

The Psychosynthesis Research Foundation – Its Vision, Mission, and Program.

Roberto Assagioli and co-workers wrote this paper, around April 1957, which is a vision and mission statement for the PRF, before establishing a legal foundation in the US in November 1957.

Source: Derived from the AAP archive, folder PRF_AAP_Correspondences, 1957.

The present world crisis, which affects all aspects of the individual and of society, is producing a considerable and rapid increase of nervous, psychological and mental disturbances. These, in their turn, constitute the chief causes of suicides, of crime (particularly juvenile delinquency), of addiction to narcotics and to alcohol. The amount and the intensity of the suffering produced by these ills, which affect the whole human being, are incalculable. The effect on other human beings, from the family to the whole social fabric, in the form of "psychological infection" — unhappiness, waste of energies, expenditure of time and money — are most serious and alarming.

"It has been estimated that (in the U.S.A.) around 300,000 more (mental) patients urgently need hospitalisation but do not get it; problem drinking affects some 3.8 million Americans.... The more conservative psychoanalysts maintain that about a third of all adults are neurotic."

("LIFE" magazine, January 7, 1957, p.74)

The causes of this situation are various, but it has been ascertained that by far the most important are of a psychological nature. Modern man is "a house divided unto itself"; he is the battleground of many and acute conflicts between the various parts of his own nature, between himself and society. The crying need for help and also the natural development of scientific investigation have caused the rapid appearance of a new science — *psychology*.

As Professor Overstreet has tersely stated: "There is, in short, a time clock of science. Each science has to wait until its hour strikes. Today, at last, the time clock of science strikes the hour of psychology; and a new enlightenment begins." (*The Mature Mind*, p.14, Publ. New York, Norton)

The growth of psychology and the extension of its applications in the fields of medicine and of education and in many other departments of life has been phenomenal — but it has been tumultuous, disordered and uneven. Not only is it one-sided and faulty in certain directions, but it has of itself raised problems and has even created dangers and, in certain cases, has produced real harm. The existence of many different and conflicting schools of psychology, some of which have extreme views, has been confusing and bewildering. Its chief liability and danger lies in the fact that both academic psychology and psychoanalysis have put the main emphasis on the elementary functions and on the lower aspects of the human being, and in the tendency to fit all individuals into a pattern of "normalcy" and "adjustment" while, in general, they neglect, and in some cases even deny, the higher aspects and possibilities of the human being.

This fact is due chiefly to a materialistic and positivistic outlook, to the application of the methods employed in the physical sciences to psychology, and to an excess of analysis and specialised research. There is therefore an urgent need for a balancing and integrating *synthesis*.

Synthesis can be applied in three main ways:

1. The synthesis of the various psychological schools, resulting in a synthetic conception of the human being.
2. The synthesis of psychology with other branches of human knowledge and life: Philosophy, religion, and the social sciences, etc., thus including the *whole* of man.
3. The synthesis of the various techniques employed in psychotherapy and in education, according to a definite psychosynthetic plan for each individual.

This trend toward synthesis is not lacking; it can be noticed in some of the best psychologists, philosophers, and educators. There is also an increasing trend towards cooperation between religion and psychology. Clergymen and rabbis are cooperating with psychologists and psychiatrists. And there has been and there is a school of psychology and a method of psychotherapy and education which, for more than thirty years, has proclaimed and applied the principle and method of synthesis, as indicated by its very name: *psychosynthesis*. A short outline of psychosynthesis is given in the appendix.

Its chief *specific* contributions are:

The study of the superconscious, the activation of its faculties and energies, and their harmonious integration in, and utilization by, the conscious personality. This includes the study of genius; the discovery and development of special talents; the study and development of the *will* (a precious human function which has been curiously neglected by psychology, by psychotherapy, and, to some extent, by education); the establishment of a harmonious integration of all human aspects: biological, emotional, mental, and spiritual, under the direction of the Self; the study and development of right interrelations and interplay between individuals and between the individual and the various groups with which he is affiliated; the creation, experiment, and use of specific techniques for those purposes.

