everything with everything else and to catalyze change. No wonder so many practices of both Shamanism and Taoism and later Buddhism relate to death and what it means on all levels.

In the West, the concept of nothing, as well as finding a symbol for it, led to the creation of the number zero, which then made it possible to do calculations with vast sums. A millennium or two ago, Indian mathematicians took another crucial step by treating zero like any other number, instead of a unique symbol. In the Middle Ages, this mathematical knowledge swept through the Arab world and then across western Europe. Zero became an important part of elaborated equations, it was a lynchpin of the scientific revolution that later evolved. In our time, our computers speak only in zeros and ones, and modern mathematics shows that zero alone can be made to generate everything. The pregnant void seems to be also present in mathematics.

Standing on the threshold of an empty space, be it in a creative process, a therapeutic one, or in life’s many different challenges – how would it be to allow the emptiness to be part of everything that we do? To listen to the sound of silence between the words, to understand the importance of waiting as well as the power of jumping into what we do not know anything about. Seeing life as cyclical, and emptiness as always present, makes the jump seem not smaller, but more like the end and the beginning at the same time, a part of a cycle of life.

Taking a break in the writing process, I go for a walk by the stream in the woods close to home. It is late afternoon and almost dusk. As I am walking through a pile of leaves, a small frog takes a jump from left to right in front of me, from the leaves and into the stream. She quickly disappears down the stream, and hopefully finds another place to hide further down. I reflect on animals’ instinctual reaction to events, and the flow of life that can keep moving unstopped when there is not any fear of the unknown. I imagine that the frog trusts in her own capacity to swim, land and find new safety. Maybe then the fear of emptiness is only in us as humans, and when we overcome the fear we jump to re-establish connection with our surrounding world. It might even be the ego that is afraid of dissolution, of losing identity and control, whereas the soul is not at all afraid. On the contrary, it seems that emptiness and being with it in different ways, reconnects us to Spirit and to our own ego-less being.

References:

Roberto Assagioli: “Transpersonal development – the dimension beyond psychosynthesis”

Robert Kaplan: “Nothing that is. Natural history of the zero”

Eva Sanner: “Så blir du mer kreativ”

Eva Sanner, Sweden, is a psychosynthesis therapist and author, and a board member of the European Psychosynthesis Association. She has published eleven books on topics such as creativity, sexuality, and relationships. Her book about creativity “Så blir du mer kreativ,” will hopefully be translated into English during 2023 with the title “Creativity and how it works”.



Stepping Into The Empty Space

By Cristina Pelizzatti, PLC, ICF MCC

A blank canvas

An empty glass

A blank page

A clean mirror

From my father, Elio Pelizzatti, artist painter, I learned the art expressed through painting.

From the love for my homeland, Valtellina, I learned the art of tasting and serving wine.

From the desire to put one's life at the service of helping human beings in the development of their human potential, a book to be written page by page, filling the empty space with meaningful and powerful words around the art of coaching through Psychosynthesis.

From the Vedic Wisdom I learn the Art of acting in accord with the Source, or Yoga.

My father was always searching for quiet and minimalist environments in which to compose his works of art. These might be small rooms in the ancient and rural houses of Sondrio. He filled them up with white canvases of various sizes, canvases that he had started to work on, others that were finished, oil paints, pencils, chinks, brushes, magazine clippings, dried flowers and other objects that could inspire him. In the air the scent of acrylic, tempera, oil, and thinner to clean brushes. I like to think I grew up with bread and brushes.

Before placing the pencil on the canvas, he would let it manifest what was already precisely outlined in his imagination. This would emerge step by step as he painted. Between him and the canvas, there was a suspended space of time, filled with contemplation. I didn't understand then. I was a little girl and I observed him and in observing I could feel the fullness of that space between him and the canvas, the intensity of the moment before entering into the canvas with the first touch of the pencil and starting to create his work. I'm not even sure today if that work was his alone, or if he was the creator of a work that manifested itself through his hand.

In contemplating the blank canvas that was in front of him, it was as if my father were asking permission to be able to "stain" it, by taking away that initial whiteness. In the silence, I felt the energy flowing as a magical connection created between him and a dimension beyond time, space and the rational mind.

Then it began. His hand took the pencil, the pencil approached the canvas, the canvas was ready to receive the stroke that from then on would change its whiteness forever. I still remember those moments as intense, almost sacred, dominated by silence, in which he entered the canvas, using his hand to bring into being what had been shared, outlined, with shared gratitude, in the empty space.

