

Psychosynthesis Quarterly— October 2024

# ecopsychosynthesis

@25

**Guest Editor: Molly Young Brown**



The magazine of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

**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.

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 non-profit 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 non-members who wish to advertise make a donation to AAP. To donate, **[Click here](#)**

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Cover image — “On the road home” - Robyn Bern, Aotearoa/New Zealand

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# Letter from the Guest Editor

## Molly Young Brown

Welcome to this Quarterly, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the first "Conversations in Psychosynthesis," which was edited by Dorothy Firman and David Klugman and published by the newly fledged Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis in 1999. The theme of that publication was "Ecopsychosynthesis," a word we coined for the occasion.

This 2024 Quarterly demonstrates how that theme has spread through the psychosynthesis community, influenced in the intervening years by the field of ecopsychology and the expanding awareness in the wider global society of humanity's radical interconnectedness and interdependency with all of Earthly life.

I believe that ecopsychosynthesis supports the "collective liberation" of all humans and all life. May we liberate ourselves collectively from greed, hatred and fear, and delusion (yes, the three "dukas" of Buddhism). May we liberate ourselves from their active forms in the world today: profit-obsessed capitalism and extreme wealth (greed); racism, sexism, fundamentalism, and all types of "othering" (hatred and fear); and the lies and misinformation that support these destructive institutions (delusion). May the articles, art, and poetry in this Quarterly inspire and inform this movement, this Great Turning.

I am forever grateful to my dear friend and colleague Didi Firman for insisting that I write the feature article for the original monograph and respond to the commentary contributed by other colleagues. She knew I had worked and studied with Joanna Macy during the 1990s in what was called at the time Deep Ecology work, including co-authoring *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (1998).\*

I was seeking ways to combine Deep Ecology and psychosynthesis so they could inform and support one another. Deep Ecology can help reconnect people with the so-called natural world, so essential to our psychological and spiritual health, as well as challenge us to take action on behalf of all life so threatened by pollution, extractivism, climate change, and (I would add) neocolonialism and capitalism. Psychosynthesis can lend its powerful tools and concepts (e.g. disidentification, Self-identification, subpersonality work, synthesis) to support people in their service to the world—beyond the therapeutic setting.

However, at that time, in 1999, I was the lead teacher in a very demanding "Pregnant Minor Program" that had been recently funded and set up in a high school in Santa Rosa, California. I started work at 7:30 am and seldom got home before 5:30, although the students left at 3. I had a huge amount of administrative work to do after a full day of teaching (mostly) educationally-challenged teen mothers. (I did try to bring in some psychosynthesis concepts and practices, with very little success.) I didn't see how I could take on writing a major paper, too.

My memory is that Didi kept after me to do it, nonetheless. So I somehow carved out the time to write, and the words poured out. They must have been backed up in my consciousness (higher or middle or both?) because it was surprisingly easy to write, once I committed myself to the task. Then I read and responded to the exciting and sometimes challenging commentary from Bill Plotkin, Carla Brennan, John Parks, Elena Franzini, and Anne Yeomans. It was glorious and extremely fulfilling, and helped bring forth aspects of my psyche that were neglected, even suppressed, in my teaching job. (More about this in the conversation with Didi and Mark that follows.)

So here it is, 25 years later, facing the global threats to life and health as great if not greater than before. Can psychosynthesis contribute to a Great Turning, to a life-sustaining, just, and cooperative society that truly works for everyone, and if so, how? The articles, poems, and art in this Quarterly offer guidance and inspiration for the challenges facing humanity today—and I am grateful to all the contributors. May ecopsychosynthesis play a major role together with all the other transformative movements and approach-



Photo Credit: Molly Young Brown's website  
<https://mollyyoungbrown.com>

es active in the world today. Bless them all!!

And bless Peter Stewart and Mark Skelding who took on the major work of receiving and editing the submissions. My “guest editor” position has been mostly honorary while they did all the work. Thank you both so much, Peter and Mark!!

\*A revised edition of *Coming Back to Life* was published in 2014, with the subtitle: *The Updated Guide to the Work That Reconnects*.



Molly studied with Roberto Assagioli, in 1973 (the year before he died) and she has shared psychosynthesis with others ever since, through training programs, workshops in North America and Europe, individual guiding sessions, and writing *The Unfolding Self: Psychosynthesis and Counseling*, 1983 (revised edition *Unfolding Self: The Practice of Psychosynthesis* from Helios Press, September 2004), and *Growing Whole: Self-realization on an Endangered Planet*, 1993, (revised edition, *Growing Whole: Self-realization for the Great Turning*, 2009). She has served on the Advisory Board and the Professional Development Committee for the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis. She co-authored *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (1998), and the 2014 revised edition: *Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to the Work That Reconnects*, with Joanna Macy, Ph.D. Molly holds a master's degree in humanistic and transpersonal psychology (1979) and a Masters of Divinity (1993) from Starr King School at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA. She also edited and published two “spiritual” books: *Held in Love: Life Stories To Inspire Us Through Times of Change* (Psychosynthesis Press, 2009) with Carolyn Treadway, and *Lighting a Candle: Collected Reflections on the Spiritual Life* (Psychosynthesis Press, 2010).



# IN CONVERSATION

Didi Firman and David Klugman

## Climate Change: Crisis and Opportunity

David and Didi have been friends and colleagues for 33 years. They taught the Synthesis Center Psychosynthesis Training together many years ago. They have worked and played at Psychosynthesis conferences, shared their lives as they went through the many joys and sorrows that life offers, walked on the beach at Malibu, went to the theater in Boston and much, much more. They know and love each other deeply and are curious about revisiting this important topic together so many years after they co-edited the first “Conversations in Psychosynthesis” monograph: *Reflections on Ecopsychosynthesis* (1999).

**Didi:** The challenge is to be nature, not to think about it, want something for it or from it, not even to try to save it. We are it. And when we finally allow ourselves to identify with that which is true, disidentifying from all the old and limiting ideas about who we are in relationship to nature, we move into the only Self-identification that ultimately exists. We are members of this eco-system, no more no less. We are participants in the unfolding of this planet's present and its future. How we participate is up to us. Thanks for the inspiration in offering the term “participant” in our earlier discussions, David!

**David:** Indeed, Didi, this is the challenge! What I find hopeful in what you have written is the idea that we may ‘finally’ arrive at the only universal self-identification that actually exists in the material world: we are all members of a mysterious and even enigmatic ‘eco-system’ in which everything is working together (organically and mechanically); interpenetrating and affecting everything in an evolution of an ‘everything’ we still know little about.

The only rub for me is that if we focus only on material problems, we will only find material (quantitative) solutions. So, while we NEED science to enable us to address and hopefully heal the injuries we have imposed on the earth and ourselves, we must be wary of its materialistic roots. Because Materialism (a dead white male ‘text’) is not the same thing as science. Material science is still beholden to it.

**Didi:** You said “SCIENCE!” Now isn’t that the thing we eco-oriented people keep using to explain why we shouldn’t build on shorelines, rip out the core of the earth, drink fossil fuels for breakfast? Science has proven it! You also said “INSIDE!” Familiar territory in psychosynthesis, but only in balance with manifestation.

From purpose (qualitative and inside) to manifestation (change, actualization of something). So, tell me, dear friend, how do we find the inside of the cosmos? And when we do, where is the work of synthesizing science and Cosmos?

**David:** We are the inside of the cosmos. There’s no getting there. It’s about access and imagination. Consciousness is the inside of the macrocosm in the same way that self-consciousness *is* the inside of each individual or microcosm. That we don’t generally know what is meant qualitatively (spiritually) by the terms ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ is the thorn at the heart of the issue for me. Realization without actualization is as lopsided as actualization without realization. So, yes, though I am coming at the problem with both in mind, I do tend to lean toward the ‘realization’ aspect in this case.

Because, we have no science of I am. We have a material ‘quantitative’ science based on I think, with no inside to it. When it comes to inwardness, or the realm of ‘qualities’, they have eyes yet see not, ears but hear not and so on. Because the (for me, sad) fact is that, insofar as virtually all legitimate scientific thinking goes, anything that cannot be weighed, measured and given a number also has no real existence. How much does the soul weigh, Didi? And what number should I assign to my “I am”?

**Didi:** The invitation then, may be for each of us, individually, to know ourselves in self-consciousness (I am...) and know ourselves in universal consciousness (We are...). Holding the particularity of each element of the earth (I am one of those) and the shared universality of everything within the WE ARE ONE of this planet, let’s imagine unity, caring, active engagement with the needs of the planet and its inhabitants. Let’s participate in creating each of those things. Let us be both I am and We are, in full consciousness now and towards the future that we imagine for this planet and participate in creating. Whew. How’s that?





Interpenetrating Synthesis  
(gouache, acrylic and pen on paper)  
By David Klugman



**David:** It is wonderful! And I am split. One part wants to say, Bravo! How beautiful. We can do that! And another part says, Yeah, and I've got a bridge to sell. That could be my skepticism, or it might suggest that a personal synthesis needs to occur inside of me. One that reminds me that I am-ing all day is not going to get anybody very far at all. And yet, while realization is essential to our understanding of the human being, we need to balance that NOW with actualization big time!

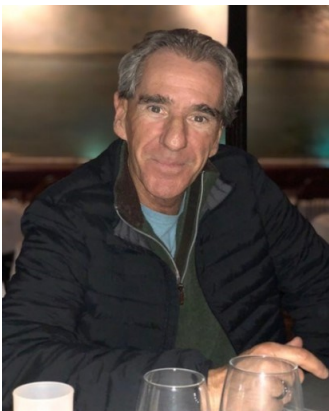
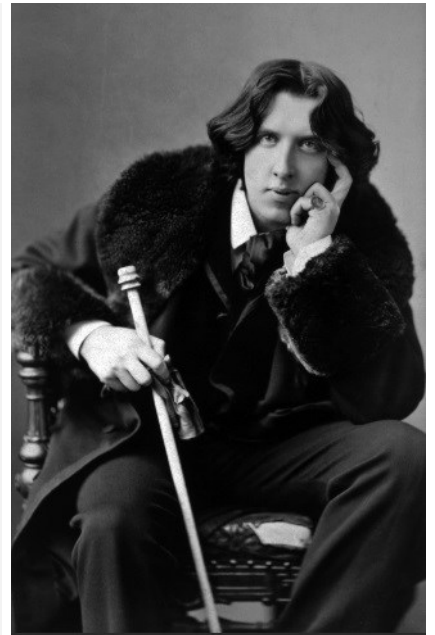
Viewed this way, tackling the problem of Climate Change is a unique opportunity for us. Because in the process of healing the earth, we may also heal ourselves, and in the process learn — and

relearn — how to keep our planet, and our societies, healthy and on the move toward the Synthesis we are reaching for. A world where the 'other' is no Other, but a sister, friend or maybe a brother.

And this is the upside to the forebodings of Climate Change. We must all, each in each one's own way, come together and heal, not only the earth, but the fractured world from which the problem of Climate Change has emerged. So, in the spirit of Synthesis, I invite us all to see Climate Change as an opportunity to bring about a collective healing and verily transform the planet and its human inhabitants.

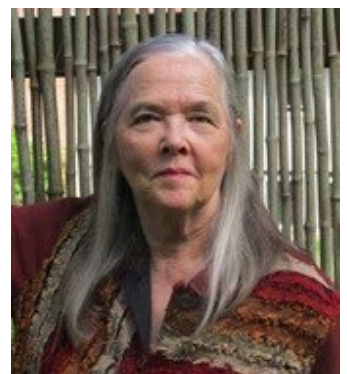
*David often brings this quote to mind more than once a day!*

*"If you want to be a grocer, or a general, or a politician, or a judge, you will invariably become it; that is your punishment. If you never know what you want to be, if you live what some might call the dynamic life, but what I will call the artistic life, if each day you are unsure of who you are and what you know, you will never become anything, and that will be your reward." Oscar Wilde*



David Klugman, MA, MS, LCSW, has been a social worker for nearly forty years. His first training out of Columbia sent him to Massachusetts, where he studied and eventually taught alongside his teacher, mentor, colleague and now dear friend, Dr. Dorothy Firman. David attended Bennington College, Johns Hopkins and Rice University with a strong emphasis on literature, psychology, music and esoteric studies. He is a poet first, to himself, though few of his poems have been published. He paints, but does not consider himself to be a painter. Rather, he thinks and moves in color. He has published a dozen or so papers, but does not consider himself to be an academic. Rather, he thinks, feels, thinks, reads-reads, thinks some more, and tries to be a coherent a writer in whatever forum he finds himself.

Dr. Dorothy Firman (really, just Didi) has been practicing and teaching psychosynthesis for nearly 50 years. She is the author of many books, the editor of the what may be the first book on psychosynthesis coaching: *The Call of Self: Psychosynthesis Life Coaching*, with chapters from psychosynthesis coaches around the world. She is the founder of the Synthesis Center and is currently teaching through Synthesis Center San Francisco, offering Board Certified and Psychosynthesis Life Coaching. She is a retired professor of psychology; a martial artist, and grandmother to 5 amazing souls, devoting this life, day by day, to helping create a better future for all children.



# FROM THE BLADE OF GRASS TO THE INFINITE UNIVERSE

Isabelle Clotilde Küng

...or how Assagioli directed my attention to the interdependencies between the infinitely small and the infinitely complex and vast, thus opening for me in 1967 the door to ( the need to know more about) the worlds our senses perceive, and the worlds physics was studying then, and is today, in 2024, always more bewildered by.... Or do YOU understand Quantum Physics?

At the end of this articles, I give two examples of exercises I have used to integrate nature in my psychosynthesis course to adolescents.

Although the title of this communication says it all, I would nevertheless like to share with you the simple story of how this life-changing and scale-of-values-modifying event, which induced me to learn more about ecosystems, took place. It might also confirm that when Assagioli said his method of psychosynthesis should be called bio-psychosynthesis, this includes eco-psycho-synthesizing processes governing all forms and levels of life...

As usual, between 1963 and the seventies. I would stay at Assagioli's place for my monthly sojourn there (see my biog below). I would spend time in his studio, classifying some of his notes and quotes while he would write his articles and books. On one of these occasions, Assagioli suddenly stood up and said... "It is time to give my body a little bit of exercise and air! Would you kindly accompany me on a short walk around the Palazzo?" (that is how buildings are called in Italy)

So here we go... down the stairs of the Istituto and out on to Via San Domenico! Assagioli of course had his usual walking cane on one side, and on the other side I had the honour to walk with him "arm-in-arm." He focused on walking, I focused on having a good relationship with his pace. We did not speak.

There was a hell of a noise on the busy street from Florence to Fiesole, which begins at Piazza Edison, the reason the number of the Istituto di Psicosintesi's Palazzo is 16 of via San Domenico. Those of you who

attended some of the Casa Assagioli events organized by the Group "Alle Fonti" are certainly familiar with the contrast between the peace-fostering atmosphere reigning in the "Palazzo" where Assagioli and his family lived, and which houses the Istituto di Psicosintesi, and the tremendous noise on the street!!!

After Assagioli and I reached the end of these first buildings and arrived at the vast grass field extending to the first crossroad he



Free Grass Field Png clipart-library.com





"Star road into the unknown." Athor unknown

paused to observe the grass field, and he breathed as if he were breathing it in and blessing it as he was breathing out. Did he just do as he had said: get some good air?

Or was there something else worthy of his attention in that common grass field?

Then he looked at me and in the simplest tone of voice, but with the "accent of truth" (as we say in French for words spoken with that authority experience conveys)

Assagioli said, in Italian for that is the language in which we conversed:

"YOU SEE ALL THESE BLADES OF GRASS, Isabelle?"

I acquiesced ! And he went on, saying: "THEY ARE MADE OF ATOMS AND IN MYRIADS OF YEARS EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THESE ATOMS WILL BECOME A HUMAN AND THEN A UNIVERSE!"

Parenthesis: Today some theories say that atoms do not exist, and instead there are particles, bundles of vibrant energy (therefore SOUND?) that associate to confer density... changing all the time. If it is so, I wonder how this applies to the periodic table of elements of old I had learned with so much interest, caressing the idea that lead could be turned into gold, if only the atomic structure thereof could be "upgraded"!?! But in the sixties of the past century, it was still believed that the atom had specific characteristics as regards the number of electrons orbiting around the nucleus and were thus the "only factor" making them the building blocks of matter. Yet



whatever atoms or what composes them is. one way or the other, Assagioli's statement, based on the logic pertaining to his bio-psycho-spiritual point of view that atoms are the seeds of universes, can make sense anyway. And it probably will even more so in the future, for the Science of Physics is little by little seeing things as they present themselves to the eye of the observer, and it need not anymore conform with the dogmatic vistas of materialistic science as it was "decided" they should be two centuries ago.

Back to my stroll with Assagioli on Via San Domenico in the sixties... You can guess how stunned I was to hear him tell me, a 23-year-old student of his, that atoms are the seeds of universes... Do you realize that this implied that atoms are alive? How could Quantum physics work if the universe were not alive?



5th Conference de Solvay, 1927. Bruxelles, Belgium

*(Note: The basics of Quantum physics were already known at the beginning of the last (20<sup>th</sup>) century.... Until the 1927 Conference at Solvay (Belgium) on Quantum Physics where “it” was decided not to mention its astounding properties, that knowledge being too dangerous for “common” humanity as long as people were psychologically unprepared to handle their psychic energies such as desires and drives, greed and cravings, wisely — something Assagioli had already addressed by publishing “A new method of*

*healing: Psychosynthesis” in 1927. End of Note)*

Be that as it may, in 1967 I knew nothing about Quantum Physics (and those who did carefully hid their knowledge) and Assagioli’s stunning statement was, therefore, soon relegated into the “things to think about” corner of my mind. We walked back to the studio, and there he continued writing his text from where he had left it, while I would also go on focusing on doing my best with these meaningful notes and quotes, which he had collected and that needed to be ordered by theme.

The narration of this simple walk with Assagioli ends here. But it accompanied me all my life, and every time someone would mention Hubert Reeves’ famous statement that “humans are made of star dust” (which certainly makes sense), I never failed to add: “Yes, their body is made of stardust, but they themselves, as living, loving and willing beings are seeds of stars”.... The will is the spark of life.

I was used to getting queer looks in situations where I would affirm the points, I felt corresponded to my inner compasses’ direction....

Today, reading AAP’s invitation to send in an article or poem, a picture or idea in relation to EcoPsycho-synthesis and seeing the quote of Sam Keen’s interview that Molly Brown chose to introduce this theme, the memory of Assagioli’s statement that sooner or later atoms blossom into universes came back into my memory and I felt like sharing it with you all.

Yes indeed, as Assagioli says: “No person can take an arrogant stand and consider himself unrelated to the universe. Like it or not, man is a part of the universal will, and he must somehow tune in and willingly participate in the rhythms of universal life.” (Assagioli, 1974 – “Golden Mean” interview); does this not perfectly illustrate what he had told me during that short stroll?



“Four seasons tree.” Author unknown

When reading “the rhythms of universal life “ I find that it is too easy to overlook the hidden significance this elegant set of words points at. Namely, to his uncensored statement that atoms are seeds of stars which he so candidly disclosed to me, which is reason I wanted to share this anecdote.

## Ecology classes

When I say, in the introductory title: “the need to know more about the worlds our senses perceive” I mean studying ecosystems. That is so because when I began learning (a little) ecology I saw, to my astonishment, that it is the science of how the Great Natural Intelligence infusing all forms of life functions to renew all, by managing destruction constructively and by providing sup-



port for development.

Indeed, by learning a few basics of ecology, and due to my background in psychosynthesis, I could not “not realize” or ignore that many laws governing our inner human psycho-metabolism (Act of Will, the psychological Laws), but also our human outer behaviour, therefore healthy or toxic relations, have their correspondence in ecological processes, or are analogous to them.

So much so that, in order to increase my pupils sensitivity to the factor of interdependence in nature, in us and between one another, I organized a class of ecology that was taught by a specialist (albeit only during one school year for three pupils). That specialist was more than happy to teach a subject that he usually had to fight for even to be considered. Sad to say in the 1960s ecology was considered a fantasy invented by nature-loving persons who enjoyed interfering with the powers in place and stopping them from imposing the construction of structures that they and their sponsors supposed were “better than nature.” Therefore, the subject matter of ecology was in no school curriculum then.... Albeit later it suddenly became a “must” in public schools. Fortunately. But had it been so earlier, maybe the world’s problems today would be less dramatic?

### **Psychosynthesis course: Exercise of feeling the presence of a tree.**

This simply consisted in sitting in silence at the foot of a tree. If silence is indeed created, it makes space and in that space subtle “things” become perceptible... so for example, if you feel a sense of thirst, out of the blue.... It might mean the tree is thirsty.... No, the tree does not communicate with “you,” it is just that its state of thirst vibrates.... And who is attentive picks it up.

### **General culture class: Solidarity between trees...**

In my solitary walks in the forest behind the school, I had noticed a tree growing on top of a large rock. Two of its main roots were plunging vertically into the soil behind that rock, while a third root was growing in front, shooting horizontally into the void.... And what was holding this root, stabilizing it? Two smaller trees facing one another that had grown diagonally in such a manner as to intersect exactly under that root growing into nowhere! I got my whole class of General Culture to take that walk and see this illustration of the intelligence of trees.... Intelligence in this case meaning solidarity!

Since then, many studies have been published and videos on this subject shared on YouTube under the key word “intelligence of trees.” You will feel so relieved to see that there are some people in the world that care and love nature.... From which our own life depends. And the more people recognize this, the better!



Educationalist, Isabelle Küng completed her didactic training in Educational Psychosynthesis from 1963 to 1970 with Dr Roberto Assagioli at the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence, Italy, carrying out the practical part in the International College "Institut Bleu-Léman" founded by Dorette Faillettaz, in Villeneuve, Switzerland, with the task of teaching it as a course included in the general curriculum for all students from the age of 13 onwards. A pioneering work at that time!

Isabelle continued the experiment as co-director of this private College from 1970 until in 1981 she decided to suspend its activities due to the world economic situation: although of excellent reputation, an autonomous international undertaking depends strictly on geopolitics. Thus ended the first world pilot experience of teaching of, to put it in other words, the: "Understanding how to, and Art of living in harmony with oneself and with others, in a multicultural environment, and becoming aware of one's inner compass."

# ECOPSYCHOSYNTHESIS CONVERSATION

## Molly Brown, Didi Firman, Mark Skelding

**Mark:** We're together today because of the 25th anniversary of this lovely little booklet, which Didi, you were one of the editors of. And Molly, I believe in a way you were the inspiration for.

**Molly:** Well, you know, let's remember how it came about. My memory is that Didi wanted to publish a quarterly journal, a monograph or whatever. It was the first publication of AAP, incidentally.

But I don't remember if I had the idea or if you had the idea that it should be on "EcoPsychosynthesis."

**Didi:** I have no idea and I am so not attached to having memories of things that it makes my life much easier than all the rest of the old folks.

**Molly:** But my memory is that I was very busy at the time with a very challenging job. I was teaching pregnant teenage women. After they had their babies, we had a nursery and I was teaching them in the adjoining classroom.

It was an extremely challenging job and I'm not sure I did the best work with it, but it was taking all my time and energy. So the idea of writing a major paper was like "I can't do that: I don't have room in my life for this."

But Didi was insistent that I needed to write it. And I don't remember all the interactions because, of course, in those days, we were not using email. We had to talk on the phone or send letters.