Psychosynthesis has been elaborated in the years since 1910. It was first presented to the public by the Institute of Psychosynthesis, which functioned actively in Rome from 1926 to 1938. After the war, in 1948, it resumed its activities in Florence. A pamphlet *entitled A New Method of Healing — Psychosynthesis* appeared in 1927; many articles and studies have since been published in various languages, and courses of lectures have been delivered in different countries, including the U.S.A., England (at various colleges, organised by Prof. Lauwerys of the University of London) and in Birmm and Geneva (at the Société de Philosophie), etc.

The very favourable and gratifying results yielded by psychosynthesis; and the increasing and urgent need for adequate help utilizing the enormous resources of talent and of the higher possibilities latent in human beings — all point to the usefulness, one might say the *necessity* of a greater development, a wider extension, and a more intensive application of *psychosynthesis*.

These are the incentives and the purposes which have urged us to propose the creation of an international Institute of Psychosynthesis with its Headquarters in the United States.

Program Of Activities

I. Research

Psychosynthesis has as yet by no means achieved adequate development, and there is ample scope and, indeed, a pressing need for both scientific and practical research. To mention only a few of the many possible fields for investigation research projects could profitably be started on:

1. The investigation and use of the higher and psychological functions and activities, such as the intuition, inspiration, mental and artistic creativity. More specifically, the study of gifted children and of individual of genius; their early recognition; the development and application of methods of education and of training suited to them.
2. The nature of the *will*; its relation to the other psychological functions; the techniques for its safe development and use.
3. Human types, their classification and description. Methods of psychosynthetic education and treatment suited to each.

II. Fields of Application

1. *Education*. The development and use of psychosynthetic educational techniques; their application in the family, in schools, in adult education. A special project has been outlined of a School for Gifted Children, and for adolescents, with the purpose of discovering and training them to become future executives and leaders in all departments of human life.
2. *Psychotherapy*. Development and use of the special psychosynthetic techniques and their integration with the other existing techniques in an inclusive plan of treatment for each patient.
3. *Human Relations*. The nature, varieties, and techniques of inter-individual psychosynthesis. The integration of a married couple - of the family group - of various communities - of national groups - and, finally, the psychosynthesis of humanity.
4. Special emphasis will be given to the *training of experts* in the various fields: Educators, Psychologists, Medical Doctors, Nurses, and Social Workers.

The best means of training is through individual "didactic psychosynthesis". When this is not possible, other methods will be used, such as Courses of Lectures, Camps, directed individual and group applications, use of a specialized library, etc.

III. Expansion

1. Through the publication of pamphlets, a bulletin or periodical, and of books on psychosynthesis.
2. Through lectures in various cities and countries.
3. Through the establishment of branches of the Institute in various places, the first one being the existing Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence, Italy.

INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

IMMEDIATE ORGANIZATIONAL PROGRAM

1. To incorporate the Institute of Psychosynthesis as a non-profit corporation in the State of Delaware, USA, to have a corporate body able to receive funds and so that donations made to its support would be tax exempt.
2. The Institute so organized could then accept the gift of the house and estate offered by AB. This will give the Institute a "home" or working center. The basic maintenance costs (such as real estate taxes, light, heat, and caretaker, etc.) have been guaranteed for two years. The cost of salaries for staff would have to be obtained by donations from interested people. Dr. Assagioli would not require a salary for his services — at least for the initial three years of operation.
3. The founding members of the Institute are to elect a representative Board of directors or trustees who would have responsibility for the Institute's programs. From their ranks, the directors would elect the officers; say, two of the officers could take up residence at the Institute's headquarters and initiate the actual program of the Institute. Presumably, these two would be Dr. Assagioli and another American doctor, so that there would always be one of them on the premises for interviews and maintenance of day-to-day working.
4.
 - a. First steps in initiating the Institute's work would presumably be the sending out of letters from the Institute headquarters to doctors and educationists, outlining the objectives and plans.
 - b. Arrange a series of lectures by Dr. Assagioli in principal cities.
 - c. Invite other doctors and educationists to the Institute for consultations and discussions to evolve a system of seminars and a method of coordinating the experience of doctors who are utilizing psychosynthesis (or similar) techniques. To explore with educationists the possibilities of presenting the techniques of psychosynthesis to schools and colleges.
5. To approach those who know of, and are interested in, Dr. Assagioli's work in psychosynthesis, and invite their financial support of the Institute. Later, prepare material for use in soliciting funds from a wider field — such as philanthropic trusts, etc.