Entering the empty space of the white canvas was for him the next step in a ritual -- if it can be defined as such -- without which the heart of what was then represented would not have existed. I am deeply grateful to my father for nourishing me with my Love of Art, the Art that accompanied him to his last breath, leaving us the beauty of his works, but above all the beauty of his being an Artist for the Heart.

In this last incomplete work by him, taken from the website <http://www.eliopelizzatti.it>, he was giving me the gift of the Art of Psychosynthesis as a way of flourishing, showing me the way, which I did not know at the time. In the following years I realized that Psychosynthesis was waiting for me, it was shown to me on many occasions, starting with



Studio di vaso con rose, 2006
Abbozzo su tela, 50x70 cm.

the example of my father as Ideal Model. Stepping into an empty space full of creativity and leaving a mark engraved in the dimension on Being, where space, time, like in a blank canvas, still to be completed, is flowing eternally.

In 2006 I graduated as a Professional Sommelier. I am not a wine drinker or an alcohol drinker, I mainly drink water. At the time, I managed an alpine refuge on the ski slopes in Valmalenco, in the Valtellina region. Many people stopped between one descent and the next and they loved, in the brief time available, to taste a good glass of wine with a typical Valtellinese dish. My passion for studying stimulated me to deepen my knowledge of the art of serving and tasting wine, and to educate my clients in the art of appreciating the combination of wine and food, to enhance both of them and to enjoy a moment of mindfulness by stepping into a dimension of pleasure combined with awareness.

Wine is not only a stimulant and a relaxant, but the result of a long process of care, passion, dedication, study, context and knowledge, which starts from a seed: in the case of Valtellina, the rare seed of the Nebbiolo grape. Finding the ideal soil, the vine sprouts deep roots, which enter the rock in search of aquifers to feed the plant, which can live for many years with a very small amount of water. The seed has a unique, peculiar productivity, giving a grape that under the skilled hands of the winemaker, who tends the vineyard day by day, results in an elixir.

The bunch of grapes that makes this elixir evolves through a long process of phases, states and stages until the final product is ready for tasting. To sip this elixir, you must have exactly the right glass. Each wine requires its peculiar ideal glass to be fully appreciated.

The glass is therefore the necessary instrument to host the first small content of this elixir. The glass is not always given due attention, but it is just as necessary as the contents, the wine. The glass enhances the wine's color, its quality, and the scent that is revealed through particular movements of the glass when it is rotated and held by the professional sommelier. The essence that the elixir is ready to release is contained first in the ideal space. The glass must be clean and empty. The emptiness is full of air that, when moved by the wine entering it, mixes with the contents, allows the release of the previously confused aromas, which reveal themselves gradually one by one with clarity to a trained sense of smell. The glass must be crystal clean. It is almost as if the space within the glass only exists to allow the contents to be fully appreciated in all their potential.

The moment in which the first drop of wine enters the empty, crystal clear glass is delicate, slow, velvety, handled with art by the expert Sommelier and first brought to the attentive gaze that begins to read the wine contained in the space that is now filled with aromas, flavors, and a unique taste to savor and experience with full awareness. Tasting a single drop of the wine is a meditation, a complete experience suspended in time, in the moment.

Without the ideal glass, the empty space, the crystalline clear glass, handled with art by the Sommelier, the wine could not be truly appreciated in the long process that brings it to the palate of the client. The Sommelier educates the client in the art of tasting, so that the client can truly experience and appreciate each step that leads to the end result of tasting and enjoying the elixir.



The fifth Zen patriarch, Hung-jen, was seeking his successor. He asked his monks to put their reflections into verse. Shen Hsiu, the favorite for the succession, wrote:

“Our body is the Bodhi tree
and our mind is a shiny mirror.
We carefully clean them by the hour
So as not to let the dust settle on it”

The Patriarch commented on the sentence saying: “To attain supreme enlightenment one must be able to spontaneously know one's nature or Essence of Mind, which is neither created nor can be destroyed. From Ksana in Kshana one must always be able to realize one's own Essence of Mind. Then all things will be free from constraint. Come back when you understand.”

An illiterate servant in the temple, Hui-neng, asked one of his friends to write these verses and give them to the Master:



“There is no Bodhi tree
Nor support for a polished mirror.
Since everything is empty,
where can the dust rest?”

Hui-neng became the sixth and last Zen Patriarch.

I’m a Psychosynthesis Coach Trainer, and I’m working in a profession that I love profoundly. It represents my Ideal Model of Being while Doing, to which I have dedicated my life with passion, diligence, determination, respect and perseverance, in synthesis with Love and Will.

Like the blank canvas I want to be.

Like the empty glass I want to be.

Like the clear mirror I want to be.

Like a white page on a book to be written I want to be.