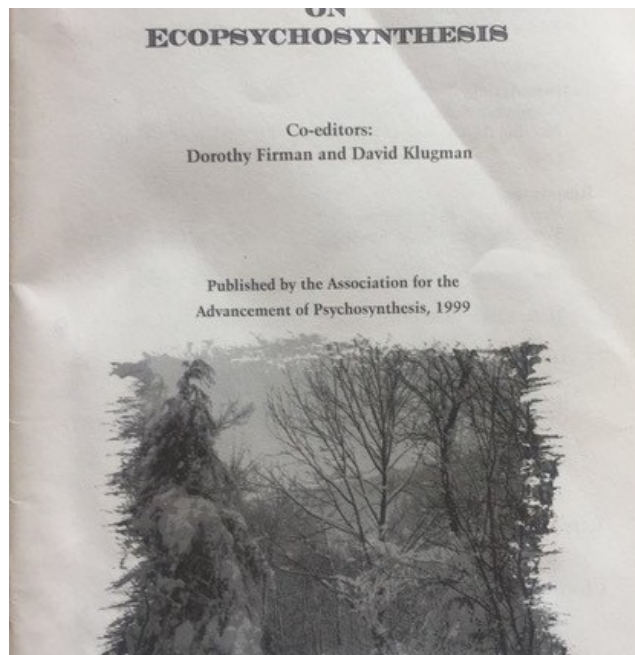
But I know there was a lot of strong will and encouragement – I tease her for nagging me – and I am eternally grateful for that because I look at it today. I think it's still really damn good.

I realized last night, as I was talking to Jim about this, that it was instrumental in making me realize I needed to leave that job, that it was not my calling and it was absorbing all my energy and time ... that it wasn't really what I was here for. So I think writing that essay helped make that transition for me.

**Didi:** I am glad. And it also brought the field of eco-psychology into psychosynthesis overtly: EcoPsychosynthesis. It was planting a seed - or watering - a seed that was barely out there.

**Mark:** What were you seeing or sensing or picking up that made you encourage Molly about this?

**Didi:** Well, Molly, you were already doing this work



The 1999 Monograph edited by Didi Firman and David Klugman, featuring EcoPsychosynthesis article by Molly Young Brown

with Joanna Macy (*Coming Back to Life; Macy & Brown*). And so the languaging was out there and then Carla Brennan was on the staff at the Synthesis Center at the time. And David (*Klugman*), who co-edited with me, was a part of the teaching staff... And it was 1999 - I guess there was not an overt other political crisis in that moment.

**Molly:** Other than Y2K, Y2K was coming up.

**Didi:** Right, right. And yes, we may as well have been talking about eco-psychology at that moment, because otherwise, all it was, was, are we all going to die?

**Mark:** Again.

**Didi:** Again. Again, yes. The answer is yes, we are all going to die.

Yeah.

**Mark:** And once you'd finally corralled Molly into it behind her typewriter, and it was underway, and you were pulling it all together, like for both of you, what did it actually feel like to be doing this?

**Didi:** I don't know what it felt like to have breakfast this morning.



**Mark:** Oh, yeah. It's this memory thing again.

**Didi:** Well, it's either the memory or it's living in the moment. It's years of Zen training.

**Mark:** Ah, right. Could be that. Well, what does it feel like to be touching back into that time now?

**Didi:** Well, it feels important. And I'm very glad that you all put that out. I wouldn't have known it was that, you know, 25 years ago.

So it feels important. And I've been in touch with David about what we might follow up with as the past editors of that.

**Mark:** I was curious about what was it you felt you were holding? And I guess, has that changed?

How much is there a sense of continuity? How much is it, are we still holding the same basket and nothing's moved? Those kinds of questions spring to mind.

**Didi:** And those are important questions. The quotes I sent for a message early from Act of Will, in one of, I can't remember the quotes, they're not in front of me, but one of them, he says something along the lines of "let's hope that more people get on the bandwagon". And Molly, of course, said that at the time in writing the main article and in response to people.

And I don't know if more people are on the bandwagon. It feels like it's diminished, in fact. When Greta Thunberg was out there, it felt like hope: young voices, new voices. But in the U.S. with this insane election going on - which will certainly have an impact on the planet - it feels like any other questions (*than the contenders*) are a little hard to focus on.

**Molly:** Well, one of the areas that I've been working on, besides trying to bring the eco-psychology into psychosynthesis, is bringing psychosynthesis into eco-psychology. And how can the basic principles and practices of psychosynthesis inform and support eco-psychology? Well, not just eco-psychology, but political psychology.

Let's call it political psychology. (How can it) help us understand and work with fascism and the whole phenomena of whatever number he was, 44? I don't want to even say the name.

But the maga-phenomena.

**Didi:** Which is not just in this country.

**Molly:** So, what's that about? And I did some

work early on, actually right around 9/11. Because, so that would only have been a couple of years after the EcoPsychosynthesis was published.

And right after 9/11, actually, I'd already been invited to go to the Kentucky Center and do a workshop. And then we, I think we may have even had to postpone it or something because of 9/11. It was probably a month afterwards that I went there.

And of course, it was very much, we hadn't even started the war in Iraq at that point. It was pending, but it hadn't actually started. And so, we did sub-personality work around what was emerging. We had a sub-personality that was a terrorist and we had a sub-personality that was a CEO of a wealthy corporation. And we worked with them as if they were individual sub-personalities. It was very exciting work.

And that idea of using sub-personality work to work with collective sub-personalities is something I have always wanted to follow up on and haven't ... As we were ending that workshop, we were in our final gathering, we got the news that they'd started bombing Iraq.

Yeah. Anyway.

**Didi:** Yeah. Everything we thought we had accomplished as young idealists and social activists may turn out to be not as much as we hoped.

**Mark:** Thank God you did it though

**Molly:** Maybe it would be even worse.

**Didi:** And we got pot legalized in lots of states. So, we got that going for us!!!!

**Molly:** We got marriage equality, and a few other things got accomplished.

**Mark:** We began talking about ecopsychology and EcoPsychosynthesis, but as we talk, all these other elements begin coming in. So, we're actually talking about the human condition, aren't we? Its the context in which these things emerge together - and now there's this term bandied about, the "poly-crisis".

In our training, we really got the message that Will is always present. So, what are we being advised of, or what's the feedback, or what's the learning?

What is it about Will that we aren't noticing?

**Didi:** Who owns it in any given human being? In other words, I have sub-personalities that will take over my Will. And it's not what we would define as the Will in its pristine self, but certainly it runs the mechanism.

And so, any sub-personality can do that, or any psychological function can have more impact on the Will.

I mean, our histories, our personal histories, that's why we know that people who were abused as a child are more likely to abuse their children. They're still making the choice to whack the kid, but where are they making it from?

**Molly:** Yep. And what comes to be, Didi, as you say that, is that's why we need to be a center of self-awareness as well as Will, because without self-awareness, will can get hijacked. And I'm not sure it's, as you say, kind of pure will, but the mechanism, the energy, even the consciousness.

I mean, the person who's whacking the child may sincerely believe that this is what they must do, because otherwise the child will turn out badly, or who knows, but there's always some kind of rationale.

**Didi:** Right. And so for me, the only thing, because awareness gets hijacked too. You look at the Proud Boys and by the time they're in court and they're starting to break their major identification and seeing that they've gotten used, then we have the beginnings of dis-identification.

And that's been so touching when we got to see it with people. And every time there's another movement where people break out of a limiting identification. So for me, the map that has always been most powerful in psychosynthesis is dis-identification because it tells us to freaking pay attention to what we're experiencing, to own it, and not to spiritual bypass into an illusion of dis-identification. Own it enough so that we know, yes, I want to get it.

Fill in the blank, recognise whatever the thing is that we're not going to do, we hope - because now we're paying attention.

So - do I have violent urges? Yes. And what am I going to do with those?

I'm going to notice them, step back from them. I have them and I am more than them.

And then the work of spiritual psychosynthesis. For me, this is building at the most basic level. It's building an identification that is stronger than our other identifications, that is built on values.

It's not the same as being enlightened, but it's a good modelling of what enlightenment would look and feel like. And that's a much better choice than any other identification we have.

**Molly:** And then I would bring in EcoPsychosynthesis, eco-psychology, and particularly the notion from deep ecology that we have an "ecological self".

For me, tuning in to that self-awareness that I am more than any particular momentary experience or thought or feeling or even body sensation opens me up to the living web of life. And to me, that's the transpersonal self, it's the living web of life. So it isn't just human, it isn't just human consciousness, it's consciousness, awareness.

We're learning so much more these days about that awareness. In 1999 I didn't know about the Mother Tree (Susan Simard) and how the mother tree communicates and sends nutrients to other trees and gets messages from other trees about what's happening and dangers.

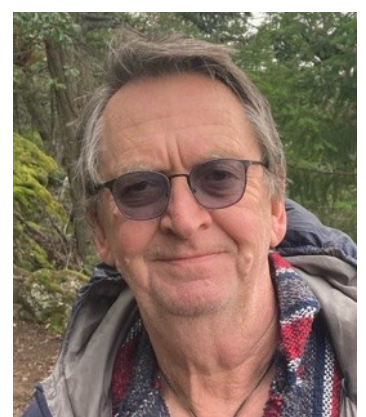
It's just amazing. We're learning so much about the consciousness of the web of life - and that we're just part of that. I think we need to move away from the anthropocentrism that sees everything being centered around the human.

Not only is it not just about us, but we don't have to do it all.

This morning, I had waked up early and couldn't get back to sleep for thinking about this and that. I could remind myself: Molly, it's not up to you. You don't have to take care of all this stuff. You can let go ... actually, the term that came to me is "let God", but what I mean by God is this larger living web that we are a part of.



PSYCHOSYNTHESIS QUARTERLY





# RECONNECTING TO NATURE, FINDING OURSELVES

Eva Sanner

**We need to change and reestablish our intimate relationship to the living world. Ecopsychology claims that this is essential for our physical and mental wellbeing, as well as for our capacity to create a sustainable society. As therapists or coaches, we need to include the wounded relationship to nature in our work with people. And of course, the first step is our own reconnection to the Earth.**

When working with people, we constantly open ourselves for a deeper understanding of ourselves as humans and co-habitants of this beautiful planet that we call our home. We want to understand how the psyche works and how we can support others in their quest for balance and harmony in life. This quest is paramount not only to us in the healing professions, but also to our whole human collective. It seems as if there is a lot of imbalance and non-harmony in the present moment. One reason for this, is that we have forgotten how to relate to the other living beings that we share this planet with.

We know now, however, by looking at the numbers and statistics of climate researchers, that our society threatens many forms of life on the planet, including ourselves. We start to understand that to create a sustainable society, we need to work *together* with the living world. Which in turn means a totally different way of looking at ourselves as humans. Parallel with the research for more sustainable ways of transporting, farming and finding energy resources, we also need a psychology that is not born from an urban academic perspective, but deeply connected to the living world. It exists and it is called ecopsychology.

Ecopsychology means a psychology based on our relationship with nature. It is developed with nature and natural processes as its basis and is inclusive in the way that it sees the human psyche as being part of the vast psyche or energy field of the planet.

Theodore Roszak is one of the pioneers in the field of ecopsychology and the ecopsychological concepts I use in this text stem from his work.

## **The bond**

The first step when we want to understand more about our relationship to nature, is usually to dive into the mass of research results about the positive effects of being in nature. Already a very short time spent outside has a measurable effect. Our bodies react to a substance evaporated from pine trees which in turn strengthen our immune system. Our blood pressure goes down, as well as the levels of stress hormones. Our brains react with relaxation and balancing of stress effects, such as an enlarged amygdala returning to a more normal size and less upset feelings, and a shrunken hippocampus (which is a result of stress) expanding again to be more able to handle memory and cognitive functions.

These effects on our brain take some time and need a regular contact with nature. But already 30 minutes in nature gives momentary effects such as stress reduction. One study mentions the “Three-day effect” – 72 hours in nature made persons up to 50 percent more creative.

There are also mental and emotional effects from being outside. When we spend time close to the soil,

maybe gardening or doing some other activities that enable close contact with the soil, we breathe in a bacterium which has proven to make us less depressed (lower frequency of depression symptoms). We feel happy when we are in nature, we are content and grateful for life. We also have peak experiences of beauty and wonder, that open us to the transpersonal realm, to the mystery of life and to reflection over our own part in it. The term biophilia covers some of these emotional effects, meaning the love for life or for nature around us.

Of course, the reason that our body and mind react so positively on contact with nature is because we evolved in a natural environment. We are not meant to spend all our time inside houses or cars, but to be outside among trees and meadows.

That is our true habitat.

But even if biophilia is something inherent to us, today it does not come by itself. It comes when we regularly spend time in nature. When we do so, our attachment system gets activated in a way similar to when we are children and form a bond with our caretakers. We can also bond with places and landscapes, as well as to natural phenomena like rivers, lakes and mountains. It is a natural part of our way of being and relating, that our urban lifestyle most often does not allow.

The bond between humans and nature is both physical (we are nature and are of nature), emotional (we love nature) and mental (we need nature to balance our brain), as well as spiritual (we connect to the miracle of life, which makes us full of gratitude). We are only aware of our own reactions, and there is little or no evidence of the bond to go both ways, with nature reacting and bonding to us. Except for when we bond to animals, since the mammal brain and its mirror neurons make it possible for a connection between two brains of different species (even if we react differently on this connection).



Photo Credit: Lena Granefelt <https://lenagranefelt.com>  
from Naturens Hemlighet (Secret of Nature)

## The connection

Having stated this bond between humans and nature, it is only logical to assume further, like ecopsychology does, that there is a connection between the health of the biosphere and the health of humans. Since we live in nature, we are part of the biosphere, and thus affected what is happening there. Ecopsychology claims that we are so closely connected, that we simply cannot be totally healthy if the eco-systems that surround us are breaking down or crumbling. We as health workers therefore need to ask ourselves the question: How much of the anxiety, depression, and difficulties in concentration that so many suffer from, depend on the fact that our own habitat is threatened or falling apart? How can we ever measure that?

What we know is that the fear, pain, and sorrow that many of us spontaneously feel when we think of what is happening in the world and in nature, is largely suppressed. And we cannot suppress one feeling without also suppressing other feelings. We are numbing ourselves, with the defences that we have available and through the habits we develop that give us comfort and soothing. This includes different forms of addiction. When we talk about the connection between nature and humans, we also need to include



the fact that many humans already get physically ill and die from imbalances in nature caused by our industrial culture.

Psychosynthesis talks about the Self as the spiritual or transpersonal level to which we as humans are connected. We all have inside of us a tiny spark of the divine, a space that can open to an experience of the whole in what we call peak experiences. Sometimes though, the description of the Self is coloured by Christian beliefs or concepts, like the Self being transcendent, something that talks to us in dreams or visions but is not so present physically in our everyday life.

As I understand it, ecopsychology offers another and in one way more physical interpretation of this transpersonal aspect of reality. What if the Self is really embracing us physically? Then the transpersonal is immanent in the physical world, and therefore also transhuman, meaning that the whole living world, is the Self. When we find ourselves in awe over the beauty of a sunset or the magnificence of the ocean, we get glimpses of a bigger perspective, of the holiness of this wholeness. When we look at the Egg model of psychosynthesis that describes the human personality, there is a lot that is outside of the dotted lines that we use to define a person. Around us is not only the human collective unconscious but the whole biosphere, a wild mind that encompasses everything.

Some have used the term the ecological Self, coined by the Norwegian eco-philosopher Arne Naess, to describe this physical immanent Self. He also formed the term “deep ecology” and claimed that self-realization is not only for humans but the birth-right for all living beings and entities on the planet. Even animals, plants and ecosystems have the right to develop their full potential, according to their species or place in a biocentric but not androcentric equality.

Therefore, it is not surprising that there is an important connection between ecopsychology and the work for nature’s rights and the coining of ecocide as a crime, claiming it should be made illegal to kill living ecosystems. Fortunately, this work has made some substantial progress and protecting ecosystems with the help of the law is now possible in several countries. In essence, many of the values intrinsic to ecopsychology are similar to those of indigenous people.

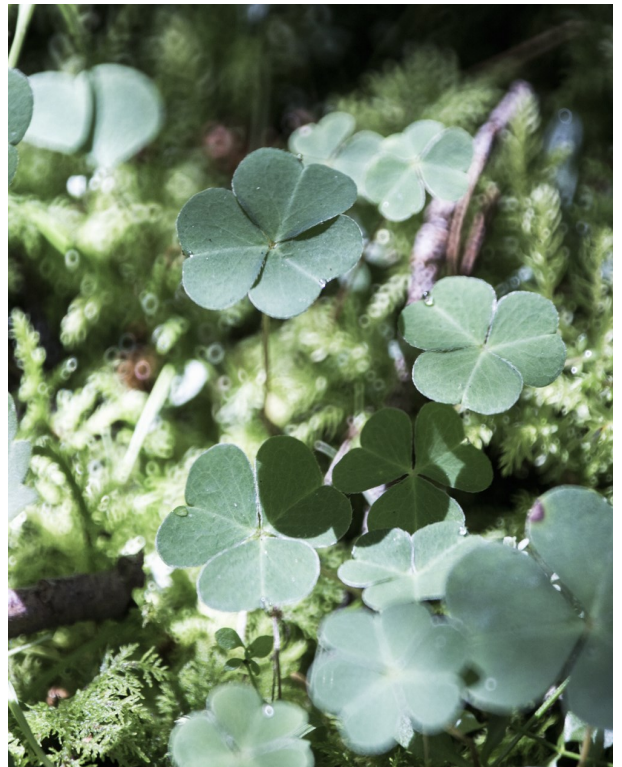


Photo Credit: Lena Granefelt

Ecopsychology is birthed from and expresses a radical questioning of our culture and its values. It is a psychology of interconnection, of surrendering to nature and of a physical intimacy with life. It also describes how we as humans need nature to thrive and evolve to our full potential. It questions the culture we live in today, built on separation between humans and nature, as well as questioning the right to exploit other living beings and the earth. It also strongly questions the idea of the “existential loneliness of man”, claiming that when we reconnect to nature, we will not feel lonely anymore but safe. Being built on a totally different way of seeing the world, ecopsychology’s world view seems to resemble that of several indigenous cultures, in what is called animism, often described as the childlike belief that “things have a soul”.

Now is the time to reformulate this into “all life is sacred” (also wolves, rivers and mountains) and we would then be describing the core of ecopsychology. We also need to see animals as brothers, places as living beings and natural phenomena as expressions of power and truth. In a world where all life is part of a sacred whole and where all species are seen as my relatives, my task as a human will be to treat all with

care and respect. Because what happens at one end, affects the other. What happens in Nature, affects us all as humans. When ecosystems die, we are affected - whether we know it or not.

This view is also reflected in many shamanic paths of knowledge, where everything created is seen as a combination of the elements and that the different worlds of plants, minerals, animals and humans need to be in balance, both within themselves and in between each other.

It is estimated that one third of people in my home country Sweden suffer from insecure attachment. I believe that roughly the same would probably go for several countries in Europe. However, it is also said that the Swedes are the people of the forest, meaning that many of us experience a spontaneous contact with nature when we are there. We tend to seek nature when we are in need, when we grieve and when we meet challenges in our lives. This is not because Swedes are different than other nationalities. But the right to walk the land and even to stay overnight in places even though you do not own the land is stated in Swedish law since long ago (and also in Norway). We simply have the possibility to get to know nature and get over some of the fear of the unknown.

Today many of us, however, do not have a close bond with nature, because we spend too little time there.

Urbanization has changed the way we spend time in nature and the possibility of doing so varies a lot depending on how we live and where. As the bond between humans and nature takes time to be re-created, it is not enough with a quick jog through the park. You need to be there repeatedly, use your senses, observe the change of seasons, rejoice over what is flourishing, mourn what is dying away and learn how to be part of the eco- system like the other beings that we share it with. I often say you need to sit in the forest until you do not feel alone any longer.

When we reconnect, it is like remembering something we have long forgotten. And when we do, we can both rejoice and respect. We are truly living together with Earth, and not on it. We need to make this journey back to where we belong, and not only for the planet or to save some nearly extinct species. We need to do it to save ourselves and to learn what it really means to fully be a human being. Note that the word human comes from the Latin *humanus*, which is a combination of homo, meaning man and humus, meaning earth. We are really of the Earth.

Connection is a truly transpersonal quality. It is about surrender, being open to the "other" without hesitation or fear, and about allowing. It is something we do and create through our actions.

When we have balanced ourselves through the process of personal psychosynthesis, we often spontaneously start a quest for meaning, each unique for every individual. Once this quest is awakened, it can be a strong force that both challenges and supports us in making changes in the way we work, love and pursue our life. Connection is also about recognizing the fact that this life and everything in it is not only about me, but also about something bigger that I am part of. How I can become part of the solution often becomes a big part of the transpersonal psychosynthesis, meaning how I can align my personal life to the will of the Universe and thus experience a feeling of purpose.

We need to do the personal journey of childhood work first, to be able to fully take the step and abandon the limited way of seeing ourselves as separate. When we experience a quest for growth from the inside of our being, we can learn to listen to this voice of our deepest Soul. Ecopsychology would maybe interpret it as living our true nature and in harmony with creation.

## **Nature as co-therapist**

So how then do we, who are therapists or coaches, work with ecopsychology as a basis?



First, we need to include more of the context when we meet a person who seeks our help or support. Not only do we need to look at the present life situation, the childhood and the bigger family system. We also need to look at how the relationship to nature is for this person, what places she might have lost and what feelings she might have around the situation the Earth is in. Her symptoms might be not only individually caused, but also collectively, including the suppressed fear of extinction.

In the same way as when we work with for example depression, we need to hold hope for the client and show a step she can take for herself. I hope that research soon will show if there really is a connection between OCD and our broken relationship to nature? Or between fear of the unknown/losing control and the fear of disappearing in the forest? Does someone who says "I do not like nature" also deny his natural or animal part of himself? How does the relationship to nature affect our life force, in creativity or sexuality? Until we know more about this, we better be with our clients from the broadest perspective possible and help them put the right questions to themselves. We as therapists or counsellors always need to hold the bigger picture.

Ecopsychology emphasizes the importance of finding ways of working with people outside, and to include nature as our always present co-therapist. We can find ways to be outside with our clients, we can take walks with them, sit with them under big trees or on the grass in a meadow. I sometimes have given sessions in the back of my garden. If you do not have a garden, maybe you have a park nearby. Maybe the client has a favourite place you could visit together. When you interpret a dream, include the possibility that it is about the relationship to nature and not only about the client's personal life or childhood trauma.

As you see, all this requires us to extend the boundaries. To think outside of the box, or rather to extend the box to include much more. Norms are changed by people who break them and create new better ones. We of course need to go first and really learn for ourselves what it means to live together with Earth. How does it feel? What does it look like? We need to find a way to connect with nature and be outdoors daily, have a favourite place that we connect to. We need to follow and celebrate the seasons, the full moon and the equinoxes. We need to sleep outside, and we need to face the darkness of the night to learn that there is always some light to be seen. We need to express our creativity in gardening, in outside art or in just playing with stones, grass or water.

To explore and deepen our relationship to nature is just as important as doing your own therapy process before you take on others as clients. As my first supervisor Barbro Byström once told me: "You cannot lead others to where you have not been yourself." This is true, not only when it comes to the childhood wounds that we received in our family, but also about the wounded relationship to Grandmother Earth and all her worlds.