Appendix

Psychosynthesis

Psychosynthesis should not be looked upon as a particular psychological doctrine, nor as a single technical procedure.

It is first and foremost a dynamic, even a dramatic conception of our psychological life, which it portrays as a constant interplay and conflict between the many different and contrasting forces, and a unifying centre which ever tends to control, harmonize and utilize them.

Psychosynthesis is, moreover, a combination of several methods of inner action, aiming first at the development and perfection of the personality - and then at its harmonious coordination and increasing unification with the spiritual Self. These phases may be called respectively "personal" and "spiritual" psychosynthesis. According to the various fields of activity in which it is used, and the different purposes which it can serve, psychosynthesis is, or may become:

1. *A method of psychological and spiritual self-development* for those who refuse to remain any longer the slaves of their own inner phantasm or of external influences, and those who refuse to submit passively to the play of the psychological force, which is going on within them, and are determined to become the king of their realm.

2. *A method of cure for nervous diseases and psychological disturbances* which becomes necessary when the cause of the trouble is a violent and complicated conflict between groups of conscious and unconscious forces, or when it is due to those deep-seated and tormenting crises (not generally understood or rightly judged by the patient himself) which often precede a phase of spiritual development.

3. *A method of integral education* which tends not only to favor the development of the various faculties of the child or the adolescent, but helps him to discover and realize his true nature, and to develop under its guidance a harmonious, radiant and efficient personality.

Psychosynthesis may also be considered as the individual expression of a wider principle, of a general law of inter-individual and cosmic synthesis. Indeed, the isolated individual does not exist; every person has intimate relationships with other individuals which make all individuals interdependent. Moreover, each and all are subordinate to the spiritual super-individual Reality.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON ROBERT ASSAGIOLI, M.D.

Dr. Robert Assagioli was born in Venice, Italy, in 1888. He took his medical degree at the University of Florence, specialising in neurology and psychiatry, but pursuing at the same time psychological and philosophical studies.

He became an active member of young philosophers, artists and literary men who published the vanguard review, "Leonardo". Later, he was the editor of the scientific periodical, "Psiche".

After practicing various methods of psychotherapy — such as suggestion, persuasion and psychoanalysis — he evolved a new and comprehensive method, aiming at a complete reconstruction of the personality, called psychosynthesis, which he applies not only to patients, but also uses and teaches as a method of education and self-education. In 1926 he founded in Rome the "*Institute of Psychosynthesis*".

After 1938 Dr. Assagioli's work in Rome became increasingly difficult, because his humanitarian and international activities aroused more and more hostility from the Fascist government, and he had to close the Institute. The arrival of the Allies liberated him in August, 1944, and later he reopened the Institute in Florence.

Writer and lecturer, Dr. Assagioli has travelled extensively in Switzerland, England, France, Holland and in America. His essays and articles, some of which have been translated into eight languages, number several hundred. Included among them are:

- Psychology and the Art of Living
- The Subconscious and the Superconscious
- The Mystery of the Self
- A New Method of Healing: Psychosynthesis
- Music as a Cause of Disease and as a Healing Agent
- How to Learn Languages through the Subconscious
- Psychological Types
- The Training of the Will
- Psychoanalysis and Psychosynthesis
- Spiritual Development and Nervous Diseases
- Psychology and Religion
- Transformation and Sublimation of the Sexual Energies
- Transformation and Sublimation of the Combative Energies
- For Parents Only
- Contributions of Psychology to Intercultural Understanding
- The Education of Gifted Children

Psychosynthesis, both as a psychotherapy and as a method of education, has grown steadily through the years, so that the Institute of Psychosynthesis, now at Via San Domenico 16, Florence, Italy, is establishing Centres and branches in various countries.