As the blank canvas, the empty glass, the clean mirror I want to serve the people who rely on me, so that they can step into the empty space that separates them from their Essence, filling the void with their contents and savoring the beauty of each one of them. I make myself available as a container and instrument for them to become who they truly are, while reaching their desired outcomes, until finally they can mirror themselves through me and realize their Essence.

At that point they can write their new story on the empty page of their awareness, the authentic story that wants to emerge around themselves, in a book not yet written, as they step into the empty space full of opportunities.

For essentially, into the Silence, into the void, into the emptiness, as well as within the fullness, only the Self exists.



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Neuroscience Applied in Coaching, Certified MBRS, Certified Foundation in Soft Skills, Certified
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*Cristina focuses on maximizing effectiveness in thinking and decision making with an emphasis
on the pursuit of excellence and Self-Leadership.*

More info:

www.syntegritycoaching.com www.synthesis-coaching.com/faculty

Travelers

By Claude Convers

I love airports; I generally arrive perky, moving fast with my small carry-on luggage—the soft floor allowing the wheels to smoothly follow me, which gives me a sense of attentive and sharp presence hardly achieved otherwise. Other travelers surround me, doing what they have to do to go where they have to go. And it is exactly what brings me joy, doing what I have to do to go where I have to go. I stand in line, take my shoes and jacket off, have nothing to declare—actually I have just about nothing with me at all—then, I feel the sense of relief and freedom that will come soon. I put my shoes and jacket on again and swiftly move on to my gate to find a seat where I can wait, and wait, and wait, and do nothing until boarding. It is there that I can see my true pleasure slowly materialize: the realization that I have nothing left to control anymore, that all I have to do is to relax and let go of what I forget, of what I remember, of what I want, of what I have and of what I lost... and know that it is not for me to know what will come of me. It is then that I can start to breathe that special air around me and accept that what I hold so tied in my hands is only wind.

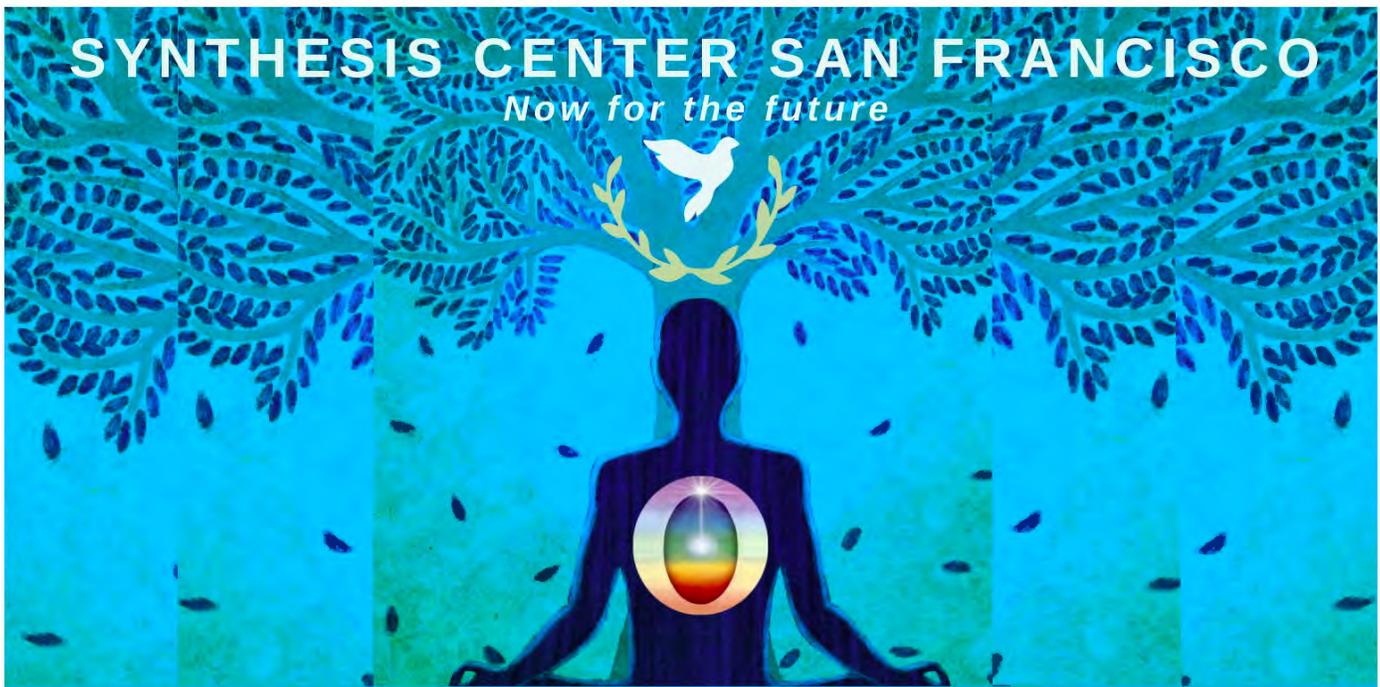


WIND

[For Claudes Bio, Click here.](#)