That is why I work with retreats especially for professionals who work with people in different ways, to

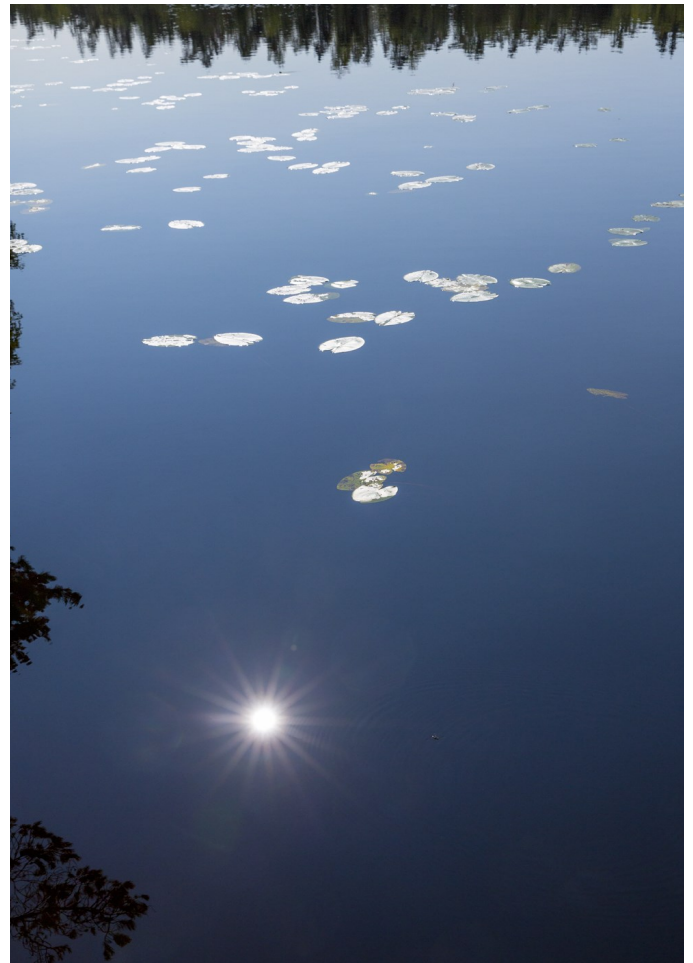


Photo Credit: Lena Granefelt

support this important reconnection so it can be spread further.

We can all look for a path, any path, that allows us and inspires us to do this. For many years working with psychosynthesis tools was my whole way of working. Somehow a longing crept in for more active and physical connection to the living world. Hence, I decided on an additional training in eco-psychology. But when that training ended, I still wanted more.

I had learned that ecopsychology and the world view of indigenous people have much in common, which in turn led me to a shamanic path. There, I found concepts similar to those of psychosynthesis, expressed in indigenous terms, such as “bifocal vision” being connected to the medicine of the hawk, who can see details and have an overview at the same time, flying high but having very good eyesight.

The transpersonal realm is always present, and as expressed in Nick Totton’s book “Wild Therapy” – the universe is experienced as a friendly place.

Shamanistic practices are spread over the planet, with different expressions in different parts of the world, and therefore difficult to define. They were probably born before there were any formed religions, when the first humans lived close to nature, close to the plant and animal worlds and more obviously at the mercy of the elements. Shamanism basically consists of practices that are intended to align humans with these other worlds and with the elements, to find the balance needed for a resilient life with harmony and health. I find it to be a treasure of resources and practices for reconnection and experiencing the wonder of life. And no wonder it is more and more popular – the number of people practicing it has more than doubled the last ten years according to an article in the Guardian.

Some years ago, I had a client who was dying from cancer. After many years of treatment, hope and fear, she was faced with the fact that she would not make it. She asked me if I could follow her in a vision quest during the night, an experience she had always wanted. We needed to adapt it to her situation and ended up hiking during the day in a forest. I left her alone by a lake for quite some time, and when I came back, she said she had learned something. “The dragonflies are so beautiful, and they live such a short time. But the big trees have been standing here for hundreds of years. Everything has its time.” Nature had done its part and shown her something that helped her come to acceptance. I could never have done that alone.

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### Eva Sanner

*Eva Sanner is a Swedish psychosynthesis therapist and writer, specialising in ecopsychology, and an apprentice on the Sweet Medicine Sundance path. Eva has been a board member of the EPA (European Psychosynthesis Association), and the EFPP (European Federation of Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy).*

Visit [www.evasanner.se](http://www.evasanner.se) for more information about retreats and courses.



# TWO POEMS

Anne Yeomans

## ***Whippoorwill***

*The number of birds in the United States and Canada  
has declined by 3 billion, or 29 percent  
over the past half-century scientists find.*

*New York Times 2019.*

*The number of birds continues to decline.*

I met the green bittern  
by an Ohio pond when I was ten,  
he on a dead tree, I on the shore.  
Both of us froze, pretending  
we were invisible to each other.

I heard the rattle of the kingfisher  
as it flew from branch to branch  
all day back and forth across the pond.  
It sounds in my chest even still.

Those were the summers  
when the whippoorwills  
sang us to sleep every night.  
*Whippoorwill, whippoorwill, whippoorwill.*  
I could hear them from my bed  
by the open window.

And that next winter  
my brothers and sister and I  
ran in and out, in and out  
with the legions of sandpipers  
when Nana took us to Florida.

In the evening, we all went back to the beach  
and stood on the shore as the sun set.  
Ancient pelicans in long lines flew across the sky.  
We could hear the beat of their wings.



## ***We used to call her Mother***

We used to call her Mother.  
We used to ask before we took,  
take only what we needed,  
and pray before we even set out.  
That was in the time when  
we knew She was our source,  
that we were nothing without Her.

Now, we take all we can.  
There is no kneeling  
and no prayer.  
When what we want is gone,  
we use any means  
to get some more—  
blow up mountain tops,  
force streams of water into Her,  
drill deep and dangerously.

We kill for what we think is ours.

Oh Mother, when will we  
fall on our knees once again  
and remember your Name?

Anne Yeomans

Anne Yeomans has been a psychotherapist, a group facilitator, and a holder of circles for over 50 years. As a young woman she studied with Roberto Assagioli, with whom she talked about the need for the return of the feminine principle in a world seriously out of balance. The principles of Psychosynthesis underlie all her work. She was one of the editors of *Willing To Love: Stories of the Couples Journey as a Path of Transformation*. She is currently working on a collection of poems called *We Used to Call Her Mother*.



# WHALE PAINTING

**Victoria Gulino**

Much of the imagery in my art is influenced by experiences during deep states of meditation. The theme of this particular painting emerged from a tremendous longing and yearning to honor the life of the whale, to witness its magnificence while grieving its vulnerability and the many losses from impacts of climate change and human behaviors that are harming the seas and its living beings.

Visualization meditation was helpful in shifting my awareness from a cognitive mind perception to higher consciousness. In that state of transpersonal awareness my heart softened and opened and the veil of separation dissolved. In that moment I felt a sacred union of love and no sense of time and space as divisive. I came away feeling a shared vulnerability with all living forms. We are all in this together and love is the thread that connects us and gives us courage.





Victoria Gulino Biog: I am a licensed mental health counselor in New York State. I recognize that each person has an innate ability to move in the direction of growth and healing. With development of greater awareness and inner tools, choices become more available leading to better outcomes. It is possible to gain a strong internal compass pointing in meaningful, purposeful directions, supporting wise perception and decision making.

I work with the whole person: mind, body, emotions and spirit with the integration of the most recent findings of neuroscience. Clinical meditation and imagery, art, psychosynthesis and transpersonal psychology inform my work.

Many of my clients have experienced feelings of safety, peace, gratitude, meaning and greater self-compassion and acceptance. My continued trainings include certificates in Clinical Meditation and Imagery and Transpersonal Coaching from The Huntington Meditation and Imagery Center and a certificate in the psychology of Psychosynthesis from New York Institute of Psychosynthesis as taught by Bonney and Richard Schaub. As a lifetime seeker, I continue to immerse myself in personal and professional development to refine and further enhance my skills. Imagery, meditation and art, bio-energy, sound, transpersonal and consciousness study and experiences have guided me and been essential parts of my life's work and purpose. I embrace these healing modalities to attune my life as well as the lives of others.



## **Psychosynthesis Creativity Contest**

**“Connection”**

**Submissions invited**  
**[creativitycontest@aap-psychosynthesis.org](mailto:creativitycontest@aap-psychosynthesis.org)**

**For detailed guidelines see page 86**



# CONVERSATION 2:

## Molly Brown, Didi Firman, Mark Skelding

**Mark:** In the original piece, Molly wrote how our biggest challenge may be to find out how we contribute to this rich tapestry of life and consciousness. What would you say about how we're finding out how to contribute?

**Molly:** Well, we have to listen. We can't invent that out of whole cloth. So to me, it's reciprocity.

It's tuning in, listening to, and I think the still small voice within is what the Quakers talk about. It may be my particular radio that's picking up on a larger communication that's always there all around us. I don't know if that made any sense or not.

**Didi:** It did, and it may be that "contribute" is not the word we want to think about, because if we can't identify, we're not going to get it.

If I can't identify with my child and their hunger, then I'll probably feed them because that's what I'm supposed to do, but I'm not going to get it. So then there's never going to be that holding environment in which my eyes and the baby's eyes connect and we are more than two individuals.

Similarly, if we don't have a way of identifying ourselves as earthlings, animals on this planet, part of this planet, at one with this planet, ultimately, this planet holds us, and if it's tired of us, it'll get rid of us.

I loved it when you said earlier, Molly, I don't remember how you said it, but not just the personal self but the ecological self. Who am I if I am earth, if I am just earth/self?

In the practice of Qigong, there's a lot of work with earth energy as well as the energy of the heavens, so to speak, earth and sky, mother and father, sun and moon, ground and cosmos.

So, Who am I if I am earth? That's a clarifying question that we need to be holding.

We thought we would fix wars when we had the war in Vietnam and we all were out there standing our ground in front of soldiers with bayonets. We thought we would fix something. We changed something, no doubt, even if it was just one soldier's minds, but we didn't know what we were going to change.

And I don't think we're clear enough today about a specific cause and effect, so we end up recycling. But - what are the statistics on how much of the recycling that we do in our houses actually ever gets recycled as opposed to dumped after we don't see it anymore into the same pile as the garbage?

Nevertheless, for us to do the recycling opens an opportunity to deepen consciousness of our being earth, to identify ourselves as being absolutely essential to the earth around us and the earth around us being absolutely essential to us?

**Mark:** You remind me of a couple of things there. Gregory Bateson's daughter, Nora, is building on her father's work. She has this lovely phrase about "meeting not matching" the problem. Matching is when you get into an arm wrestle with it, whereas meeting is actually coming into relationship and learning with it, which I think is what you're talking about there, Didi, too.

**Molly:** I was going to say there's humility involved.

**Didi:** Yes, big, big word, humility, and somebody in the first journal, I think it was Carla, talked about earth as the external unifying center. Yeah, that's a really nice frame of reference, and in a very kind of logical, obvious way, it is.

**Molly:** Yeah, yeah, and it's really not external.

**Didi:** No, but anything that we attach to that rosebush out there, it is both us and not us, but that's true of our personalities and our bodies and our personal self, and maybe all of this comes back, if we're playing with the egg diagram, for instance, comes back to what's not on the egg diagram but is plenty written about by Assagioli, which is the universal higher self. The collective self, the thing that is so not us in this body and in this personality, but is helping us, and we are a manifestation and a creation of that larger universal whatever.

**Mark:** I notice you moving your arms around Molly in a circling motion, like a flowing torus shape, continually shaping, reshaping and being shaped.

**Molly:** It's true.

**Mark:** I've been thinking again by Winnicott's expression about "Going on being". I was looking at the egg diagram the other day, and I'm from the tradition that has a star both at the top and the bottom, and draws a dotted line between them, and I

extended-

**Molly:** A star at the bottom?

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Do you know about the star at the bottom, Didi?

**Didi:** We've always done that. I mean, here's our more exotic version actually painted by a Mandala artist. (Didi holds up a painting)

**Molly:** Beautiful.

**Didi:** Yeah, it's good.

**Molly:** We can see it.

**Didi:** The star at the bottom and the top.

Because it's the self in incarnation, or the self in the dark night of the soul in the lower unconscious, and the self at the kitchen sink, and the self at the high, at the mountaintop. That's how I always explain it.

**Molly:** So, I interrupted you because I wanted to make sure that there was understanding here about the star at the bottom, and I just learned something I didn't know before.

**Didi:** Talking about Winnicott.

**Mark:** And "going on being" - no matter where we are in our lives, we're having an experience of going on being, which I think is just such a kind of warm expression somehow.

Looking at the egg diagram, we often put a dotted line connecting the higher self and this immanent self at the bottom. And I extended it and kind of got the sense (of) it extending back to the Big Bang.

And I'm quite moved to be sharing it with you guys, actually.

It reminded me of Maslow interacting with the Blackfoot people who put him right on a few things which never made it into his famous theory for a long time, if ever. They consider that when you're born, you're self-actualized from the get-go. Yes you continue to self-actualize in the process of living through various contexts, but you're already a perfect infant when you're born.

And the role of community is to help foster all those qualities in alignment with the cultural recognition and value of being part of all of our

relations. It's something about "being and being part of" all at the same time, and that going on being isn't actually personal – which is what you both were just talking about.

I was thinking about my recent birthday, and how, when I was born, a unique, new world was born because I was now in it. Not that I'm that special (even though, to myself, I am kind of important!). I was getting messages from friends, like you do, and I thought, really, it's like all our birthday.

If you're in the world that I'm in, then I'm in yours too, and that world began on the day that I joined it.

**Molly:** I'm imagining a Venn diagram image, each of us being our own little oval, but intersecting with all these other realities, all these other worlds. My world is different from Didi's world, different from your world, but there's a lot of overlap, a lot of exchange. And you affect my world, and my world affects your world as we come into relationship.

**Didi:** And even when we don't come into apparent relationship, there's still the whole psycho-energetic exchange going on - it's like the mother tree!

**Mark:** Ah yes – psycho-energetics: thank you, Didi. Molly, you told me a couple of weeks ago, that another paper that you transcribed with Roberto was the Fifth Force, bio-energetics paper. And that doesn't seem to turn up very much in the psychosynthesis mainstream at all.

**Didi:** On our website, there is an article by an energy medicine practitioner and psychosynthesisist about psycho-energetics. So there's a little bit, there.

But we may be asking a question that maybe we don't even want to play with .... even though Assagioli asked that Psychosynthesis evolve, how much has it actually evolved?

**Mark:** I think that's such an important question.

**Molly:** And not only how much has it evolved, but honestly, has it evolved at all?

I see all the work being done in the archives and it's like trying to go back and find out what the master said about this, that, and the other thing, rather than moving forward with...

And yes, I mean, I can see it's "both/and", because I can see there is much to be learned there about thoughts he was having that maybe didn't get into his books and weren't as well known. There's some really beautiful quotes that are coming from that work.

So it's "both/and", but it needs also the other direction of looking out and letting in more understanding. For example, we were just talking about the ecological self as something that's coming in from another field, but which aligns with the idea of the transpersonal self, which is a psychosynthesis concept. So it's an evolution through interaction with the larger world.

**Mark:** Interaction ... coming into relationship ... So how much in relationship with the wider world is psychosynthesis? That would be one of those questions if we're suggesting that the creativity comes about through watching which way the wind is blowing and deciding how to trim the sails.

But the other thing you mentioned before is subpersonalities. I was struck by an idea of the archives as kind of being, certainly now, psychosynthetic subpersonalities, because the subpersonality evolves around the need, right?

So at the level at which that subpersonality emerges, there's a need that's being met in a particular context, badly or not. And context keeps changing, which I think is one of the most exciting of Roberto's quotes, that we're always in context and it's always changing. So you could say there's something about looking at the archives and something about needs being expressed and met in that context – but what is the need being engaged, and, how does it apply in our present context – and how do we see that?

So - "will we acknowledge the context" is the question that we're sitting with right now. Are we prepared to do that?

**Didi:** And that is surely one of the big purposes of this quarterly, because we are paying attention to the context. As you said earlier, Molly, [through the archives] we are looking back at Assagioli's insight and awareness, because it's very easy for awareness to do this – we do develop awareness in this way, and psychosynthesis is such an expansion for so many people of

any awareness they've had before, and then that seems to be enough. But it's not.

"I have psychosynthesis and I am not psychosynthesis."

**Molly:** I have more than psychosynthesis, yes.

**Mark:** You just said we are "looking back" at awareness. And if we're looking, if we consider the system that we're part of as a whole, and intelligent, and so on, are we not also not only looking back, but we're looking out at awareness all around us, including us, as it were, and awareness is looking back at us, participating.

Isn't there a possibility of feedback, of information that we possibly can't receive in ways that makes sense unless we think about the information in relationship and as feedback?

If I'm only thinking of myself as impacting the world, if I don't have a place in me to think the world may be communicating a response to me, then I'm not going to be in a relationship with it, other than trying to bend it to my will.

**Didi:** And that's a really good frame, having a relationship to the planet, however we think of it, that we stop objectifying it and have a relationship to it.

**Molly:** David Abram has this suggestion that I have found extremely valuable. I don't even remember where I read it or heard it, but I know he originated it. And that is that a practice of walking out - especially out in nature, but it could be in your room, wherever you are – walking out and recognising "I am looking and everything I'm seeing is as if and also the earth (or life, if you want to use life instead of earth) looking through my eyes and seeing what I'm seeing".

And then, being aware that it's also looking through your eyes and seeing what you're seeing.

It's a really powerful way of experiencing yourself as a sense organ of life, or a sense organ of earth, whichever metaphor works for you. And that has worked for me to help me feel or experience being earth, rather than earth being something else there, and I'm here. And of course, you can do that with anything. You can do it with your eyes, you can do it with your ears, you can do it with any of your senses, or you could even do it with your emotions. Earth is experiencing grief through me, or earth is experiencing joy through me. Pretty cool.



# 'Hare's Breath'

## Intimacy and the Cherishing of Experience

By Susan Holliday

Psychotherapist Susan Holliday reflects on  
the importance of encountering nature as 'Thou'



*"Creation happens to us, burns itself into us, recasts us in burning"*<sup>1</sup>  
Martin Buber

*The scent of Camomile hangs sweet in the air as I make my way along the still sleeping lakeside. A trickle of sunlight inches slowly down the head of the narrow valley, like a lover tracing from nape to rump the impossibly beautiful contour of his sweetheart's back. A Midas touch of first light dispelling night. Waking the day with a kiss.*

*Above me, a dapple of cloud makes its unhurried way across the undulant horizon. The lane blushes with Rosebay Willowherb in swathes of deepest pink. All around, lichen-laced walls and time-worn ways thread hillside to valley, past to present, kith to kin. At a footpath sign to the little hamlet of Nether Wasdale, I leave the lakeside and head west towards the sunlit slopes through a patch of woodland. Beech and Birch give way to Elder, Holly and Rowan as the path emerges into a mosaic of fields, each one patterned with clumps of sun-dried grass and edged with Harebells.*

*That's when I see her. Stock still, nose twitching. She already knows I'm here. Burnished eyes wide open, the dark tips of her long ears are pinned up and back, as she takes in the unfamiliar presence of the creature who has strayed into her morning. Wishing with all my heart for the hare to stay, I too stop in my tracks.*

*For one extraordinary moment we look at each other. I feel her taking me into the soft tissue of her awareness. She can hear me breathing. Through her exquisitely sensitive nostrils the scent of my skin mingles with the hare's breath, rests on her tongue, before breezing its way deep into her lungs, through the chambers of her heart and into the very life blood of her. In the split second before her strong back legs kick out and she hares off, I feel profoundly seen.*

\* \* \*

This intimate encounter with the natural world is one of several I have attempted to clothe in language. The practice of writing creates space for me to ponder these encounters in my heart. It helps me gestate and cherish my experiences of the natural world, so they swell in my imagination and take root in my being. The outcome of this cherishing of experience is a collection of prose poems I call 'Inklings'.<sup>2</sup>

Looking back over this collection of writing I recognise two essential characteristics of intimate encounter:

### 1) Experiencing nature as *subject*

My experience of meeting the hare is of encounter with a sentient 'other', a consciousness existing in full separate-ness of my will. The hare is not a 'product' of my imagination, nor is she<sup>3</sup> just a collection of objective features – ears, eyes, tongue. She is a vital presence, a *subject*. She existed before our meeting and will continue to exist long after I have left the sunlit slopes (my sense is of having '*strayed into her morning*'). In the fleeting moment between us, I'm aware that the hare is *choosing* to engage with me, and also that she *chooses* to 'hare off'. She is entirely self-willed. Wild.

Our meeting is unforeseen and unbidden. It fills me with a sense of grace. What strikes me in this encounter (as with others I've written about) is that the presence of the hare is both utterly 'beyond' me and yet also evokes a deep affinity 'within' me, a remembrance perhaps of our shared inheritance as embodied souls within a single web of being.

For a few precious moments, the separation between us becomes thinner. In English, the phrase 'a hair's breadth' describes the smallest possible gap between two things. 'Hare's Breath' (the title for this 'inkling') is a play on this idea. For a fleeting moment, the hare and I are very close. And yet there is still a gap, an experience of 'otherness'. Perhaps this is what Martin Buber is referring to when he writes about the meeting of *I and Thou*.

### 2) Nature as *inter-subjective*

The second feature of these encounters in the natural world, is that something original and unrepeatable happens *between us*. It is not just that the hare is a unique presence (*this* hare). It is also that this moment of meeting is unlike any other. We meet in the early hours of this particular summer morning. The light dancing across the hillside mirrors unrepeatable patterns of cloud and sky. I have been walking for two hours, so my heart is soft and my mind uncluttered. I know nothing of the hare's prior existence, of the journey that has brought her to this exact place at the edge of the sunlit field at precisely the moment I enter it. But I sense the improbability of our meeting. A hundred years ago there may have been as many as four million brown hares in the UK, but recent estimates suggest that there are now fewer than 800,000. You don't just bump into a hare these days. If you went looking for them, you'd be hard-pressed to find one. Rather, I have the sense of *being found*.

*The Thou meets me. But I step into direct relation with it.  
Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one.*<sup>4</sup>

The *Thou* of which Buber speaks is not just something pre-existing and contained within either the hare or within me, like a light bulb in a lamp. *Thou* emerges from a kind of implicate order<sup>5</sup> which *finds us* through the dynamic experience of meeting.

The lived experience of *I:Thou* arises in response to a kind of nakedness of expectation, between two centres of consciousness shorn of pre-conception and free of the objectifying perspective *I:It*.

We tend to imagine the act of seeing as an outward movement in which our sight travels to engage with an objective subject 'out there'. In my experience, seeing another being deeply (whether this is in the natural world or in the therapy practice) is primarily an act of 'taking in'. There needs to be an opening in me. What touches me so deeply in my encounter with the hare is the experience of also 'being taken in' (*I feel her taking me into the soft tissue of her awareness*). There is an experience of mutual 'in-sight', a kind of soul intercourse. This two-way intimacy ('into-me-you-see') opens up a space for communion.

\* \* \*

In a time of increasing urbanisation and the proliferation of mediated experience, much has been written about the importance of restoring human contact with nature. As far back as 1975, Robert Pyle coined the phrase the 'extinction of experience'<sup>6</sup> to describe our alienation from the sentient, multi-sensory and richly textured living world. The value of restoring contact with nature is now well documented in terms of physical, emotional and mental well-being<sup>7</sup> (body-feelings-mind).

Welcome though this advocacy may be, it risks perpetuating the objectification of nature as a ‘resource’ for us (humans) to ‘use’. Presenting nature as a medicine box misses the more fundamental psychospiritual dimension of nature as *I:Thou* relationship.

*‘Spirit is not in the I’, but between I and Thou.  
It is not like the blood that circulates within you,  
but like the air in which you breathe’.*<sup>8</sup>

We understand nature (both human and more than human) by immersing ourselves in the imaginal and sensate quality of *experience*. Cézanne articulates this tender vision when he advocates that the artist perceives through reading the ‘*two parallel texts*’ of nature, ‘*nature seen and nature felt*.’<sup>9</sup> This intimacy of experience arises from open attention stretched out in time:

*Time and contemplation gradually modify our vision  
and in the end we achieve understanding*<sup>10</sup>

Contemplation of encounter is vital if we are to stem the ‘extinction of experience’. We have a responsibility to cherish what is revealed to us, by *sustaining* the experience in our imagination. We cherish our encounters with nature, not to unravel them, nor to take them apart, but to gather them into our hearts, to *under-stand*. Cherishing experience brings us into a relationship of care. It activates love and will. Ultimately, it’s what we *make* of our *I:Thou* encounters (with each other and with the living world) that potentially transforms everything.

\* \* \*

This encounter with the hare reminds me that the transpersonal dimension need not be imagined as ‘way up there’ or ‘way out there’. It can also be experienced in the fine space (the hair’s breadth) ‘right here’ between two separate subjects. Cultivating our capacity for intimacy and inter-subjectivity matters because it restores us to a position of humility and right relationship with the wider web of being. It matters also because this communion with nature opens a door to an experience of relationship with the ‘more than’, with the mystery Assagioli calls the Transpersonal Self. This unfathomable mystery, which emerges in the finest of spaces between subjects, is the source of understanding and transformation which the world so urgently needs at this point in our collective story.

Susan Holliday, August 2024

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Susan Holliday is a psychosynthesis psychotherapist based in the UK and author of *Hidden Wonders of the Human Heart – How to See Through your Sorrow*. She has an enduring interest in the correlation between the health of the natural world and the flourishing of the human spirit. Drawing together stories from her therapy practice with accounts of intimate encounters in nature, her book explores the art of seeing deeply.





# MY JOURNEY WITH ECOPSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Paul Courtney Clarke  
MA. CertEd, CQSW

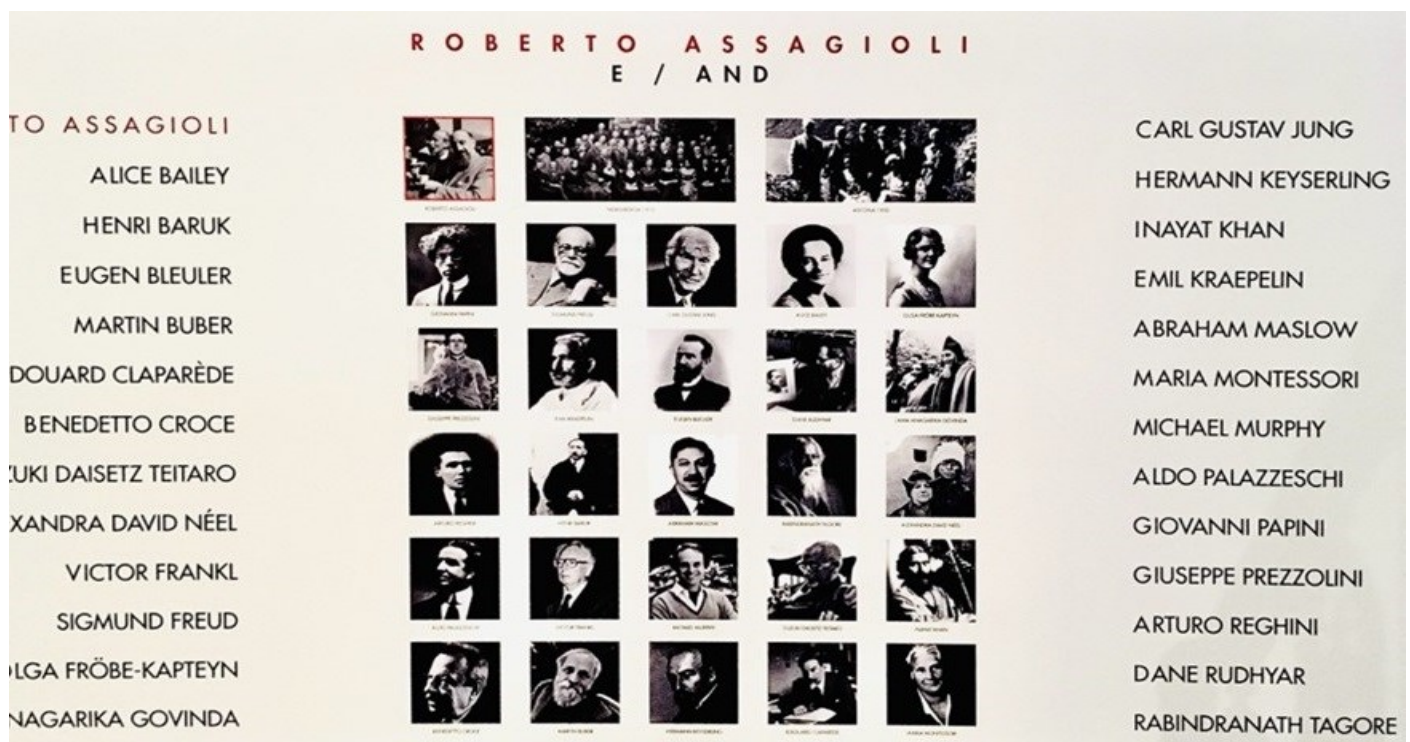
I want to share with you moments from my journey as it relates to the theme of this AAP issue. Particularly the **Fields of Love** camp in 2010 which served as my portal into eco-consciousness. It's organiser, **Jewels Wingfield**, believes that *"our own personal journeys are the most useful gift that we can bring to each other"*.<sup>1</sup> So here's a taste of mine.

Every journey, even a journey revisiting a journey, needs some resources, guides, and a sense of mission. As our guides I've invited the swallows from our barn to help us whizz back and forth along my time-line. With their streamlined body and long wings, they can travel fast and far, and hunt in flight with awesome manoeuvrability.

Great for gathering the material we come across to contribute to the EcoPsychosynthesis I believe the world needs in 2024. And, for me, they summon Joy<sup>1</sup>.

Before we dart back to my moment of eco-awakening, I'd like to share with you an image from my journey with psychosynthesis. We're whizzing through time and space - to Florence in Italy, 2018, swooping into the foyer of Casa Assagioli, one-time home of Roberto Assagioli, the founder of Psychosynthesis. It's now a centre where his work continues. My wife Harriet has spent many years exploring Psychosynthesis. I'm still walking in its foothills. We are both thrilled to visit its source.

Halfway up the wide staircase, visible from the foyer, is this display.



Picture by Paul Clarke, Florence 2018

The photographs are all of people who inspired, collaborated with, or in other ways influenced Assagioli,<sup>2</sup> each offering fascinating perspectives on, examples of, and insights into our Human Nature.

There is no image of Assagioli, and no mention of Psychosynthesis. It's a gallery of those who inspired him, collaborated with him, resourced him on his Journey. It shows rather than tells. It celebrates a few of those many beings whose psychologies and other wisdoms shine a light on who we humans are. And it speaks to an essence of psycho-

synthesis I'd been missing - that of inclusion. Excluding only what diminishes us.

Our dominant paradigm in the Western world is the market of ideas – each competing against the rest. Sam Keen in his memorable interview with Assagioli in 1974 contrasted Assagioli's approach with '*the American therapeutic scene [where] we are accustomed to psychological warfare, regular shootouts at the "you're-not-OK" corral*'.<sup>2</sup> It's the difference between 'versus' and 'as well as'. Instead of turning insights and idea into 'magic bullets' Assagioli offers them space to dance together. Whether on a wall display, or in his visionary Egg diagram, a synthesis rather than a war. Why does that touch me so deeply?

A quick detour winging back in time to Cardiff 2006. That year, as CEO for a local mental health charity, I accepted a UK Charity Award for leading a transformation of its 'drop-in' centres into Resource centres; from being cul-de-sacs for people's lives to being stepping stones on their recovery journey. We created a culture that embraced people's abilities and potential, not just their problems, and encouraged their local communities to become both a potential resource for their recovery and beneficiaries of their skills and gifts. No one, not even our commissioners, understood what we were doing. But they saw it worked.

That same year I'm compering a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary party for **Cardiff Meltdown**, a ground-breaking non-profit music and performance cooperative I'd co-founded and helped sustain for 25 years. In over 1500 gigs, many with open stages for anyone to play, we had melted down barriers between genres and generations, cultures and mindsets, and local and global talents, to become "the capital's most consistent and influential music club over the last two decades"<sup>3</sup>.

Both achievements hinged on creating spaces for collaboration, encouraging people to access their 'more than', and weaving together partnerships with anyone that 'got' what we were looking to achieve. In both cases our example rippled out to become a beacon for new practice, with local and national influence. And in both cases, following our instincts more than any rational plan, we bucked the accepted norms of fragmented services in mental health, or rival competing scenes in music and culture. Which is why when I see the gallery – it feels like 'coming home'<sup>3</sup>. And why I have faith in the potential of human systems to transform<sup>4</sup>.

Our destination – the **Fields of Love** camp, 2010 – is another space that invites in the wisdoms. Jewels Wingfield is, among much else, a one-woman whirlwind of 'as well as' offering an experiential deep dive into the terrain of both eco and psyche. She draws on her training with Joanna Macy, the pioneering American environmental activist and source of 'the Work that Reconnects', and uses structures and meditations from 'Coming Back to Life' co-created by Macy with Molly Young Brown<sup>4</sup>. Molly studied Psychosynthesis with Roberto Assagioli in Florence the year before he died, and she is guest editor of this Journal.

So, if the allyship between Psychosynthesis and Eco-consciousness is to fulfil its potential in 2024, I'd encourage us to treasure Assagioli's assertion that Psychosynthesis is not a separate 'school of thought'<sup>5</sup>, but an inclusive container for all useful ideas and practices. Of course, all of us will each cherish our own Psychosynthesis, rooted in Assagioli's wealth of concepts and practices - the centrality of Will, the inclusion of the spiritual and esoteric, and so on. The myriad methods and practices each of us grow from roots in his work, is an expanding garden of gifts that we share in our community and bring to the world. My 'take' on psychosynthesis, is not 'instead of' but 'as well as' those of everyone else. And its also an invitation to us to remember Assagioli's assertion that "psychosynthesis is holistic, global and inclusive"<sup>6</sup>.

To encourage myself in this I've created my own gallery of allies and inspirations, a visual synthesis of them below (top of next page). And included are those from the realm of socio-synthesis and eco-synthesis. With just some photos and a notice board you could create one too. What would your board look like?



Picture by Paul Clarke.<sup>7</sup> Key: All left to right. Top row: Jacinda Ardern; Greta Thurnberg; Roberto Assagioli; Casa Assagioli display; Assagioli portrait; Mo Mowlem; Maya Angelou; Middle row: Eupsychian Management, Abraham Maslow from Assagioli's library; Entangled Life, Merlin Sheldrake; Asylums, Erving Goffman; Internal Family Systems, Richard Schwartz; Reinventing Organisations Frederic Laloux; Humankind, Rutger Bregman; Bottom Row: Joanna Macy; Jan Day; Charles Eisenstein; Jewels Wingfield; Gabor Mate; Bjork; Aneurin Bevan.

So, lets swoop back through the years to Summer 2010, in a wild, abundant valley in the heart of Devon, UK, and I am a fern. Sat amid my fellows, in my damp earthy streamside habitat. The beautiful fractal symmetry of my leaf unfurled to release my spores into the air, as I have done since before the existence of humans. Since before dinosaurs. Since before grass. 350 millions years of presence and witness. Only today my spores will be words spoken to humans and all manner of organisms at a **Council of all Beings**. My ancient voice speaking to ancient truths. I, as one of the first large plants to live on land, helped make oxygen. Which in turn primed the land for the emergence of a myriad other life forms. And, as an emissary of deep time, I'll ask all beings, and particularly those recent arrivals, the humans, how they treat the air we breathe. How they respect the living abundance we helped nurture.

The **Council of all Beings** ritual aims to "allow us to step aside from our human identity and speak on behalf of other life forms. It is excellent for growing the ecological self, for it brings a sense of our solidarity with all life and fresh awareness of the damage wrought by our upstart species".<sup>8</sup>

For me this communion with fern, and our collective immersion in nature throughout this camp, sets in train a scary, beautiful discombobulation. Deep shifts in my emotional landscape, a sense of release and surrender in my body and breath, my mind one moment full of questions like meteors showering down, the next still as a mill pond. And the beginnings of the ongoing dissolving of my sense of separation from Nature take root. And then, inevitably, as I meet my own nature as part of Nature, it dawns in me that the wounds inflicted by me and my species on this world are not just harm, but self-harm.

In those waves of that gratitude and wonder, and of grief and dismay, and nurtured by the heartfelt holding of the Fields of Love community, the seed of my eco-consciousness is planted.

Witnessing this with my present self, I recognise how, since then, I've grown in my capacity to hold both wonder



and grief, while the eco-crisis continues to intensify. Last summer as part of a shamanic Vision Quest on the farm we now live on, I spent three days alone in nature. An intimate and magical connection. This summer, after months of extreme wet weather disrupting the cycles of nature including our human cycles, this farm, and many others, for the first time ever had no Harvest. Just bare-earth fields in place of abundance. I witness grief, worry, disbelief ... and still a general reluctance to acknowledge or confront climate change.

## Joyful Emergency

I arrived at my first Jewel Wingfield's workshop as a workaholic Welshman, whose outer success in transforming human services masked an inner loneliness and confusion. Every Jewels camp seemed to shake up my life. After **Fields of Love** I sold my house in Cardiff, downsized to a shared house in Bristol (with friends I'd met through Jewels) and got a part time job. In 2013 at the opening camp to her permanent base **EarthHeart**<sup>6</sup>, I met my future wife Harriet who would soon introduce me to the realm of Psychosynthesis, decided to end my long mental health career, and in the following 18 months I moved from the city to rural Nottinghamshire where we now live on a farm with horses and labradors, and the odd shamanic vision quest.

Molly Young Brown describes these life-changing 'shifts' so well:

*"Every now and then, however, life takes us in a big leap forward, sometimes, it feels, by the scruff of our necks. Mysterious forces, inside and out, demand changes in priorities, activities, relationships and life directions. We are confronted with deeper issues of life and death, meaning and purpose. These are times of 'spiritual emergence' or spiritual emergency' – a psychological crisis brought on by spiritual awakening".<sup>9</sup>*

Faced with an existential crisis, Assagioli observes, "*an awakening occurs in which the individual discovers his will... He sees that he is a living subject, an actor, endowed with the power ... to bring about changes in his own personality, in others, in circumstances. And this awareness leads to a feeling of wholeness, security and joy*".<sup>10</sup>

If we create the right spaces to come together to do this work, land in ourselves to begin with, meet and see each other as the beings we are, and then step into whatever territory we are exploring to find fertile soil and sow seeds of change, we can spark playfulness, creativity, joy, and breathe the fire of hope into our futures.

And a joyful swallow swoops by to drop from its beak a strip of paper from a desk in Casa Assagioli in 1974.

*"There is no certainty. There is only adventure"*<sup>11</sup>

## Bits and Bobs

A rich and interconnected ecology of ideas and initiatives has been emerging. From the **Climate Coaches Alliance**<sup>12</sup> to the **Doughnut Economics Action Lab**<sup>13</sup>, from the richly collaborative **Stories for Life**<sup>14</sup> website to the original and evolving source of **The Work that Reconnects**<sup>15</sup>. And Jewels' **EarthHeart**<sup>16</sup> still thrives – a go-to for reconnecting to our source.

Most Dictionaries continue to define Nature and Humans as distinct separate entities.<sup>17</sup>

**Tomas Bjorkman**<sup>18</sup> suggests that in a time of multiple, epochal global crises its wise for us to question everything we take as 'given', the Myths and Mindsets, the 'common sense, that have become embedded in our sense of what's normal but which cause or compound the crises we face.

### END NOTES

1. They've also learnt to time travel.
2. Including Jung, Freud, Maslow, Buber, Indian Polymath Tagore, esoteric English pioneer Alice Bailey, Esalen founder Michael Murphy, Buddhist explorer Alexandra David-Neal and more
3. My Coaching for Leadership course run by Psychosynthesis Coaching Ltd confirmed my sense of 'homecoming'. The wealth of knowledge conveyed, but with presence, spiritual awareness, and a capacity for both depth of feeling and lightness of heart was life changing.

4. Like a circle in a circle ... I love these unexpected threads of connection.
5. Organised by Tayanita Lodge, Leicester. <https://tayanita.uk>
6. EarthHearts mission was and is *"To co-create a world where we remember that the evolution of our consciousness is reliant on the thriving of the natural world and that the thriving of the natural world is reliant on the evolution of our consciousness"*. For me that sings of EcoPsychosynthesis.
7. In the pandemic I hosted and was uplifted by the Collective Conversation, a monthly group of psychosynthesis coaches visioning a better future. My mission now is to seed more such

## INDEX

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I live with my wife and our two labradors on a farm in rural Nottinghamshire. In 2018, I completed a **Post Graduate Certificate in Psychosynthesis Leadership Coaching**, with **Psychosynthesis Coaching Limited**. My coaching, mentoring and group work practice is **Seeding Synthesis**. Its mission is to help individuals spark transformation in themselves and in the (human and eco) systems they touch upon. I am a **diversity champion** and mentor for participants in the for award winning Bristol based **Stepping Up Leadership Programme**, created to improve the diversity of the city's leadership. During the pandemic I hosted the **Collective Conversation** – an online group of psychosynthesis practitioners exploring visioning and seeding a better world. In the past 35 years of my life and career I've acquired a wealth of experience: as an award winning leader of organisations and partnerships **transforming mental health systems**, as an **intuitive bodyworker**, as a **diversity mentor**, and as a musician **creating music and arts spaces for new talents and new collaborations**. As I embrace my 'eldership' I now draw on all this experience in my **Seeding Synthesis** practice: [www.seedingsynthesis.com](http://www.seedingsynthesis.com). My understanding of what helps people bring about change in their lives and in the world around them has also benefited from my own **deep journey of personal development**, with exceptional teachers, where I've learnt the importance of presence, deep listening, and an open-heart in creating the right environment for people to flourish. And I'm ever grateful to Harriet, my wife, for introducing me to Psychosynthesis, to its source - Roberto Assagioli, and to Labradors.



# ATTUNED TO THE UNIVERSAL RHYTHMS OF NATURE

**Dr. Neal Klein**

**Associate Professor Psychology, Lesley University**

“When they go low, we go high.” Do you remember when our former First Lady Michelle Obama said that? It seems like we are back there again. Let’s consider how this plays out as we examine the physical makeup of our human brain.

Our physical human brain has three major sections if we look at it through an evolutionary lens. These three sections go from earlier to later in the evolution of life on the planet. They go from lower to higher, as they are physically situated in that direction within each of us. Consequently, this is true as an evolving species and as a developing individual being.

Let me quote from my book *Me, Myself and Mindfulness: The Arithmetic of Consciousness*, which was specifically written for the general public:

“We all have three brains or three different, basic parts to our brain, and these three parts have been developing for millions of years. Our first part can be called the reptilian brain, considering we share this part with alligators, frogs, turtles, etc. This part of our brain is all that reptiles have, and this part of our brain functions for us exactly how it functions for all reptiles. It directs our instincts for staying alive. This includes breathing, drinking, eating, procreating, hunting for food, protecting ourselves, making quick exits when we are threatened - like when a bear or car or really big guy is after us.

The second part is our mammalian brain, which we have in common with all mammals. This part is far more complex and it adds to life’s complexity as well. So what can a monkey or a dog or a horse do that a snake or a lizard can’t? Lots of things, including taking care of and protecting their young, forming tribes/herds/packs, solving basic problems, having far-superior movement, and being able to communicate with additional sounds, just for starters. Most important, though, may be the ability to have strong emotions. Powerful emotions like love, anger, sadness, joy, and fear all come from this part of our brain. Lucky reptiles have only one [part to their] brain and a much simpler life.

The third part is our distinctly human brain, which is much bigger than the other two parts combined. It allows us to understand and create things like the use of fire, the wheel, language, numbers, planes, medicinal drugs, nuclear bombs, etc. So many things! It also allows us to create a variety of possible lifestyles and cultures. Whereas dogs from every continent follow the same inborn rules for forming a pack, humans can create any sort of community.

The options are innumerable- tribal life, city life, different types of ‘isms’ like capitalism or socialism, various ways to honor God, different systems to enforce right vs. wrong. You get the picture.”

In a very short amount of time, our consciousness can quickly move between each of these three sections of our brain, as we all need to stay alive, heed our feelings, and be creative problem-solvers. The dilemma is that any one of these can become our most used, and thus our normal, both individually and socially.

100,000 years ago when we were trying to survive non-stop as we were on the bottom of the food chain, we needed to be guided by our reptilian brain. 10,000 years ago when we were exploring new continents, sailing unknown oceans, living through the Agricultural Revolution, we needed to be guided by our mammalian brain. Today, our distinctly human brain must lead if we are to create the civilization that we are



destined for, which is our evolutionary direction. The conscious and appropriate use of our three brains is necessary for this to occur. Our understanding of this is vital!

“When they go low, we go high” becomes our call for creating a social/political system where each of us can have our biological, psychological, and spiritual needs met. Isn’t this our deepest desire? A possible response to that is a foundational aspect of Psychosynthesis: “Just as there is a personal will . . . so there is a Transpersonal Will. . . . It is its action which is felt by the personal self, or “I,” as a “pull” or “call.”

-Roberto Assagioli

Dr. Neal Klein has taught at Lesley University, in Cambridge, MA for the past 40 years, teaching classes in cutting edge psychology, counseling, holistic health and wellness, and cross-cultural psychology. He is the author of A New Operating Manual for Being Human, and his most recent publication Me, Myself, and Mindfulness: The Arithmetic of Consciousness. This publication was written with the intent of teaching basic psychological skills to children and their families in hopes of making their lives easier, and creating manageable psychological skill sets from a much earlier age. Neal has over 30 years of experience as a practicing psychotherapist. One of his life quests has been to help expand the current prevailing paradigm that we as human beings and psychologists use to formulate our beliefs regarding what is humanly possible—emphasizing the nature of consciousness and human potential. Neal was a former steering committee member of AAP: Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis.



Neal’s Youtube Channel is Trace-Ending Times: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYIJ8RPDbe\\_xfiH-0PQF8Uw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYIJ8RPDbe_xfiH-0PQF8Uw) Website: <http://www.trance-endingtimes.com>

# NEVER FORGET!

## Mark Skelding

“Never forget,” said Assagioli

Assagioli’s full name for his methodology is “Biopsychosynthesis”.

“Never forget *Bios*,” Assagioli repeated, dance therapist Matilde Santandrea told Paola Giovetti<sup>1</sup>.

*Bios*, the Greek word for “life”, is about experiencing and expressing long evolutionary processes that integrate and express complexity. We can think about these and become enriched or confused by ideas and concepts. But the thinking is only one aspect of being alive, which is a full, visceral, sensual experience.