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**“I am deeply convinced that peace is fundamentally
a psychological problem...**

**I believe that only through education and applying and in becoming living
examples of realized peace in ourselves, in our families, in our work; in
demonstrating the possibility of right and harmonious relations in small
groups one can create a true (peace)... it is a slow process but in my opinion
the only sure and effective, in the long run.”**

- Roberto Assagioli - handwritten note Archivio Assagioli

WINTER 2023 - WE BEGIN JANUARY 30, 2023

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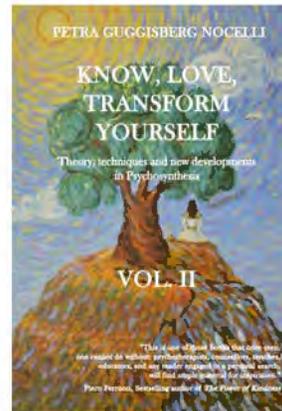
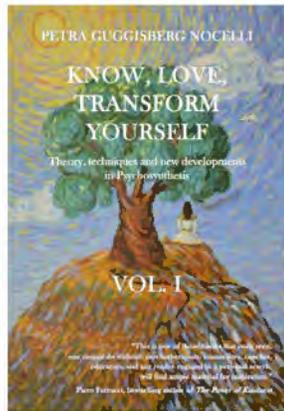
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Know, Love, Transform Yourself

by Petra Guggisberg Nocelli

Reviewed by Jan Kuniholm



Petra Guggisberg Nocelli's *Know, Love, Transform Yourself: Theory, Techniques, and New Developments in Psychosynthesis* is a monumental contribution to psychosynthesis literature. At two volumes totaling 1100 pages, it is literally a monument!

The contents of her work is significant: she herself is the author of large portions of the two volumes but she has also included chapters and contributions from a variety of authors from Europe and North America. Originally written and compiled in Italian, The English language edition of Volume I was published in 2021 and Volume II appeared in 2022.

There is so much material in these two volumes that it is possible only to summarize its contents briefly. Volume I contains Part One with an overview about Roberto Assagioli, psychosynthesis, and the stages, aspects and core of the psychosynthesis process. Part Two Focuses on Techniques and Exercises that facilitate the process. Volume I then proceeds to present significant contributions by other authors on topics such as addictions, creativity, beauty, disidentification, dynamic wholeness, resilience, love and will, coaching, as well as different models of psychospiritual unfoldment and growth. Volume II begins with chapters on personal and transpersonal psychosynthesis, and proceeds with contributions by other authors on topics such as power, mental imagery, body awareness, sexuality, ecological transformation, and education. Many of the articles in both volumes contain practical applications and exercises but Volume II also contains a large library of practical psychosynthesis exercises that are presented apart from specific articles.

Nocelli's writing is generally well-informed and clear and she presents a lot of material in very useful ways. Illustrations, charts and diagrams are plentiful and well-presented and helpful to the reader. Contributing authors include Rozana Bažec, Ewa Bialek, Joan Evans, Dorothy Firman, John Firman and Ann Gila, Birgit Haus, Catherine Ann Lombard, Tan Nguyen, Will Parfitt, Bonney Gulino Schaub and Richard Schaub, Micael Wolde, Kristina Brode, Molly Young Brown, Martha Crampton, David England, Angie Fee, Sonoe Hiramatsu, Mark Horowitz, Aubyn Howard, Isabelle Clotilde Küng, Jan Kuniholm, Walter Polt, Franco Salvini, Eva Sanner, Jan Taal, and Tom Yeomans. This reviewer noted occasional defects in translation of material into the English language, but these were minor distractions and did not prevent the reader from understanding the meaning and content, which was consistently interesting and well-presented.

Many significant ideas, both new and old, are presented here so that these two volumes can serve as a one-stop reference for psychosynthesis. Highly Recommended!

Contribute To The March 2023 Psychosynthesis Quarterly

with Guest Editor Peter Stewart

This Issue's Theme: Psychosynthesis and Work

Work, Purpose, Destiny:

For many of us, work is a big deal, a key element in our sense of purpose and self-esteem. It can take up half of our waking day, or more. Those of us who are psychosynthesis practitioners, whether therapists, coaches or counsellors, may have deliberately chosen to work in the service to others. Our clients' work may be driven by entirely different motives.