Our personal experience of this is immediate, dependent upon the state of our biology – bios-logos: literally “the discourse of bios”. In every moment we are an expression and experience of Life. Paradoxically, the immediacy of this remarkable phenomenon involves us directly in complex nests and networks of relationship that extend to the beginning of time.

... we are always in a ... context; (no-one) is an isolated unit. This same principle applies to an individual’s relation to nature and the universe. No person can take an arrogant stand and consider himself unrelated to the universe. Like it or not, each of us is a part of the universal will and we must somehow tune in and willingly participate in the rhythms of universal life (Assagioli, 1974<sup>2</sup>).

Life is not a solitary process. *Bios* expresses in *ecos*, Greek for household. Ernst Haeckel<sup>3</sup> coined the word “ecology” in 1866. *Ecos-logos* refers to the discourse and interactions of “the household” of bios. To stand in a woodland or to step into the ocean is to find oneself amidst the chatter of that household. It is sensual. Ions in the air are differently charged. Light reflects differently on our eyes. The taste in our mouth alters. Our bodies respond.

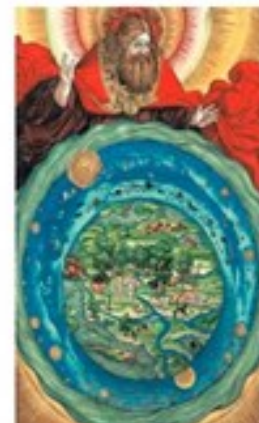
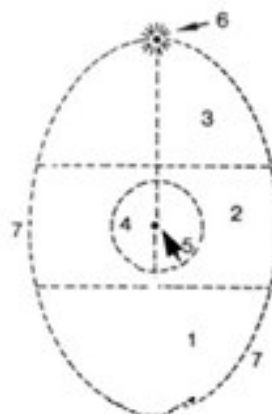
Or perhaps, caught up in the demanding, thinking daily life, the light off a passing car distracts us ... noticing a red gateway, we are flooded by a memory of a beloved grandparent. Again, our bodies respond and we taste the seed cake and hear the clatter of old-fashioned china.

Through embodied emotions and thoughts we enrich and are enriched by the wider community of life.

Gregory Bateson, psychologist, anthropologist and polymath, was fascinated by living and learning. He noted that “difference that makes the difference”<sup>4</sup>, meaning that information, essential to life and learning, is always a signal of difference. And when we notice it, it matters. Literally – information, the signal, a packet of energy, becomes matter through our response.

Our response, or lack of it, is relevant: it has an effect on our surroundings, and the system of which we are part. Others respond accordingly.

*Bios* occurs in the context of *ecos*. Bio-psychosynthesis reminds us that psyche is not merely some disembodied process. The word *psyche* itself carries older meanings that already connect breath and spirit, but, following the Modern development of *psyche-logos*, and the way that mental processes were capturing attention, Assagioli was concerned that something was being lost. Although he held a deep regard for Freud, he noted: “... while the bringing into the light of consciousness ... the diverse tendencies at war in our unconscious may eliminate some morbid symptoms, it is not sufficient to solve the conflicts.”<sup>5</sup>



Assagioli continually refined his thinking over his lifetime, but its formative years span a 30 year period. 1888 to 1918. This was a time of massive social, technological and political change and

The Egg Diagram demonstrates how Assagioli’s transitional thinking drew on imagery from both Raj Yoga and religious iconography to assist recognition of the expression of universal qualities, life and will in the individual.



reform. In many ways it was about bringing together – synthesis – disparate parts to understand a greater wholeness. The US civil war, unification of Italy and Germany; linking the world by telegraph, steamships and railways; Marx seeking to unite the vision of the dispossessed; Freud wanting to make sense of the drives and demands of human experience.

In this context, Assagioli noted “The major limitation of psychoanalysis is to have dealt only, or almost exclusively, with the lower aspects of the psyche. Yes, it is a ‘depth psychology,’ but always in a descending direction” (1965)<sup>6</sup>. Assagioli’s attention was on our potential to realise the heights of the potential for being human in the world. “Never forget *Bios*.”

A century on we realise that there was a huge shadow component to the context of the times. The colonial project was in full swing, destroying cultures and landscapes in the name of God and profit. God had been declared dead by Nietzsche (1882)<sup>7</sup>. The bearded (white) divine patriarch of Mediaeval paintings was increasingly replaced in the common mind by photographs of equally bearded (white) patriarchs wielding earthly power. “Whiteness” was rightness, at least in the increasingly dominant culture.

And then, 5 August 1888, Bertha Benz secretly fired up an invention that she and her husband had developed in the shed. And drove her kids to her mum’s<sup>8</sup>.

Across the Alps, Assagioli was 6 months old. The “Century of the Self”<sup>9</sup> was dawning.

For people *everywhere*, the familiar was dying. The connection between people and place, people and the natural world, had already been weakened by commercial technology, gin, workhouses and factories. Ancient customs faded as communities were uprooted. In Europe, this continued traumatising power-over practices began hundreds of years before. Resmaa Menakem (2020) notes how Europe’s dispossessed and their dissociated leaders acted out their unresolved trauma on the *terra nullis* of the New World<sup>10</sup> from Virginia to Vietnam, and Georgia to Gaza. Menakem’s graphic (right) resonates uncomfortably with the mediaeval art, above.

Whilst Assagioli attended to the heights to help liberate personal and collective energy caught in the “tendencies at war in our unconscious”, others were seeing how these could be manipulated in place. Whilst thought of liberation was in the air, uninvited squatters were boarding off the basement.

“If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it not possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing about it?”<sup>11</sup> wrote the “father of Public Relations”, Freud’s nephew, Edward Bernays. Far from enabling us to “tune in and willingly participate”, he saw the value of increasing our alienation. Corporate and political interests were thrilled. Given Assagioli’s contention that Life’s tendency towards synthesis is an evolutionary process to integrate and make meaning of complexity, such efforts to stall, repress and manipulate it fit Peter Levine’s definition of trauma<sup>12</sup>.

Intergenerational European trauma sowed the winds of the 20th Century; the 21st is reaping the whirlwind.

The late 19th century’s marvellous achievements demonstrated human ingenuity and capacity to make the world in its own image. Tragically, that image went largely unquestioned by those identified with its wealth, power, belonging and comfort. Individualistic, patriarchal and anthropocentric thinking continued to dominate ideas of self that still shape the social institutions preserving this wealth, power and worldview. 90 years ago this individualistic thinking informed dictators - and fascism.

Assagioli was amongst thinkers in diverse disciplines attentive to decentering the individual - psychologically, socially, scientifically. Whilst Leni Riefenstahl was making “Triumph of the Will”<sup>13</sup>, Assagioli’s 1930s writing seems to reflect on “spooky”<sup>14</sup> entanglements observed by quantum science:

Psychosynthesis may 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 them all interdependent. Moreover, each and all are included in and part of the spiritual super-individual Reality<sup>15</sup>.

Abraham Maslow discovered the power and process of this in a Blackfoot community in 1938. It radically revised his thinking, which he felt he must adapt for US acceptance:







1910 Postcard in Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa

Blackfoot scholar Billy Wadsorth (of the Blood, or Kanai Tribe) summarizes in dialogue with Cindy Blackstock (2011), Maslow did not “fully situate the individual within the context of community.” If he had done so, and also more deeply integrated the Blackfoot perspective, “the model would be centered on multi-generational community actualization versus on individual actualization and transcendence<sup>16</sup>.”

Maslow agreed, it seems. In an unpublished 1966 essay he wrote “...self-actualization is not enough. Personal salvation and what is good for the person alone cannot be really understood in isolation.”

Meanwhile, the economic and political benefits of Bernays’ thinking became ever more clear. It was becoming “The Century of the Struggle for the Self”.

By the 1960s, consciousness was a hot topic in social and scientific worlds. Whilst Huxley was probing the Doors of Perception<sup>17</sup>, something akin to Assagioli’s “super-individual Reality” was apparently influencing the particle/wave behaviour of light.

Physicists argued the role that consciousness has in quantum processes<sup>18</sup> and life (they still do!). Assagioli saw a world-view problem:

We are so accustomed, in our objective consciousness, to associate each living being with one corresponding separate and visible body, or vehicle of expression, that we find it difficult to realize the actual existence and nature of an Entity, of a living Being, which simultaneously functions through a multiplicity of forms and subordinated living units.... an Entity is characterized by life<sup>19</sup>.

The Struggle for Self continued through the 60s. Assagioli’s “tune in and participate” (emphasis added) is very different to Leary/McLuhan<sup>20</sup> “turn on, tune in, drop out”.

Psychosynthesis was able to offer a coherent vision highly-prized by Esalen’s influential psycho-spiritual intellectual community and the flourishing Human Potential Movement<sup>21</sup>. Assagioli observed:

a small but rapidly growing minority of people are developing what might be called a psycho-ecological conscience<sup>22</sup>.

But Ken Wilber<sup>23</sup> suggests that the 60s resistance lacked sufficient socio-personal development to hold their vision: we tuned in but were unable to fully participate. Then.

Silently, CO<sub>2</sub>, the dark gift of fossil fuels, had been accruing. Scientists had been warning successive presidents about its danger for 15 years<sup>24</sup>. Then both the 60’s energy and the energy system ran out of gas.

President Carter’s now visionary-looking response to the energy crisis of that decade shocked the establishment<sup>25</sup>. It almost looked like the Whole Earth Catalogue had taken over the Oval Office.

Efficiencies, electric vehicles, collectivisations, renewable energy, and the like were bad for business. Neoliberal economics, an inevitable evolution of the applied psychology begun by Bernays, sought to remove the ‘dead hand of government ... to give maximum scope to the invisible hand of self-interest’<sup>26</sup> (Clearly the Extractive Self!)

The self-congratulatory hand of public and corporate funding further conditions our sense of normal. With chilling dissociation, Project 2025<sup>27</sup> operationalises the alienation of its thinking.

Polymath Gregory Bateson observed:

If we continue to operate in terms of a Cartesian dualism of mind versus matter, we shall probably also continue to see the world in terms of God versus man; elite versus people; chosen race versus others; nation versus nation; and man versus environment. It is doubtful whether a species having both an advanced technology and this strange way of looking at its world can endure<sup>28</sup>.

If Bateson’s prognosis looked likely when the Ecopsychosynthesis monograph was published in 1999, 25 years on any doubt has been removed.



Rarely do three hurricanes churn in the Atlantic—7 Oct 2024  
NASA—public domain image

It is surreal to read discussion about when the Gulf Stream will stop<sup>29</sup>, at what point the Amazon will become a savannah<sup>30</sup>, that all human semen tested this year contains microplastics<sup>31</sup>, or that we already consume nearly 2 planets' worth of resources annually<sup>32</sup>. When ecopsychologist Steffi Bednarek (2024)<sup>33</sup> writes "the familiar is dying", she means it literally.

As corporate and political interest became more fused, approaches to education, healing, learning, conservation and social development become increasingly commodified, monetised and "professionalised". Academics and clinicians who wish to remain active, are constrained by financial and professional realities required by institutions attentive to corporate and government funding requirements. These rest upon an unquestioned notion of self as individualised, disconnected and "free".

Institutional thinking is captured. Matthew Adams (2024) observes the need for "psychologists and allied professionals" to join trans-disciplinary calls to indigenise and decolonise, to challenge entrenched, often Eurocentric and androcentric practices and theories. And, especially, to "acknowledge that attempts to decenter the human, challenge anthropocentrism, and develop meaningful alternatives... are inherently political"<sup>34</sup>.

Through rewards and threats of excommunication, the over-arching system demands complicity. Critics, instructed not to be "political", become siloed, marginalised, defunded and exhausted. Some just disappear<sup>35</sup>.

Assagioli reminds us "Never forget Bios". We now know that our willing participation involves engaging with the feedback of ecos. Schumacher educator, Stephan Harding, suggests we become "Gaia'ed."<sup>36</sup>

Psychosynthesis has always sought to be a bridge, synthesising paradoxical opposites, its foremost thinkers drawing together magic and science<sup>37</sup>. Assagioli evolved its holonic, multivalent concept of "life, Being and Mystery" to the end of his days. Molly Young Brown transcribed his paper "The New Dimensions of Psychology: The Third, Fourth and Fifth Forces"<sup>38</sup> delivered in Switzerland in 1973. It describes: *the aim of psychoenergetics is... to investigate all forces existent in the universe and their interaction:*

1. *The physical energies, starting from the sub-atomic level and extending to the astronomical, galactic level.*
2. *The biological energies, the organizers of living matter.*
3. *Specifically psychic energies of all qualities and at all levels.*
4. *Spiritual, transpersonal, transcendent energies.*

He said:

There is no question of "choosing between" them; each is equally valid in its own section of the field or well-defined radius of action. The arguments and disputes between exponents or the various currents are in large measure artificial, and due principally to their attitude of denying scientific validity to any conception or method different from the one they have espoused.

To embrace these energies requires recognising consciousness-and-will as a unitive, "distinct and not separate" aspect of being/ becoming at every level of this "entity characterised by life".

Polymath neuroscientist Ian McGilchrist offers vital insight and a painstaking exploration of how information, received via embodiment, is processed. Surely Assagioli would love the observation that the brain's left hemisphere, with its capacity to create and live out a workable impression of the world, is a wonderful servant of life and "living being". But, although adept at quantifying, naming, and concretising, it becomes a terrible master if resistant to being "characterised by Life", engaged in its wholeness through the right hemisphere.

In recommending analysis as a path to synthesis, integrating subpersonalities, and practicing identification-and-disidentification, Assagioli was seeing the "I" as a phenomenon that consolidates our diverse experience in context of a greater whole, prefiguring McGilchrist.

McGilchrist's thinking opens up a space for Assagioli's work to be both deepened and broadened. And to revise its understanding of the "lower" section of the Egg and reclaim "the basement". This too is built of stardust, shares trees' breath and is enlivened by sunlight, embodied within a singular, diversified, unity that spans time.

McGilchrist describes "panentheism"... "something flowing, life-giving, creative, responsive, awe-inspiring, and sacred 'in all that we behold ...' but which can never be reduced to what can be seen or fully known"<sup>39</sup>. "Panentheism sees everything as sacred, not just for our use" (ibid).

The classification, like any, belongs to left hemisphere process. Living the experience restores us to right-hemisphere's access, "immanent in the very process of the world's continual ... coming-into-being" (ibid). "In almost all parts of the world apart from Western Europe, the Middle East and non-native North America, animism is the normal way to see [and "willingly participate" in] the world".

The Blackfoot understand that to be born is to self-actualise into a particular context – and that individual and context co-evolve. Had

the inclusive insights and integrative science of such as Andreas Weber<sup>40</sup> (biologist), Karen O'Brien<sup>41</sup> (sociologist) or Katherine Peil Kauffman<sup>42</sup> (psychotheologist) been available, Assagioli may have recognised the lower section of the Egg as a pinnacle of a 14 billion year process as well as a platform for its next step.

Neuroscientist Dan Siegel (2011) points forward: "As long the self is defined as a singular noun the planet is cooked"<sup>43</sup>

Community and culture that recognise ecos - the discourse of the "more than human" world – enable us to evolve in alignment with inherent, embodied processes of a collective psycho-spiritual commons. Psychosphere. We feel its information in our bodies, through breath and light and flesh.

Sensation, intuition and imagination enables homeostasis, the whole and part enrolled in actualising Self - neither Universal, Higher, Ecological, Personal - but all of these, all and always, and more.

To riff Star Trek: "Its Self, Jim, but not as we know it".

Whatever the motives of Bernays and his successors, their "only-singular-human-self centred" thinking now dominates a world, protected and projected in bits, bytes and screens. The rulebook says "believe all is well and be accepted" and "drill, drill, drill to be rewarded".

When our bodies say otherwise, we fall prey to cognitive dissonance, powerlessness and bypassing. Meanwhile, mental illness<sup>44</sup>, social disarray<sup>45</sup>, CO2 and temperature rise in lockstep with each other as community and ecosystem wellbeing declines. To respond only with techniques to ease the pain pathologises the feedback that we receive through being embodied within the living system.

Feedback connects human experience to immanent transpersonal Being. We explore it best together\*.

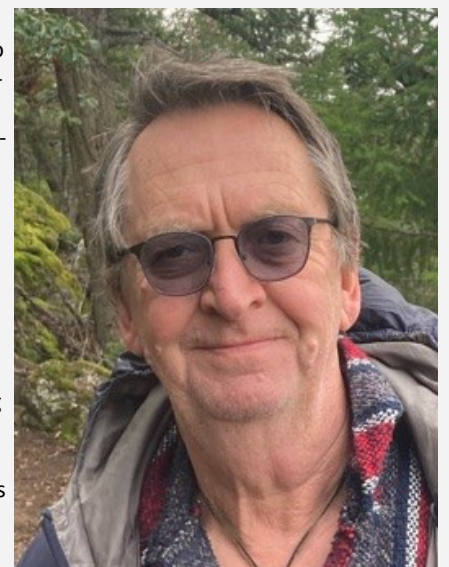
In the film, *Living In The Time of Dying*<sup>46</sup> (2020), Cherokee elder Stan Rushworth, teased his interviewer's foundational myth. Referring to the Genesis story in which Adam and Eve are cast out of Paradise, he asks "Why do that? We didn't do that. Indigenous people don't do that."

Bateson said the real problem is "the difference between how nature works and people think".

Or "Never forget ... *Ecos*"....

\* One of our goals at the AAP July 2025 conference (see page 81 of this Quarterly)

I started life as a psychosynthesis guide in 1998. I had been working in wildlife conservation communications in the 1980/90s when I realised that the species and habitats we were trying to protect were not the problem. Excited by the forthcoming Rio Summit and the promise of Agenda 21, office conversation was thick with climate talk, the frightful and overwhelming tempered by the prospect of will-full action. I had just discovered Will Parfitt's "Essentials of Psychosynthesis" and was in touch with Helen Palmer and Peter Hubbard at the Institute in Auckland. By the end of the decade it was clear that our mainstream psychology, dominator worldview and Western sense of self and purpose were at odds with how our planet works, and in denial of both our senses and our science. Curious, alarmed and engaged, I took the psychosynthesis psychotherapy training in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I was a faculty member for the last 11 years of the NZ Institute, teaching the introductory week and foundation year with my colleague Robyn Rogers. During that time, I discovered David Abram's writing, Andy Fisher's "Radical Ecopsychology" and Molly Brown and Joanna Macy's work. This led to a deep dive into aspects of ecopsychosynthesis as well as an education Masters in Social Ecology. I now live on Saltspring Island, BC with my Canadian partner, embraced by the land, and thrilled by Psychosynthesis. I have an international online and in-person practice, am a member of Climate Psychology Alliance, and seek ways to persuade mainstream psychology to notice how ready the world is for us to choose a different experience of being human, and what our discipline as a whole could offer in an intentional, inter-disciplinary trans-contextual dialogue to assist this.





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# HOE TO HARVEST

## Connecting Soil, Soul and Community

Catherine Ann Lombard



It took me a long time and a good deal of sweat to understand it — just how much growing food extends beyond the garden. Not only does a garden feed us, but it also forms us – as persons and as a community. My husband and I have been growing much of what we eat for the past twenty-five years. We started out with a small plot and a few lettuce and tomato plants, but we now have enough land to keep us busy and well-fed.

Once you work in tandem with the soil and seasons, you learn to appreciate the spiritual lessons they hold. How fundamentally attached we are to this place called Earth. How much working the land can actually help us to become fully human. As Gandhi once said, “To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves.”

While a garden provides us with fruits and vegetables, it also acts as a mirror for the soul. As we interact with hoe, shovel and watering can upon our Earth, the Earth is ready to teach us about ourselves.

There are days when I find myself tearing at weeds, only moments later to feel the fierce roots of long-buried anger and resentment clinging to my heart. Other days I am filled with joy, longing to spill seeds upon every patch of bare soil. By gardening we create a place where our inner and outer worlds can meet. And in this space, with time and nourishment, we are encouraged to move closer to ourselves and each other.

My neighbor once explained why gardening was the humblest of tasks. “Your head is always bowed and sometimes you have to go down on your knees.” Growing food is also a revolutionary act. Physically, the small farmer spends time hoeing, seeding, planting, composting, weeding, watering, and finally harvesting – not only produce, but also the seeds for next year’s crop. Meanwhile, spiritually the farmer is creating a new way of being. As Vandana Shiva said, “The power to feed ourselves is the power to free ourselves.” Gardening also brings us in communion with our Earth and the universe. From the millions of microorganisms alive in the soil to the moon’s phases telling us what to plant and when. The German mystic and saint Hildegard von Bingen wrote: “Humankind is called to co-create. With nature’s help, humankind can set into creation all that is necessary and life-sustaining.” What better way to co-create alongside Nature’s diversity than to bite down on a cherry tomato or munch snap green peas grown with our own two hands?

Sharing a bountiful harvest is also a way to shift the economic paradigm from exploiting the Earth to sharing her abundance. Many times I have given away (and received in return) crates of plump tomatoes, fava beans, juicy apples and plums. Sharing harvested food cultivates friendship, gratitude, and peace. Even without much land to sow, everyone can find a way to grow *something* to eat. Try planting herbs in flowerpots on the windowsill or grace your terrace or balcony with larger pots full of salads, beans, and tomatoes. Otherwise, commit to buy produce from local farmers, contribute time or energy to community gardens, or plant some perennial flowers (preferably edible!) somewhere ... anywhere in your neighborhood.

Recently I planted a seed-thought that has bared fruit. At the charity where I volunteer, I suggested that we start growing food in the small plot next to where we distribute food and clothes. Together with a local cooperative that grows biological grains and legumes, charity volunteers and recipients have planted fruit trees this autumn and tilled the soil for spring planting.

The lessons gardening offers are simple. Every seed we plant holds a fruitful past and a tender promise. All we give to the soil feeds our future. And the small farmer is a humble, radical peacemaker.

Please note that this article was first published by the [Woman Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual](#) as one of the winners of the WATER Essay Contest 2024.

Catherine Ann Lombard is a gardener and writer living in Italy. She has published many articles on psychosynthesis. More recently, she has translated and written the “Introduction” to Roberto Assagioli’s [Creating Harmony in Life](#). To learn more about her and her writing, visit [LoveAndWill.com](#)





# INTEGRATING ECOPSYCHOSYNTHESIS INTO A HOLISTIC SYSTEM

**Ewa Danuta Bialek**

For nearly three decades, I have been immersed in psychosynthesis, constantly unearthing new revelations. It's always derived from my personal experience. For this reason, every article or book I write contains an element of my story.

It has become evident to me that psychosynthesis integrates multiple dimensions of life. Psychosynthesis practitioners have greatly contributed to the discovery of its application in other areas, and I appreciate this.

Psychosynthesis is not only multidimensional (it deals with different levels of fusion) but also multi-spatial. Two basic psychosynthesis models can illustrate this:

1. the horizontal "star" model
2. the vertical "egg" model.

Roberto Assagioli was an exceptional genius and visionary. He set the basis for the "Grand Synthesis" he formulated. His diagrams, therefore, provide the model for creating subsequent "synthesis floors."

I'll briefly explain my process, and then discuss generalizations.

When I first found myself in a wide international group of practitioners in 1996 at a conference in San Diego titled "Psychosynthesis for the Next Millennium," I was stunned by the multitude of its applications. I still had no idea in what field I would find a place for it. My psychosynthesis teacher John W. Cullen, thanks to whom I found myself at the conference, made this easier for me. He also prepared a short note about my dedication to psychosynthesis in Poland (which was completely unknown here at the time).

This note, among others, was later included in the book: Psychosynthesis in North America. Discovering Our History 1957-2010, and much earlier in the IAMOP Newsletter - from 1995. Thanks to this information, I got exceptional support from the world in the form of books: Edit Stauffer, Guy Pettitt, Diana Whitmore, Thomas Yeomans and John Weiser, Piero Ferrucci, Jean Hardy, Molly Young Brown, Margret Ruffler, David Platts, Will Parfitt, and Marilyn Barry.

These books opened up a sizable thematic resource for the future library of the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Warsaw, Poland, especially for "my synthesis."

In the following year, I journeyed to Poggio del Fuocco. I carried some books that I had gotten earlier. One of the things mentioned was the Findhorn Foundation, an eco-village in North Scotland. Several events from that trip and contact with David Platts "conjured up" my next trip the following year to Findhorn, further participation in numerous workshops and conferences there closely related to the ecological approach to reality (such as Eco-village Training, Conferences: For the Love of Nature, Soul in Education, etc.).

As a result, these important journeys led me to explore two key aspects of psychosynthesis: the internal and external dimensions, which encompass personal growth and community and planetary well-being.

My interest in psychosynthesis in education has greatly intensified, incorporating the surrounding ecosystem of human existence. My stays at Findhorn led to connections with individuals involved in psychosynthesis, such as Diana Whitmore, as well as others in the field of ecology, for example, Joanna Macy, Jane Goodall, John Seed, Vandana Shiva, Satish Kumar, and a workshop at Schumacher College. These have significantly impacted my work and the books I wrote later, which describe "the model of education for the future," or "the university of integrated education."

Psychosynthesis has stimulated the ancient message of "know thyself" in modern times. Over the years, science and education have erased the connection between man, others, and the earth. Prioritizing logical thinking, facts, and profit, man, and nature suffered a decline in value. The attitude to the Earth has changed from devoted to subservient.

Henryk Skolimowski, an eco-philosopher at Harbor University, has shown the way back through his concept of the "participatory mind". The concept of interconnectedness forms the foundation for building "living systems" that encompass individuals, communities, humanity, and the environment. The Findhorn Foundation is a prime example of a harmonious community, working together for the planet's sustainability. By embracing consciousness and growing their understanding of themselves, individuals can become part of a collective mind called the "participating mind." In this way, we can join the search for solutions to serious problems on a global scale.

Psychosynthesis is not just a system derived from the experiences of its creator or followers. It is a philosophy of life - a living philosophy, encompassing the happening life, which connects people and their actions into a coherent whole, leading to the good of the whole.

This corresponds to the functions of the human brain - including the synthesizing thinking of the right hemisphere, and the logical thinking of the left side.

We are slowly approaching the philosophy of science and what it is supposed to represent in its messages. This philosophy is to be dedicated to life and verified by it. This is consistent with Skolimowski and J. Gorecki, but also with the essence of psychosynthesis and its profound message.

The philosophy of science is to represent the universal aspect of human nature. Following A. Wheeler, we express ourselves in the "participatory world." We realize an upward aspiration, revealing what is potential within us. We are going beyond the recognition of the Universal Will and helping ourselves and Life to "become." Being part of the participating mind, we are also part of the dynamic evolution of the Cosmos.

Ascending higher, which is part of the process of psychosynthesis, allows the spiritual aspect of the human being to emerge, as it does the world. This aspect goes beyond biology and uncovers the hidden possibilities of "becoming," as it expresses new insights and states of higher consciousness. In this process, we constantly create ourselves, returning to oneness with the Cosmos.

In this way, understanding G. Bateson, mind and nature (the Universe) become one, interpenetrating each other. Following H. Skolimowski and J. Gorecki, "We create a symphony in which the musicians, composer, and listeners are an integral whole".

The unifying element is therefore "upward education" - raising self-awareness, finding common spaces, and seeing them by stepping out of current systems of thinking and perceiving the world. We need new world views that allow us to understand the complexity of the phenomena of the global nature. We have to see the world formed from interconnected parts as a holistic system.

We urgently need to look for "common space," that is, that which connects, is cohesive and unifying. This will help us understand the relationships between the parts and realize the importance of our being in relationships with other people. This works together in the "laboratory of life." We need to learn how to create relationships, and from there the connections to family, work, and all the other relationships that come into our lives, sometimes for a moment and sometimes for a longer period.

This is the inner work of each of us individually and all of us together. It is a "return to the essence of things" - getting to know ourselves and the creation of what we create and realize in the world. We have the right and duty to do this consciously not to destroy ourselves and the world. Without this work, we will not survive as a species.

Those who have delved further into psychosynthesis have grasped its core concept of "synthesis," starting from the self, progressing towards the true essence of the self, the soul, and heeding its beckoning. She is the one who directs us towards revitalizing the world and our relationship with nature. She inspires us to assist our clients in discovering their inner core, recognizing global issues, and addressing them in practical ways.

Such practitioners of psychosynthesis have become examples of "following" the message of Assagioli's "Great Synthesis." This creates a "living" system, a participatory mind, also derived from Bateson's message, to find the "link that connects" - our spiritual nature, connected to the Anima Mundi. Through personal exploration and practice, psychosynthesis becomes invaluable. To educate oneself means to continuously broaden awareness, recognize global problems, and respond proactively. It is through it that we are in the process of "becoming" a better version of ourselves. We have the power to make a positive impact on the world by working together and valuing each other's contributions.

Psychosynthesis, explored over the years and practiced on oneself, is priceless. It is educating oneself, constantly expanding one's awareness seeing the world's problems, and responding proactively. It is through it that we are in the process of "becoming" a better version of ourselves. We can contribute to the world through ourselves, thanks to ourselves, in "synthesis" and synergy with others, instead of depreciating their existence and contribution to others.

EcoPsychosynthesis is a fundamental part of "holistic psychosynthesis," a systemic synthesis of what is of the person, the environment, and the world. All of this corresponds to Roberto Assagioli's formulation that man exists in the world, hence all his actions concern himself and the place where he lives. Man is part of the "Great Ecosystem" and we have to see him as part of the Great Synthesis.

**Dr. Ewa Danuta Bialek**— a lifelong scientist in medicine, completed postgraduate studies in psychology and is trained in Psychosynthesis. In 1997 she founded the Association, *Education for the Future* and in 2004, *The Institute of Psychosynthesis* in Warsaw, Poland. She has written 52 books and over 60 articles in scientific journals.

Most of her books are now on Amazon in English: <https://www.amazon.com/author/dr.ewa-danuta-bialek1> Topics include: raising children to be healthy; the causes of autoimmune diseases and the possibilities of their healing; increasing women's consciousness; entrepreneurship with a soul; transpersonal coaching; models of education and a new paradigm in science, all seen through the eyes of psychosynthesis.

Ewa is dedicated to teaching people about well-being and developing comprehensive methods to address the need for health education in all stages of life. Her work, in person and in her writing has had a powerful positive effect on many people, throughout the world.

<https://psychosynteza.pl> and [ewa.bialek@psychosynteza.pl](mailto:ewa.bialek@psychosynteza.pl)





# CONVERSATION 3:

## Molly Brown, Didi Firman, Mark Skelding

**Mark:** I have an exercise I sometimes do with people, which in my mind, I call “the Transpersonal Quality safari”. You pick one of the transpersonal qualities, and ideally take it outside and look to see where it’s being mirrored back ... the places in the world around me where I’m connecting with the quality I’m carrying.

And not so much as a thought exercise - although, obviously, I’m holding the thought of a word like kindness or respect - but I’m more interested in the felt sense in my body when I start to connect in that way.

And I think that what you’re saying, Molly, and that kind of approach, and you were talking about embodiment before, Didi, there’s Karen O’Brien, a professor, I think she’s from Copenhagen, who talks about universal values being embedded within evolutionary process. We call them qualities, I think.

Obviously, evolution isn’t saying more respect for Redwoods, but there’s a basis to the beingness of the tree, and its sense of itself - in whatever way trees do that, as we were talking before. Biology understands this through ideas like autopoiesis, where the entity is responding and signalling: this feels good, or this feels bad.

We’ve barely begun to explore the potential of this response that shapes the whole ecology and evolution. And what we understand and name as universal values, virtues or transpersonal qualities arise out of that process – and we connect with them through our own embodiment, and then as a bridge to connect us to the living world, like you’re saying.

**Molly:** Can you give an example of a transpersonal quality that we’ve hardly embodied?

**Mark:** Hardly explored the potential of them ... Well, I think there’s something in the middle, as it were - probably the Mystery that can never be properly expressed like the Tao... and this idea of ecological self, of being Earth, that we’re talking about, of being viscerally engaged with our fellow living entities, is an expression of that.

And this going on beingness is bit like the star diagram in a way: it kind of folds out into all sorts of different areas whilst preserving a particular essence of itself that is reflected back to us from these apparent externalities.

If we held that, then we’d have an ethical frame, at least, the potential for an ethical framework, that is responsive to something we’re part of but **is** not created by us, not just human, even if we’re recognising the ethic through human eyes.

And what is our felt-experience as we do this? We were talking recently, Molly, how we were taught about anger, sadness, fear, and joy, happiness as the fundamental four branches of the emotional tree – mad, sad, bad and glad - and each gives us direct and immediate information about our needs, whether it’s about boundaries, or comfort, or safety, or to celebrate.

But what we don’t get reminded about is wonder as an emotion that gives us information about our need to be connected to something greater than ourselves. And I do wonder about how that gets left out, what that serves, and its impact.

**Molly:** You wonder about wonder.

**Mark:** I do: I wonder about wonder ... I wonder about wonder and when I feel it, I am wonder-full, wonderfully filled with wonder!!!

But it’s interesting, isn’t it? You know, that I don’t know how true that story is, that First Nations par-

ents will hold their infant out to the universe and say, you know, here.

That seems to me like stepping out into wonder from the get go. And yeah, our mainstream psychology doesn't seem to name it. I don't know what you guys think about that.

**Didi:** Well, when Molly asked an example of a transpersonal quality that we're not manifesting I'm not exactly sure how you said it, Mark ...

**Molly:** Embodying, embodying.

**Didi:** ... that we're not embodying.... My question was, what transpersonal quality are we embodying?

Because as a species, you can go through all these 20 transpersonal qualities, and say: "yeah, if we get a C minus on that quality as a species, we're doing good".

But mostly we're flunking all the transpersonal qualities as embodied or ethical mandates for us. You know, you take any religion, and even if they've got some of those same concepts in them, there's an exception. You know, love my neighbor, unless you want their property.

**Molly:** Or they're the wrong colour, or yeah, whatever.

**Mark:** This shows the polycrisis again, isn't it? We were talking about ecology and connection and once we're in the flow of that, the talk opens out again into social equity, and racial justice, and so on, and so on. It's as John Muir said: as soon as you tug on one strand, you find the whole universe hitched in there.

**Molly:** I'm intrigued with your practice that you mentioned a few minutes ago, because it strikes me as being a way of embodying and enlivening the whole idea of transpersonal qualities...

They're not human: they're more than human.

If we look in the right places, we can see every one of them in nature, in what we call nature, as if nature was something different than human. But shorthand, "nature" - the more than human

world. I really do think this is a place where psychosynthesis has, quote, "gone wrong", with too much emphasis on...it's too anthropocentric. It's not only too anthropocentric, it's too individual.

Focus on the individual as if the individual somehow existed as a monad separate from everything else. Family systems has done a lot with taking what were basically psychosynthesis concepts and bringing it into a larger world of the family. Let's just keep going with that.

**Didi:** Systems theory in general keeps looking further back. Mark Horowitz's book, *The Dance of We*, really looks at systems theory through the lens of psychosynthesis. That's not his intention, but being a psychosynthesisist himself, he's playing out how can we not see everything through the lens of synthesis.

**Molly:** He's done a lot of work with organizations and has brought psychosynthesis into organizational development.

**Didi:** Now he's pretty much retired ?

**Mark:** I'm sure there will be an invitation for him to come to the conference.

**Molly:** Well, my excuse is it's the wrong coast. He doesn't have that - oh, yes, he does, because he's in Portland now.

**Didi:** But maybe, Mark, though it's not specific to our conversation, maybe there will be a way that you all put a Zoom component in.

**Mark:** I think we were already talking about doing that because we've got people from Europe who want to do that and don't want to fly - I don't want them to fly either, frankly, unless they're coming for a good long time and doing a lot of work!!

**Molly:** Well, we've talked about a train trip across the country that picks up people all along the way.

Details of the 2025 AAP conference, to be held July 24-27 at the Garrison Institute in New York, are available at the end of the quarterly publication. The AAP has also issued a call for speakers and workshops. Anyone interested in taking part should email:  
[conference@aap-psychosynthesis.org](mailto:conference@aap-psychosynthesis.org)

# TALES FOR THE GREAT TURNING

David England

## Tales for the Great Turning

*I was invited to provide an evening of storytelling for the local 'Great Turning' group, who follow the work of Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown. I named the storytelling performance 'Tales for the Great Turning', and gathered a collection of stories with an environmental context: our connection with the natural world. Here are three of them.*

### DREAM DILEMMA

*The 'Dream Dilemma' story expresses the joy of feeling a sense of union with the natural world. I recently came close to this experience in a garden planted with buddleia to attract butterflies, watching close up as peacocks, red admirals, marbled whites, and cabbage whites supped nectar from the flowers.*

A man dreamt that he was a butterfly, struggling to get free from the chrysalis. He squeezed from the chrysalis and opened his wings for the first time, a beautiful pattern of red and orange and blue, flecked with white and yellow. He was enthralled.

A draft of wind arose under his wings and he soared into the sky, learning to shift his wings to match the breeze. He had always wanted to fly. Now, he alighted on a leaf, closed his wings and opened them, closed them and opened them again, such wonder.

A bright yellow sunflower caught his eye. He felt an urge to fly down onto the sunflower, to sink his proboscis into the flower, to sup the sweet nectar like a straw, to savour such richness of flavour, aah! Then he awoke. He touched his lips. He pondered. Am I a man who dreamt he was a beautiful, enchanted butterfly. Or am I a butterfly, dreaming I am a man? Is there a difference?

### THE KING AND THE OAK

*'The King and the Oak' is about the element of earth, into which trees and plants plunge their roots, upon which we ourselves are rooted, and which for us is a metaphor for groundedness. It is astonishing that deforestation is the subject of an ancient Greek myth, when today the deforestation of our primeval rain forests is a matter of such deep concern. Then and now, it is ruthless greed that poses the threat.*

A long time ago in Thessaly there was a beautiful grove. Here trees grew undisturbed. Wild bees made their honey. Birds sang in gently swaying tree-tops and little fawns rested in the shade. It was a safe and glorious place. In the middle of an open glade there stood a mighty oak. Near the oak were fountains. They were the most sparkling fountains anyone had ever seen. In that distant grove every tree and every bush was fresh and green.

Once in a while, people visited the valley. They entered the wood in dreamy trepidation for they knew



that the great goddess Demeter had her temple in the glade of the oak. The trees near the entrance of the grove changed the purposeful traveller's urgency into a willing surrender to the lush valley's slow, steady pace. Thus all was peaceful in that vale. Here the fruit of the earth was loved and Demeter, the great goddess, listened to the people who came to beg her aid. Near the base of the great oak were many small gifts, lingering witnesses to the grace bestowed by Demeter.

In every tree there lived a hamadryad or wood-nymph. The tree's life and the wood-nymph's life were interwoven. Whenever a tree died, the hamadryad died. Therefore the wood in the grove was never cut. Each tree grew until it had reached the fullness of its years, or until thunder or great storms brought an early end to the life of the tree which reached upward into the sky.

Near the valley of Demeter there lived Erysichthon, King of Thessaly. He was mighty and prosperous, which is dangerous for kings. In order to show the world his wealth as well as his power he decided to build a new palace. He designed it himself. It had to be higher and wider than any palace he had ever visited. Of course, he would need the tallest and oldest trees in the country to create the largest roof ever made, a roof which had to span the majestic width of his new palace. He knew where such trees grew. Not hesitating for a moment, he instructed twenty woodcutters to take their best axes and follow him to the sacred grove.

When the king entered the grove he did not feel the gnawing darkness which fell upon the ancient forest, nor did he hear the warning in the rustle of the trees. The woodcutters trembled before the grove's sanctity, but the king shouted angrily and told them to cut down every tree in sight, to strike their axe deep into every tree's strong body.

The men could not lift their axes. They could not will themselves to do as they had been told. Because the woodcutters failed to savage the trees as he so ordered, the king's rage grew. He ran deeper and deeper into the grove. The woodcutters followed; loneliness ravaged their faces. Then in great fury the king tore a big axe towards himself. He lifted it and with one blind stroke he cut the blade far into the great oak's trunk. A piercing cry ran through the skies. It was the wounded cry of the hamadryad. He told himself that the axe was singing a triumphant song. Thus, he ignored the wood-nymph's burst of grievous pain. Again he hacked wildly into the tree.

At that moment, an old priestess came from the temple which stood near the great oak.

She approached the king saying that he was unwise to anger the great goddess Demeter. Was she not the power of growth in everything that flourishes on earth? But the king, he did not listen. He spat insults at the old priestess. This oak had to be cut apart. He wanted it to support his palace roof.

The old priestess urged him once more to be careful. He did not listen. Then she walked away and the woodcutters saw that her face was the face of Demeter.

The great oak fell. The hamadryad died. Her last moan added to the darkness. The other wood-nymphs in the valley answered her dying wail. The woodcutters were very frightened. They wanted to leave the valley, but they could not do so. Instead they obeyed their king, felling every tree.

It was not long before the king's new palace was finished, and it was majestic indeed. The king knew that he had insulted the great goddess, but as nothing unusual had happened during the building of the palace, he soon comforted himself. Her powers must be limited. Not even Demeter could punish him.

Then, Demeter visited her trusted servants, Drought and Hunger, upon Thessaly. Through them, Demeter had the power to stunt growth. Wherever they went, they sowed her barren seed. No longer did the fountains bubble towards the sky. No rain fell. Rivers ceased their flow. The peasants who dwelled in the

once lush hills took their remaining livestock and followed the trail of sorrowful hope which led to other lands. They searched and found a new home, far from Thessaly.

Soon Hunger entered the king's own palace, sowing strife and fury amongst his servants. They abandoned the king. At last only King Erysichthon and his daughter Mestra lived in the palace. She stayed loyally by his side. Travellers who still passed through the king's country invariably carried ample supplies of food and water. The king and his daughter raised their hands towards these strangers, exchanging their precious objects for food. Sometimes they begged.

When there were no other precious objects left, the king sold his daughter to a passing merchant. She became a slave. The food thus gained did not last long. Then the king died in an agony of hunger and thirst.

The sacred grove remains for ever barren. The wood-nymphs never return. Though Demeter punished the king, she could never make the valley lush again. Not even Demeter can do this.

### [The Young Man, Lion, and Yellow Flowered Storm-Cloud Tree](#)

*'The Young Man, Lion, and Yellow Flowered Storm-cloud Tree' brings us back to 'Dream Dilemma', but with a very different take on our union with the natural world, in the way the story challenges our mindset about our relationship with dangerous predators.*

*I first told this story during a storytelling group in the yurt at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, Bishopsgate, London.*

One day a young man went hunting. Well, he was supposed to be hunting, but he felt tired and lay down to rest beside a waterhole. A short time later, a lion arrived at the waterhole. The lion was very thirsty. When the lion saw the man lying there, he thought to himself,

"Mm! I realise I'm hungry as well as thirsty."

The young man knew the lion was there. He went into fight/flight mode, as we animals do; he couldn't fight the lion and he wasn't fast enough to run away, so he did the third thing, he froze, played dead.

The lion thought to himself,

"I'd better quench my thirst before I eat this tasty morsel," so he picked the man up and thrust him into the branches of a yellow flowered storm-cloud tree that grew close to the waterhole. The lion turned towards the waterhole, but as he did so he noticed the man's head move a little.

"Well," thought the lion, "that's a bit odd," so he went back to the yellow flowered storm-cloud tree and pushed the man more firmly into its branches. When the young man began to weep, copious tears running down his cheeks, the lion, who was very thirsty by this time, licked the tears from the young man's cheeks.

The lion turned back to the waterhole and continued quenching his thirst. With the lion's back turned, the man leapt from the yellow flowered storm-cloud tree and began to run away. He didn't want to run towards the village, for fear the lion would run after him and attack the village, so he shouted towards some villages,

"Help me! Help me! I'm being chased by a lion who has carried me and licked tears from my cheeks."

The villagers were alarmed, for was this not their hearts' young man? They wrapped their hearts' young man in hartebeest skins and hid him in some bushes. They did not want their hearts' young man to be eaten by a lion.

At the entrance to the village there stood a wise old man, who called out a warning,

"A lion is coming, a lion is coming, a lion who has carried our hearts' young man and licked tears from his cheeks."

The lion entered the village, and began a rampage looking for their hearts' young man. In her distress, the mother of the young man screamed out to the men of the village,

"Shoot the lion, shoot the lion before it finds my hearts' young man."

The men of the village shot their arrows at the lion, but the arrows just glanced off. The men of the village threw their spears at the lion, but the spears just glanced off. The wise old man cautioned the men, "You cannot kill the lion, for he has carried the young man and licked the tears from his cheeks, and his will is set on our hearts' young man."

The people of the village offered other children to the lion, but the lion's will was set on their hearts' young man. The wise old man spoke to the people,

"The mother of our hearts' young man must give her son to the lion, for he has carried him and licked the tears from his cheeks and our spears and arrows cannot touch him."

With a heavy heart, the mother of our hearts' young man spoke to the men of the village,

"Let it be so, but let not the lion carry my hearts' young man to his eating place. Let the lion and my hearts' young man lie in death together."

The villagers unwrapped their hearts' young man from the hartebeest skins. They gave him to the lion. The lion killed their hearts' young man. The men of the village rushed forward and plunged their spears into the lion. As he was dying, the lion spoke,

"Now I can die. I have been given the young man whom I lifted and carried to the yellow flowered storm-cloud tree. I put him there and licked his tears. I sought him all this time. Now I shall lie with him in death, for I am his."

The lion died. The lion and the young man lay dead. Then the lion was at peace. The young man was at peace. And the people were at peace.

David England is a UKCP Registered psychosynthesis psychotherapist in private practice in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead UK. 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).





# NATURE AND WILDLIFE PHOTOS

## Carla Brennan



Carla Brennan contributed to the original 1999 monograph on EcoPsychosynthesis and is now a wildlife and nature photographer. She has graciously allowed us to use some of her nature and wildlife photos in the publication.

*Conversations in Psychosynthesis*

The Personal Is Planetary  
Carla Brennan



Carla Brennan, M.Ed., is an ecopsychologist and psychosynthesis counselor in private practice in Amherst, Massachusetts. She also teaches Human Ecology at Greenfield Community College, leads retreats in wild nature and offers workshops in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, yoga and qigong.

Carla Brennan grew up in western Pennsylvania, went to college in Washington State, and then moved to Massachusetts where she finished her undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Along the way, she has been a freelance illustrator, a psychotherapist and a Buddhist teacher. In 2001, she headed west and found herself in a new relationship. Twenty years later, she and her partner Chris lost their home in the CZU wildfire in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Not wanting to rebuild, and instead seeking a new lifestyle, they bought an RV and are living the nomadic life for now. Carla says, "This gives me the chance to visit and revisit wild areas, and capture beauty and wonder with my heart and my camera." Carla continues to teach workshops and retreats to connect our inner nature with outer nature.