In this quarterly, we explore the issues around psychosynthesis and work. Roberto Assagioli, the founder of psychosynthesis, said: "Through all your mortal work your soul should sing to God". In *Transpersonal Psychology*, a collection of his spiritual essays and lectures, Assagioli is quoted as saying:

"Yet another source of joy, if we are able to achieve it, is work or activity. Since in one way or another this occupies us for many hours of the day, we will appreciate how important it is to work serenely and joyfully. Even when engaged on some unpleasant, painful task we can find reason for spiritual joy, based on our ability to overcome circumstances."

But our work ethos can raise other issues. In serving others, is there a risk that we forget ourselves? How do we relate to clients and colleagues whose attitude to work is different from our own? How do we deal with periods of frustration at work? How do we engage with clients who are unhappy in their jobs but need the money? How does our sense of Self evolve when we change our path? What shapes our own sense of purpose, and how does work relate to our spiritual goals and destiny?

I warmly invite you to contribute your thoughts and reflections around this topic for the March 2023 quarterly. The deadline for submissions is 31st January, 2023. We welcome textual contributions of up to around 1,500 words. We also welcome photos, images and graphics relevant to the theme of psychosynthesis and work.

The Psychosynthesis Quarterly accepts announcements, ideas, reviews of books and events, articles, poetry, art, exercises, photos, and letters. Tell us what has helped your life and work, what can help others, and examples of psychosynthesis theory in action. We welcome articles from all who study, teach, coach, counsel, and play with psychosynthesis.

We hope our suggestion of from 250 to 1500 words may serve as a guideline that helps your writing. We prefer that you use the APA style guide when possible, for things like punctuation and references. Announcements, book reviews, and upcoming events are also welcome, with a request that nonmembers who wish to submit advertising make a donation to AAP. To donate, [click here](#).

Please send your announcements, ideas, reviews of books and events, articles, poetry, art, exercises, photos, and letters to newsletter@aap-psychosynthesis.org

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS JANUARY 31, 2023

Peter is a creative coach who has recently focussed his work on career transitions and issues around employment. He is accredited at Foundation Level by the European Mentoring and Coaching Council. He trained as a psychosynthesis coach on the PGCLC program run by Middlesex University and the Institute of Psychosynthesis in London. Before that, he worked for more than 30 years as a journalist, consultant and analyst, mainly in the fields of energy and travel. He runs several websites dedicated to his creative interests including pottery, poetry, painting, travel and wine. You can connect with Peter through his website <https://coachcreates.com> which has links to his various social media or by email to peter@coachcreates.com



Webinar: Embracing The Empty Space

Presented by Claude Convers
Sunday, February 5, 2023

9am – 10:30 pm (PST)

Noon – 1:30 pm (EST)

5pm – 6:30 pm (GMT)

6pm – 7:30 pm (CET)

Time convertor: <https://www.worldtimebuddy.com/>

Target Audience:

This webinar is for anyone interested in experiencing the Psychosynthesis process. We'll explore our interactions with choices, and how they affect our daily life and our way of being in the world.

Description:

In our December 2022 AAP Quarterly we witnessed how the empty space can be perceived, among many other things, as being challenging, unpredictable, or joyful. In this webinar, my intention is to bring lightness into the process of stepping into the empty space while expanding on the experience of surrender and the sense of exploration and curiosity.

Using Psychosynthesis tools and philosophy as a support, we'll practice making choices while letting go of the outcome. We'll open our minds and hearts to the emergence of creativity and we'll ease the moment of pushing past our resistance to open ourselves to whatever will be.

Participants will have the opportunity to engage with one another and share experiences, and, if the desire emerges, to also share the tangible outcomes of their creative expression and exploration.

Learning Objectives - Attendees will:

- Connect to the Higher Self through meditation and imagery
- Interact with poetry, images, music and gentle movement
- Use spontaneity as a springboard for exploration and discovery
- Engage with other participants and share experiences and understandings
- Learn to open and connect to the sense of flow and surrender in the Psychosynthesis tradition, to brighten daily life and ease relationships with the unknown

[Click here to Register](#)

**This webinar is FREE to Members,
\$25 to Non Members
Deadline for registration is Friday, February 2, 2023**

[For Claudes Bio, Click here.](#)

Introducing “Your Voice”

We often receive comments after each publication of the Quarterly. Now we are introducing “Your Voice” as an opportunity to share these with you. After reading the Quarterly, if you wish to share your thoughts, comments, or feedback, please send them to newsletter@aap-psychoanalysis.org. We ask that you be kind and respectful as we are all doing our best.