Websites: <https://carlabrennan.com>  
<https://bloomofthepresent.org>



<https://carlabrennan.com>



<https://carlabrennan.com>



<https://carlabrennan.com>

# LET'S BE REALISTIC!

## Isabelle Clotilde Küng

Or how Assagioli “tried” to convey to me the fact that people see the world from different perspectives, depending on their scale of values.

1965 Assagioli was animating an International Psychosynthesis Meeting at my mother's school Institut Bleu-Léman in Villeneuve. That spring she had inaugurated her second school at Glion where she resided and where I helped her as needed while also teaching Psychosynthesis to the pupils of the first school as well as to the students of the second.

I was all too proud to show Assagioli around and take pictures with him and the students.

Thereupon we went out to enjoy the breath-taking view, which he silently admired. Then he looked at me with that attitude he adopted when he was going to communicate an important information, he said:

*“ Do you see all these forests Isabelle?”*

*“realize that every tree is the habitat and shelter of myriads of forms of life, and the cradle allowing them to develop ?”*

Develop their kind of consciousness I added for myself.

Assagioli then said, in substance: *“Well, you and I and many, many others, we value this, but please understand also that to many other people these vast forests merely represent a quantity of square meters of land worth money. A person possessed by money sees everything in terms of cash.”*



Roberto Assagioli in 1965, pausing with the Students of IVP

We only see what we have in our own heart I concluded for myself, thinking, not without a touch of sadness, that I had to learn to see this for what it is, and come to terms with these multipolar values that possess people, and still manage to work out my life project! (teach Psychosynthesis – that is learn to live in harmony with all) Would I be able to do that and still be joyous and enchanted by the marvels the ever-renewing nature gives with such a generosity?

Someone wrote a prayer that addresses this dilemma: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference....” Ah! It is the prayer said at the close of every meeting of the Alcoholics Anonymous (thank you Google! But what Google did not say is that addiction to nerve modifying perception substances is in fact a disease, just

like any addiction is a disease, that is caused by not being at ease with oneself... and addiction to possession is part of the lot!)

That wake-up call from Assagioli moved me deeply, because it was chasing me out of my comfort zone.... How could I go on being enthusiastic about the art of discovering, experiencing and becoming true to our innermost Self, when knowing that so many people just care about forgetting who they truly are?

So, in the long run I looked for indirect ways of waking up my pupils to these multiple values we all must come to terms with, in a constructive manner. As I was also giving general culture classes, I shared with my pupils – those in the school I had in the meantime with my husband bought from my mother, (which implies that the other school fell out of my priorities) the **“1854 Testament of Seattle!”** I even asked the teachers of the Advanced language courses to discuss it in class, and use it even as a dictation text, and dissertation theme.

Let me mention here just one of the passages I remember of this “Testament” .... The sentence where the Chief Seattle says: **“The grand people in Washington want us to sell them our land! But how can we sell something that belongs to the great life of this planet?”**

Respect to this wise chief! who knew, long before the new age movement, that we have all receive the gift of being part of the life of this planet and that the earth is one reality infused by the One Life in which we all live, move, and exist....



... every tree is the habitat and shelter of myriads of forms of life, and the cradle allowing them to develop...” Roberto Assagioli (1965/Glion)

I hope that it pleased you to read this short narration of my conversation with Assagioli in Glion in 1965 and how circumstances pushed me to integrate it into my business experience as a school director to use these circumstances, by no means easy, to also send out a wakeup call to my pupils.

And I hope it will encourage you to do what is possible in favour of this so generous life that still tolerates us on its “property!”

Educationalist, Isabelle Küng completed her didactic training in Educational Psychosynthesis from 1963 to 1970 with Dr Roberto Assagioli at the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence, Italy, carrying out the practical part in the International College "Institut Bleu-Léman" founded by Dorette Faillettaz, in Villeneuve, Switzerland, with the task of teaching it as a course included in the general curriculum for all students from the age of 13 onwards. A pioneering work at that time!

Isabelle continued the experiment as co-director of this private College from 1970 until in 1981 she decided to suspend its activities due to the world economic situation: although of excellent reputation, an autonomous international undertaking depends strictly on geopolitics. Thus ended the first world pilot experience of teaching of, to put it in other words, the: "Understanding how to, and Art of living in harmony with oneself and with others, in a multicultural environment, and becoming aware of one's inner compass."





# ECOPSYCHOSYNTHESIS

**Rev. Sally Singingtree**

**M.A.T, M.A**



Although Roberto Assagioli inspired a system of transpersonal psychology and bequeathed us a treasure trove of writing that has informed the healing work of therapists, social workers, clergy, educators, artists, physicians and others, he left little behind about the field we refer to as EcoPsychosynthesis, sometimes also called eco-psychology, or depth ecology. Now, fifty years after Assagioli's death, it's clear that the effects upon humanity about what is happening in the natural environment have been significantly under appreciated. It's time to acknowledge what is happening in the ecology of our earthly being as we continue to utilize the core concepts of psychosynthesis.

EcoPsychosynthesis is a branch of classical psychosynthesis that makes explicit the somatic nature of having a human life and which recognizes that we belong to the natural environment, and are subject to the same laws and dynamics that govern all earth beings. Based on the mind-body-spirit connection, EcoPsychosynthesis expands on classical psychosynthesis by incorporating recent scientific findings as well as lived experiences that address the increasing levels of anxiety, disease and death that are affecting humanity due to the changes in the natural environment.

Although humans have always been directly affected by nature and other naturally occurring phenomena such as volcanoes, tsunamis, floods, pandemics, tornadoes and other traumatic events, things are different now. Many changes are due to human activities that have affected our climate, our water, our air and our sense of place within the natural world. We live embodied lives on a dynamic and changing planet. EcoPsychosynthesis explicitly includes consideration of our overall sense of well-being along with all our suffering that directly relates to the responses of our body, mind and spirit to what is happening day after day within the natural world around us.

Having trained at The Synthesis Center in Amherst, Massachusetts under Didi Firman and her teaching staff, I've relied upon psychosynthesis wisdom, maps and models for over forty years. There is a streamlined genius to the basic concepts of psychosynthesis as well as to the Egg Diagram and the Star Diagram that lends them to extrapolation in a seemingly endless number of particular situations. Utilizing a psychosynthesis lens allows me to see that most situations are potentially mutable.

From an EcoPsychosynthesis perspective, perhaps we could consider overlaying some of the classical maps and models of psychosynthesis with a deep ecology perspective. What an EcoPsychosynthesis perspective adds onto earlier understanding is the layer of The Earth element, which embodies an overall relationship with all manifest life living upon and within our planet.

As a gardener, I've noticed that the plants that I tend respond in noticeable ways to the quality of my attention, be it steady and appreciative or sporadic and neglectful. What I am suggesting is that we consider responding to ourselves as though we were gardeners of our own lives, making the best choices given the growing conditions at hand.

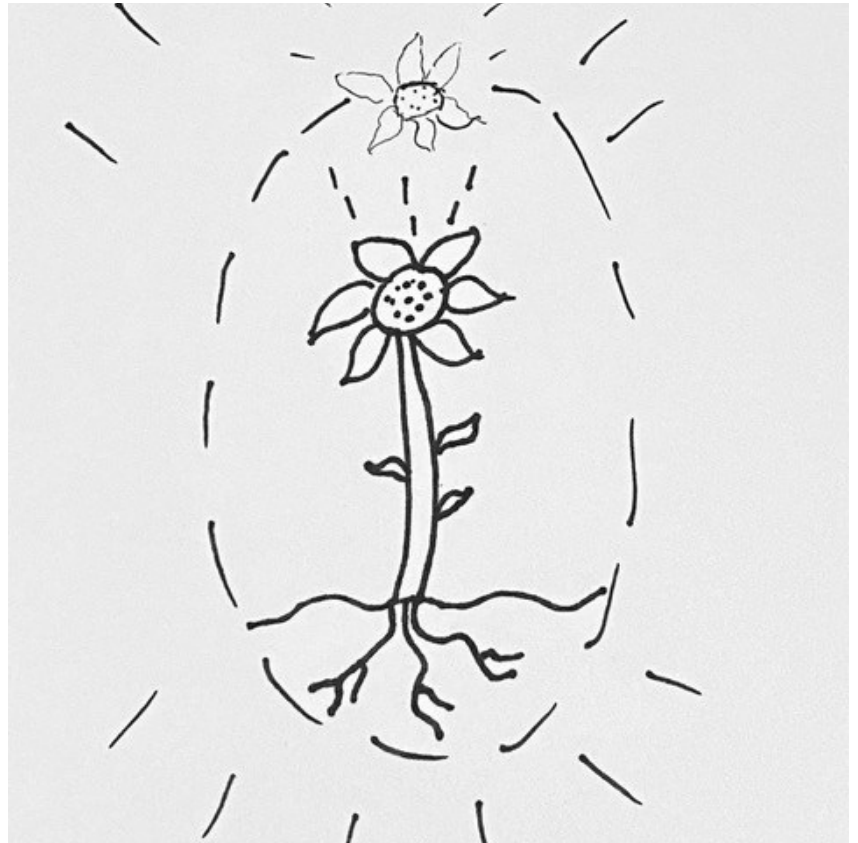
Here's an overlay for Assagioli's original egg diagram in which the inner egg area is augmented by including the metaphor of a blossoming plant with roots, stem, leaves, blossom and central seed head.

The lower unconscious area of the egg incorporates humanity's biological evolutionary roots and ongoing participation in the developing story of life on planet Earth.

Growing from the roots is a stem and several leaves. This represents an ongoing communication and life process along the vertical axis of the plant. Leaves are potential growth points along the vertical axis.

The Middle Unconscious area of the egg overlay includes all our sensate proprioceptive experiences within our natural environment and psycho-spiritual selves that we only vaguely register consciously, but which affect us anyway.

The Metaphysical superconscious area is the part of us that receives awareness and expanded consciousness that may result in transformation. Within this area is a kind of pure potential version of what is presently happening in an actual plant or human. Significantly, this higher metaphysical self is in constant communication and relationship with the physical womb of embodiment through the stem.



The petals making up the blossom are the parts of our personal selves that are conscious. They are parts of ourselves that respond to external stimuli and make choices that range from skillful to unskillful.

The center of the blossom contains the seed producing area of the plant. In actual open-pollinated, heirloom seeds, there is an adaptogenic quality. Seeds gathered and saved at harvest time at the end of one season hold specific genetic information based on the growing season just experienced and the place they were grown. Planting those adapted seeds the next season in the same location will yield a plant that is better able to cope with changing conditions. In plant terms, this could mean quick or slower days to maturity or water requirements that reflect changes in weather patterns. In human terms this could mean a deepening of ecological awareness and development of more refined choices that honor our relationship with the natural world.

The boundary of the egg itself is drawn with a dotted line, which indicates that it's permeable to influences that include not only the collective unconscious but the wider universe of natural life, cosmic forces and multidimensional energy streams. This dotted line indicates not only porosity in a static sense, but also implies respiration and breathing. In our Earth atmosphere, plants take up carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen. We all know human and other animal life on our planet is dependent on oxygen to survive. As humans foolishly destroy plant habitat, the vitality of the natural world in which we live is compromised. Moreover, the length of our human lives is defined by our first and last breath and many spiritual traditions refer to a dimension of ongoing life beyond physical life as the breath of spirit or the breath of the soul. There are many exercises that utilize breath awareness that help us to remember and activate our sense of ourselves as relating to the wholeness of life.

We are porous to the alchemy of a living planet whose atmosphere, oceans, minerals and multiplicity of life forms have a direct impact upon our psychological and spiritual well-being, creativity and inspiration.

As we honor those qualities in ourselves and life around us, we become part of the solutions ahead for planet earth and all species and all sentient life on Gaia Earth.

In closing, I offer a poem.

ALWAYS

Are we not still  
just one of many  
arising out of Gaia's  
alchemy of sentience

Are we not still  
supported in being  
by bone kin  
rocks and minerals

Are we not still  
ocean within skin  
with ongoing rhythms  
and possibility

Are we not still  
warmed and guided  
by the fires  
of consciousness

Are we not still  
intertwined  
with the elements  
of ongoing creation

Are we not still  
governed  
by Earth  
heart wisdom

Are we not still  
nested within  
a holarchy  
of belonging

Rev. Sally Singingtree, M.A.T, M.A.  
Santa Rosa, California  
September 1, 2024



# SUSTAINABILITY IN CAREERS WORK

Peter Stewart



After decades working as a journalist, I took the plunge last year and became a careers adviser. For most of my own career, I had worked as a reporter covering the energy sector, meeting oil producers in the Middle East, getting to know the biggest gas exporters in unpopular countries like Russia and Iran, and more recently, as an energy analyst, wrestling with the issues around climate change mitigation and the challenges of the Energy Transition. Not very “eco” although as an observer, I always felt I was not “part” of the industry!

Now that I am a careers adviser, I have a different perspective. While working as a reporter, my focus was on the huge scale of the industry, and the planetary damage it was inflicting. But now that I am working in careers, I feel primarily the challenge of identifying purpose and meaning, and the sense of isolation, loneliness and lack of community that frustrates many people in achieving this.

After training as a coach with Psychosynthesis Leadership Coaching, I felt a personal resonance with offering careers guidance. I liked the practical and specific focus. But the goal of “getting a job” also links in with the big questions in life: “Why am I here?” “What is the meaning of Life?” “What am I going to do with my life on this planet?”

It is this context that I want to explore the themes of eco-psychology and sustainability. Why is it that, despite all the talk, so little is being done to address the big issues of planetary crisis? I am not an expert in eco-psychology, but hopefully this piece will suggest some ways forward.

While working on this edition of the Quarterly, I exchanged emails with Molly Young Brown, Didi Firman and Mark Skelding. One of these (from Didi) ended: “Let’s save the world!” I thought, with a jolt of surprise, What a great idea! I had never thought of it before, explicitly, because it sounds so simple, and even naive!

My training in economics had taught me that random processes shape events. I have always been fascinated by how order emerges from chaos, and how random processes in nature lead to structures of order and beauty. More recently, I have read Kate Raworth’s book Doughnut Economics, which explores the limitations of neo-classical economics and the central myth that we are all rational decision-makers acting in our own self-interest. And of course, I know that the world is Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous.

But maybe this simple Act of Will is what we need. “Let’s save the world!”

The young people I meet as a careers adviser are generally idealistic and with a desire to change the world for the good, but their lack of experience makes it difficult for them to see practical ways to put their idealism to work. Likewise, the older people I meet are generally idealistic and with a desire to change the world, often for the good, although their experience has taught them that, well, actually...

changing the world is not that easy.

The energy sector that I reported on is among the biggest contributors to global climate change, because it is among the largest emitters of Greenhouse Gases. Change is essential. The sector complains that it faces a yawning skills gap, so as a careers adviser with a background in energy, I have specialized in green jobs and careers.

I often meet young people who have no interest in the energy sector, because they believe Big Energy is destroying the planet -- and they do not buy into corporate promises of environmental responsibility, seeing these as "greenwash". Unfortunately, some of these young people also have heads filled with gloom about the looming planetary Armageddon and the poly-crisis. They have heard so much about Global Warming that they feel almost as "burnt out" about it as the planet itself is becoming! In short, they feel powerless to exercise their Will for good.

In contrast, the experienced workers who could help solve the problem, who understand the scale of the world's energy needs, who have the engineering skills to plan the switch from fossil fuels to clean alternatives, and who could be inspirational role models for the young, they prefer to play golf or take up a hobby, and they rail at young whippersnappers like Greta Thunberg. Having spent their working lives believing they contributed to higher living standards and poverty reduction, they feel scorn for the groups that demonize their life's work. They feel powerless and undervalued, and they have limited appetite to work in the field of "new" clean energy.

Of course, I was aware of the polarization from early in my career. I remember in the early 1980s stepping daintily over a Greenpeace activist who was protesting the bow-tie dinner that I would be attending that evening. Feeling rather guilty, I stopped to let him know that I was reporting on the event rather than being part of the carnival, and he gave me a friendly thumbs up.



Shortly after I joined the AAP, Aubyn Howard of Psychosynthesis Coaching Ltd gave an inspiring talk about polarization. If I remember rightly, he took the angle that only through self-knowledge and personal synthesis could we hope to address the wider societal polarizations. It seemed to resonate with the audience, many of whom were suffering from the collective trauma of a Trump presidency and its long shadow.

The link between personal “inner” work and the wider societal challenge of the poly-crisis was the theme of an inspiring careers conference that I attended this summer. The conference was held in Birmingham, organized by the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, and focussed on Sustainability in Careers.

After years working in a brutally cut-throat industry (I meant energy, but this could equally apply to journalism!) I have honestly found careers advisers to be the nicest, most generous and most giving group of people I have ever worked with. I say this without any qualification, they are as nice as the people I have met within the Psychosynthesis community!

The conference explored personal and planetary sustainability, and the links between the two. There was an interesting discussion relating to mental health issues at work, notably the problem of burnout. Individual burnout was viewed through the prism of the wider problem, that to compete in a capitalist economy, the “mindset” of many companies is to squeeze each last drop of productivity out of their staff members.

Speakers from Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and Canada talked respectively about the value of including nature in the work environment, how careers can save the planet, sustainable careers in disruptive times, and implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through careers work. There was a talk from a former teacher, now with the World Wildlife Fund, about the value of careers work in promoting planetary sustainability.

Until then, I had generally considered well-being and the environment as separate but related areas of concern, but this was a reminder that they are two faces of the same problem.

This holistic approach felt very congruent with Psychosynthesis, with its focus on systems and the inter-connection of mind, body and spirit.

The conference ended with a World Café where the delegates brainstormed the related themes of:

- Career wellbeing and sustaining the self
- Skills, experience and learning for sustainability
- The climate crisis, and implications for career development work

I was astonished by the “radical” tone of the climate advocacy that emerged from this gathering. It was an intelligent and nuanced discussion, as part of the goal of



Giving a careers session for young people, looking at the risks of climate change



careers guidance is to ensure and respect the autonomy of the client as an individual. And of course, there were differences of opinion about how explicitly and proactively to focus the client on the “sustainability” of their career choices.

The career guidance community, with its focus on getting young people into decent jobs, has a rather staid image. When I think of careers advisers, my image is of solid folk in blazer and tie (or the female equivalent!) It was strange and surprising for me to feel this thirst for change, and their willingness to make this a top priority for career work.

I recently guest edited the Quarterly on Psychosynthesis and Work, in which I advocated the use of Psychosynthesis concepts for careers guidance work. It was a shock to find at the conference that similar concepts to Psychosynthesis from other disciplines are already being incorporated in careers guidance work!

Although the Birmingham event had nothing to do with Psychosynthesis, I was also struck by how much of the language being used was relevant to our own community of counsellors, therapists, coaches, educators and artists.

A powerful moment at the conference was when Dr Cathy Brown, a psychologist, spoke of the value of resonance in careers and careers guidance. With many delegates concerned about the gap between words and action, greenwashing and lack of engagement, “resonance” soon became the word of the conference. It seemed to “resonate” with almost everyone, and for me it resonated with the emphasis in Psychosynthesis and The Act of Will, of putting words into action, walking the walk rather than talking the talk.

Yet again, this in my mind argues the case, not only for incorporating Psychosynthesis ideas in careers work, but also the need for Psychosynthesis to actively embrace the wider movement of synthetic and holistic philosophies that are shaping the world, and not least, the world of work and jobs.

We need to speak to these people, with the optimism and Will that Roberto Assagioli would have advocated. Not with gloomy predictions of disaster, but the Smiling Wisdom of hope and love. And as Assagioli urged at the end of his life, in the famous Sam Keen interview, not as a community stuck in past ways, but one that is open to change and grow by embracing learning from other professions and disciplines.

It’s inspiring to find that other communities outside that of Psychosynthesis are having the same idea. The careers professionals that I trained with had many inspiring stories of having changed lives. The work is not that well-paid, and many practitioners in the field feel it is less prestigious than it should be. We often call it the Cinderella profession, so the idea of “changing lives” or helping people to change their lives, is really the life blood that keeps people motivated.

Perhaps we are all waking up to this need for change. Maybe the time is ripe for Psychosynthesis to find common cause with these other disciplines, and to work together to “save the world”.

Peter is a careers adviser and employment coach, and he runs the creative agency Coachcreates Ltd. He qualified as a leadership coach in 2016 and was accredited by the European Mentoring and Coaching Council in 2021, then completed the Level 6 Diploma in Careers Guidance and Development with the CDI in 2023. Coachcreates offers coaching and mentoring services, but also offers a range of creative services such as copywriting and web design. Before becoming a careers coach, he worked for more than 30 years as an energy journalist, analyst and consultant, and he recently set up a careers mentoring program for young professionals with the British Institute of Energy Economics. Peter is on the steering committee of the AAP, and edits their quarterly journal. He has authored several business and travel books, as well as writing more recently about green careers for magazines including Career Matters.



# THREE POEMS

## Christine Moran

### Happy Places

Each day I watch and wait eagerly  
for spring snowdrops to appear and bloom  
bringing hope to my heart for the year ahead  
Thank you, my little spattering of beauty.

I lie in my hammock  
under the mauve wisteria  
listening to bees.  
The aroma fills my senses  
with relaxation and peace.  
I am grounded to the earth  
and in the movement of sway  
I return to the warm womb.

Autumn finds me in awe  
standing amid trees  
absorbing their magnificence and  
connecting with their roots.  
I am reminded of divine intervention.  
I feel small and full of wonder.  
Thank you for reminding me of who I am.

Staring into flames  
hearth or bonfire  
mesmerizes and transforms me  
survival of the species and mystery,  
I sit and dream hypnotized by possibilities.

Thank you for giving me another year on Earth.

Christine Moran

### **5:00am in June**

The in-between time and the opportunities for miracles to take place,  
Nature awakens and sings wholeheartedly to celebrate another day.  
Crows go to work in their black suits, and sheep bleat in fields close by,  
Calves call for mothers, and cows bawl for their young, it's weaning time.  
I hear their cries of grief and have empathy for their loss.  
And pigeons croon close by, to say I am here too in this tapestry of delight.

I sit and listen and allow the sounds permeate my body, mind, and spirit,  
Breathing, I am another creature in paradise.  
There is a domestic dispute in the ash tree, territory, power, and control, what's new!  
This is mine, this is yours, boundaries. Survival or greed?  
The cats begin their morning ritual, washing their faces in unison,  
Do they always follow these steps I wonder - whiskers then paws?

6:00am in June, and time for tea now, for another creature of habit.

Christine Moran

### **Chimes calling**

She sat in the sunshine  
taking a moment, a pause,  
the birds sang her song  
the bees recognized her  
the trees whispered her name  
the wind softly caressed her face and hair  
The rose bush swayed in her direction  
spraying her with its intimacy.

She breathed,  
felt her feet on solid ground  
closed her eyes  
and melted into creation,  
her place in this great design,  
part of the beauty of it all  
a shimmering haze,  
a sanctuary of peace.

Christine Moran

# DRAWINGS

## Elisabeth Contadino

I am offering up several drawings from a series that I did this spring and early summer. I will give you some of the context which relates to the theme of EcoPsychosynthesis but, mostly, I am hoping that the drawings touch you.

Drawing 1 - exploring energy/structure

Drawing 2 - exploring energy/structure

Drawing 3 - exploring energy/structure

Drawing 4 - sentinel image

Drawing 5 - exploring compassion

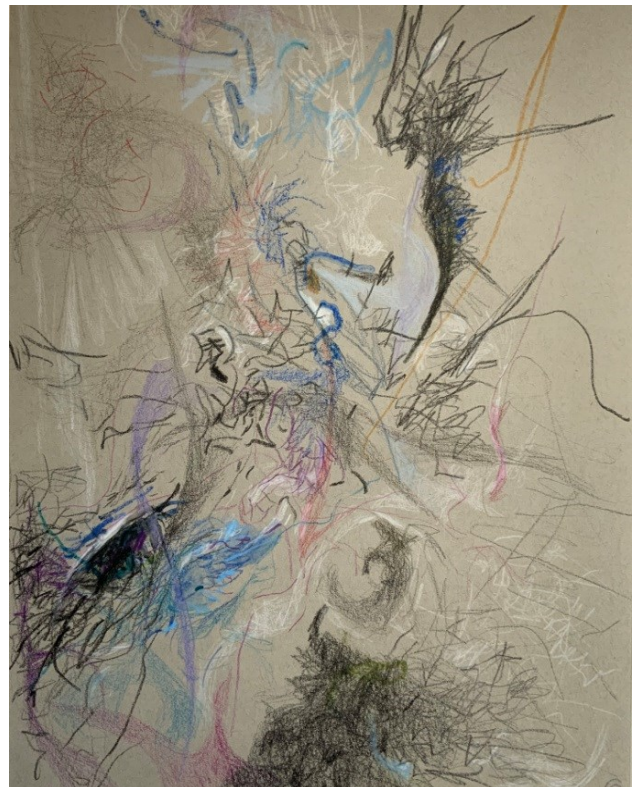
My feeling of connection to the earth heightened considerably as I approached and then celebrated my seventieth birthday a few months ago. I feel directed to use what time I have left as a living creature to live as sincerely and in sync with the earth as I can.

When I was in my thirties, Psychosynthesis helped me by giving me a framework in which to work with others and myself. It has also served as a foundation from which I have subsequently explored and developed ways of creating a meaningful life for myself.

Over the past few years, two ways that have been vital to me are creating art and spending time with a community of about a dozen colleagues. At one time or another, we studied energy work, grounding, and centering with the same teacher. We gather together three times a month for several hours to meditate for the healing of our planet and all that lives on it.

Expressing my creativity has been of importance to me as long as I can remember. Until recently, I would feel the archetypal images and themes that showed up were relating primarily to my personal life. They helped me feel significant and connected to the greater universe. It was not until more recently that they shifted me into feeling less my personal identification and more a sense of being of what makes up the universe.

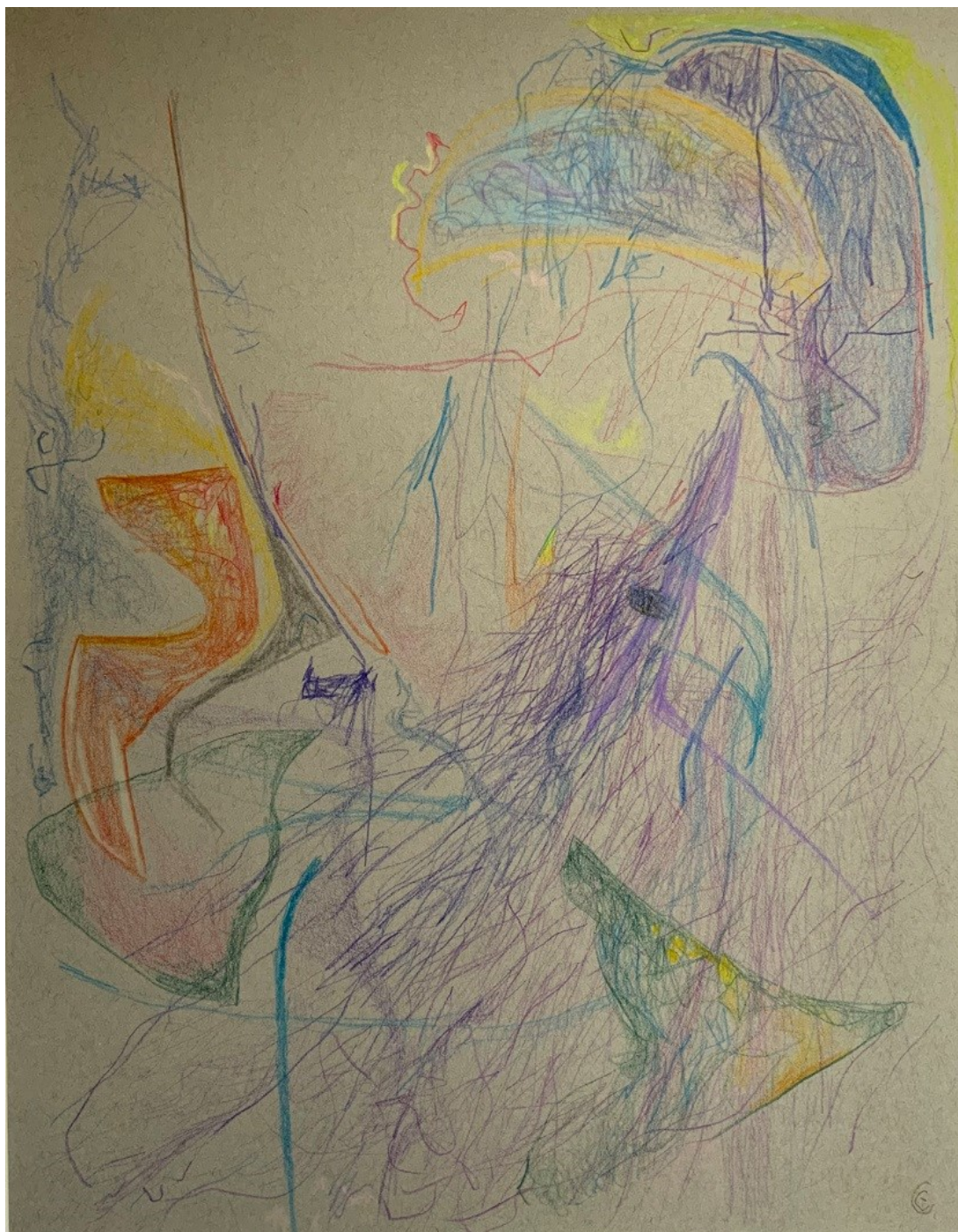
The sense of mystery has become both more tangible and evasive. In keeping with that, one of the themes is the relationship between energy and material/structure.





More specifically, the shift in my perception of the transformation from one to the other or of the inclusion of one within the other. I have always tended to frame my world using the qualities that, for me, fit the label, “energetic” rather than “structural” or “material”.

The meditation community has been instrumental in helping me recognize the importance and the power of collective consciousness and intention. Each time we meet, my ability to center myself and feel my place among the others as part of a mandala-like tensegrity construct grows stronger



and clearer. My discernment of and receptivity to higher self or guidance also has become stronger and clearer.

At first it was not so easy. At one point, I dreamt of a sentinel figure who was intent and calm in his watching. His function was to watch and alert others.

The sentinel was surrounded by a huge expanse of night sky above and a deep shadowed forest behind, while standing at the border between trees and darkness in front. I was very disturbed by a





“At first it was not so easy. At one point, I dreamt of a sentinel figure who was intent and calm in his watching. His function was to watch and alert others”.



feeling that approached an overwhelming anticipation of the unknown. I stayed with the image and feeling and tried to, but could not, draw it.

Several weeks later after continuing to work with the image, another image presented itself. This time it was the same as before except I could see the energy. After drawing it, there was a shift in my ability to go deeper and more easily into my meditation with the community.

On both the personal and transpersonal levels, the sentinel drawing has helped me to explore the relationship of looking at my fear of being present and of compassion (not to be confused with kindness).

I have the beginning of compassion for myself as I struggle with staying with my fear and the wonder at recognizing my intimacy with the earth, community, and my living self. All the while, the destruction of the earth as a habitable home for life has grown in momentum.

My own mortality and even the mortality of individual living things does not seem to be the issue. What is my wish and hope is that the evolution of life and consciousness will continue and that I am helping to make it happen.



Elisabeth Contadino studied Psychosynthesis at the Kentucky Center of Psychosynthesis. She has a BA in art with a concentration in art therapy and a MA in social work. She worked for many years in the mental health field and later in hospice care.

For the past twenty two years she has been licensed as a massage therapist which has allowed her to practice various modalities that involve touch. She primarily draws on energy work and on the Trager® Approach, a form of somatic education that she is certified in. She has studied and continues to study with Helen Yamada, healer and artist. Elisabeth attributes her return to drawing several years ago primarily to the support from Dr. Henry Kenkel, psychiatrist/neurologist/acupuncturist. Elisabeth lives in Cincinnati, OH



<http://www.elisabethcontadino.com/>

# Who's Up for Building a Cathedral?

## Bill Plotkin, Ph.D Animas Valley Institute

This is a shortened and abridged version of an original article by Bill Plotkin, who featured prominently in the 1999 AAP monograph on EcoPsychosynthesis (see graphics below). The full version can be read online using the link below:

<https://www.animas.org/whos-up-for-building-a-cathedral-ecocentric-human-development-the-heros-journey-and-cultural-regeneration/>

### Who's Up for Building a Cathedral? Ecocentric Human Development, the Hero's Journey, and Cultural Regeneration

#### *Conversations in Psychosynthesis*

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A few months ago, Charles Eisenstein had, as is his wont, some rather interesting things to say, this time about myths, archetypes, and maturity:

*The Hero's Journey is perfectly legitimate myth with a valid place among many others in the pantheon. However, it is not appropriate today as a primary guide for civilization. The main problem is not that it is male-gendered and needs to be neutered or balanced by a female equivalent. It is that the Hero is a boy archetype, not a man archetype. We need to source guidance from more mature archetypes, which comprise the masculine, feminine, and non-gendered.*

I agree with much here. Take, for example, Joseph Campbell's framing of the Hero's Journey. Campbell, the Western world's most famous twentieth-century mythologist, describes the Hero as what I, too, think of as an immature male human — for sure an admired, celebrated, and in some ways public-spirited hero but nonetheless a version of what I would name an egocentric adolescent, someone who bravely battles prodigious foes, prevails, rescues the damsel or saves the village, and receives his reward. Adolescent hero themes include the ordeal courageously faced, the triumph, the boon brought back for the people, and the public acclaim. The focus of the story is on the solo superstar. Egocentric.

Adolescent heroism can serve society — and life more generally. But it can also, often unwittingly, be life-harming (consider, for example, the heroes of unjust wars, ecocidal commerce, or toxic technology). Viewed psychospiritually, the adolescent hero narrative might at times, in some societies, encapsulate an important developmental episode for some adolescent males (and even some adolescents otherwise gendered or non-gendered) while at other times be quite detrimental to both the hero and his more-than-human community. But either way, the adolescent hero story contrasts in significant ways with more mature varieties of initiatory odysseys.

While reading my words here, it's essential that you know that when I use the specific word adolescence, I'm not referring to an age range, like 13 to 19, but to a developmental life stage that begins with psychosocial puberty and

#### *Conversations in Psychosynthesis*

##### Nature, Soul, and Psychosynthesis: Toward an Eco-Depth Psychology Bill Plotkin



Bill Plotkin, Ph.D., is the founding director of the Animas Valley Institute: A Modern School of Soul Initiation. It is his soulwork to support people in deeply accessing that which is most fulfilling and sacred in their lives. He has been a wilderness guide since 1974, a licensed psychologist in private practice since 1980, and has been training vision quest guides since 1988. He is the author of the forthcoming *Soulcraft: The Art of Growing Whole*, as well as several short-stories and numerous articles on contemporary wilderness rites.



does not necessarily end before death. A person can be aged 30, 50, or 80 and still be in the psychological stage of adolescence — even in the first half of adolescence or “early adolescence.”

Please also note that I’m not using the term adolescence in a pejorative way. There’s nothing the least bit regrettable or undesirable about adolescence. Not only is it an essential stage in a human life, but it is also a stage — in its whole, healthy version, anyway — that offers priceless gifts to our human community, the sorts of gifts that people in earlier or later stages are not able to offer as well, gifts such as exuberant and fiery creativity in style, music, art, fashion, and language.

And consider this: Adolescence appears to be a relatively new stage in human development, a stage that may hold the key to the next phase in the evolution of our species. For example, adolescence, fully embraced and inhabited, affords a cultivation of our uniquely human imagination beyond what most people have been capable of in the past. The fact that humanity as a whole has not yet understood what adolescence is for and has so far not taken advantage of its species-shifting potentials does not in any way imply there’s something wrong with it — or with people who are in that developmental stage.

Adolescence itself is not a problem. Rather, pathological versions of adolescence, or overly prolonged adolescence — and the consequent scarcity of true adults and elders — that’s a problem, a world-class misfortune, perhaps the root crisis we now face on this planet.

That Campbell’s rendering of the Hero might be an adolescent framing is not really surprising. He, after all, was a product of not only his time but, like all of us, of his culture, essentially the kind of culture most all contemporary people on Earth now live in and have for many centuries: cultures in which the personal development of a majority of its members is arrested in what I have come to understand as an unhealthy variety of early adolescence, namely egocentric adolescence — a stage whose center of gravity revolves around not just what’s-in-it-for-me (egocentrism) but also competition/ dominance, conformity (and its close cousin, rebellion), consumerism, the pursuit of (mostly superficial) social status, and the dynamic of ingroups/ outgroups, and, consequently, a society — and a world — overrun by materialism, racism, classism, anthropocentrism, endless war, and, for far too many, poverty and mere survival, if that. This is adolescence gone wrong. Very wrong.

### **Patho-adolescent Societies**

If this brief description of egocentric adolescence sounds like an all-too-accurate portrayal of most current human societies, it’s not a coincidence: Most contemporary cultures are indeed thoroughly egocentric and anchored in a particularly pathological form of adolescence (what I’ve named “patho-adolescence”).

From where I sit, this seems to be true not only of current North American and European societies but of all industrialized (aka, nature-alienated) societies in Asia, Africa, and South America, including both their elites and their marginalized communities. The kind of sociopolitical system that Rhiane Eisler, in *The Chalice and the Blade*, calls dominator society has “won” almost everywhere on Earth — with the resultant grave losses to land, water, and air, to millions of species, to cultural and linguistic diversity, social and racial justice, equity, and, more generally, to the quality of human life and all life.

For those not familiar with our work at Animas Valley Institute, my characterization of most extant societies as patho-adolescent will rightly strike you as radical and audacious. It’s not an easy assertion for me to make — or to offer publicly. It rubs rudely against the way most of us think about ourselves and our societies. If it is correct — if it is — there are enormous implications and ramifications. It changes most everything we believe about who we are as a species on this planet at this time — and what to do about it.

It took many years for me to reach this conclusion and, when at last I did, I was filled with a profound grief with the realization of how many Earthly species, including our own, have suffered at the hands of humanity.

To really consider the possibility of developmental arrest of this scope, most people will want to know more precisely what I mean by “early adolescence” and by “true adulthood” and also how and when it came about that most contemporary cultures have devolved into societies of egocentric adolescents. In this essay, I’ll be able to only touch on these things. For more elaborate explorations and definitions, please see *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World* and/or *The Journey of Soul Initiation: A Field Guide*

for Visionaries, Evolutionaries, and Revolutionaries.

But to at least stir your interest: By “a true adult human” I mean someone who (1) experiences themselves as a member, first and foremost, of the Earth community, (2) has had one or more visionary experiences of their unique ecological niche in that community (a niche that is theirs not because they chose it but because they were born for it or as it), and (3) is consciously and successfully embodying that unique place as a gift to their people and, more generally, to the Earth community. Doing so makes them an agent of cultural evolution — and also, in an ego-centric-dominator society like ours, an agent of cultural revolution (or regeneration).

True adults are agents of cultural evolution not because they are consciously trying to support the evolution of their culture but because their conscious and successful embodiment of their unique innate niche in the Earth community is what contributes to cultural evolution, which it does precisely because that is the niche that Life (or Mystery or Soul or Nature) gave birth to them to embody.

In the end, it’s who we truly are that matters, not who we think we are — but we must undertake and endure an initiatory journey in order to discover and, more importantly, be able to embody who we truly are. And that journey cannot begin until we are psychospiritually prepared for it.

By serving as an agent of cultural evolution, a true adult is thereby also serving as an evolutionary agent for the human species and for Earthly life more generally. All true adult humans are, in short, visionary artisans of evolution.

How do you become a true adult in this sense? Long story. Short version: After having achieved sufficient success at the developmental tasks of the two stages of childhood and the stage of early adolescence (both the culture and nature tasks of each of these stages), which is way easier said than done in a patho-adolescent society, you enter what I think of as late adolescence and the multi-year journey of soul initiation. A central element of that journey is one or more underworld adventures I call the Descent to Soul, during which, if successful, you have an experience of Soul Encounter, usually in the form of a vision or revelation. If you are fortunate, that encounter results in, over a period of many months or more, the radical metamorphosis of your ego into a form capable of carrying to your people the gift you were born with and as.

People in different developmental stages — for example, egocentric early adolescence, ecocentric early adolescence, late adolescence, and early adulthood — may look and talk in similar ways but there are profound differences in their consciousness, what to them is important in life, and the ways they are in relationship to the world. Life stage makes all the difference as to where a person offers their attention, the choices they make, what they are doing in and with their lives, what counts as valuable or necessary, what they experience the world to be, what they live for, what they’re willing to die for.

The rare exceptions that currently exist to egocentric-dominator societies are of two kinds: First are the apparently very few indigenous, nature-based peoples who have not only physically survived the ravages of dominator imperialism but also managed to stay culturally/ linguistically intact, the latter being more challenging and rarer. These are what Eisler terms partnership societies. Second are the small ecocentric networks emerging now in many places throughout the world, socioeconomic sanctuaries within the confines of the patho-adolescent overculture. These early-stage regenerative communities are learning again how to be in life-enhancing relationship to the land and its flora, fauna, and fungi, how to be in compassionate communion with the great diversity of humanity, and how to cultivate mature and loving relationships within their own human circles.

So, again, it’s not at all a mystery that Campbell would see world mythology as telling an endless variety of what looks to me — and perhaps to Charles and others — as immature or egocentric hero stories. It’s the worldview or lens Campbell was looking through, a lens with a narrative arc that Charles characterizes as: ... the call to adventure, leaving home, the mentor, the threshold, the test, the enemy, the ordeal, the triumph, the return and so forth.

By contemporary standards, that doesn’t sound like such a bad story to live, does it? For example, many of the best contemporary novels and Hollywood screenplays (not just Star Wars) are based on this narrative template. The immaturity built into this arc is not the call to adventure, leaving home, the mentor, or the threshold — mature framings of initiatory myths have these features as well. Rather, the immaturity I see is in the understanding of what

constitutes a test, an enemy, an ordeal, a triumph, and a return. And there are certain essential elements of a mature framing that are simply missing from the adolescent storyline. I'll explore these points later in this essay. But first, my main theme: What Exactly Do We Mean by "Mature"?

For guidance through the turbulence of our times, Charles recommends "other mythic arcs based on mature archetypes." But there's exactly the rub: Not primarily the question of where we might find such myths and archetypes (they're everywhere) but rather how would we recognize and understand as such a mature archetype or myth if we encountered one? What would enable us to identify what exactly is mature about it?

We shall fail to recognize a mature myth or archetype even when we're in the presence of one if we're not able to answer this essential question: What exactly do we mean by "mature"? If, in contemporary societies, all that most people have (like Campbell did) are adolescent frames (whether they be pathological or healthy versions thereof), then we're fated to endlessly understand through an adolescent lens all myths and archetypes, no matter how mature their elements and themes may be.

And this brings us right to the heart of what I most want to share with you in this essay: The difficulty for any given person in accessing or recognizing a mature framework (a framework for true maturity) is not only that person's culture but, even more so, their developmental stage. Maybe it's just obvious: If someone has not themselves matured beyond early adolescence, then their lens, too, will necessarily be adolescent; everything they experience will be seen and understood through that lens. The caterpillar cannot truly imagine the life of a butterfly.

As one example, one that has cut close to the bone for me, personally: Some people who have appreciated my first book, *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche*, and have graciously shared with me what they like about it, appear, nonetheless, to not understand it. They see it as offering a path to nature connection, inner peace, a more fulfilling job, or perhaps an improved social or sexual life (all of which are genuine and wholesome early-adolescent desires). And I'm not saying that *Soulcraft* doesn't support those quests. But the book was actually created as a manual for ruining your early-adolescent life (if you are among the relatively few contemporary people prepared for such a dissolution), for undermining whatever initial happiness you had so painstakingly achieved in your life. It is, in other words, an introduction to the hazardous and harrowing journey of soul initiation, the journey that takes place during late adolescence and that eventually culminates in true adulthood. I don't intend this in any way as a criticism of some of my readers; it's simply the unavoidable reality of attempting to understand — or, for that matter, to articulate — a worldview that lies outside that of egocentric-dominator culture (aka conformist-consumer culture) and the consciousness of people in early adolescence.

Another example of early adolescent framing is, quite frankly, the entire field of contemporary Western psychological science (or at least its mainstream), which, for the most part, attempts to learn what it is to be human by studying the behavior of actual human beings (the "empirical method"). Take, for example, science's inquiry into what it is to be an "adult" human: If most "adults" being studied by psychologists are actually in the stage of early adolescence — and if most researchers are as well — the entire discipline of psychology becomes a psychology of adolescence. And that, I believe, is exactly what we have. One particular dynamic to note: Due to ease of recruitment, most humans studied in research by university psychologists are college students, usually sophomores enrolled in their first psychology class, with the assumption that college 20-year-olds are representative of human adults, more generally. The irony here is that the results might not be appreciably different if the research "subjects" were older people but still, psychologically, early-adolescent.

I'll say it again: Due to the dynamics of egocentric-dominator societies, in which most humans now come of age, the majority of contemporary post-pubescent humans are stuck in the developmental life stage of early adolescence.

A culture has to take some major hits and be unravelling for many hundreds or thousands of years to keep a majority of its members from reaching true adulthood. Such a culture is severely degraded. But not by accident. By design. Why would egocentric-dominator leaders do this to their own cultures (and why has this been perpetrated in so many societies for so many thousands of years throughout the world)? Long story, but here's the short form: Human maturity is bad for business (by which I mean the obscene profits and despotic power of patho-adolescent tyrants).



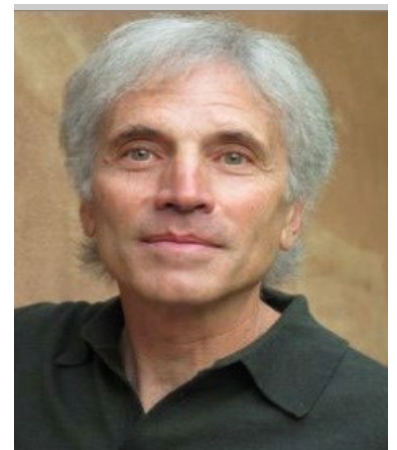
If what we have is rampant developmental arrest, it's not the fault of individual humans. Rather, it's due to the fact that most people now live within the confines of psychologically and socially unhealthy cultures (some of which are, nevertheless, technologically, hygienically, and jurisprudentially advanced, politically stable, and economically wealthy). Consider the depravities — sporadic to frequent — on display every day most everywhere in the world: mind-boggling cruelties (as part of unjust wars or otherwise), outrageous injustices (racial, gender-based, class-based, etc.), unconstrained corruption, rampant greed, extreme inequalities, political insanities, politician juvenility and crudity, and unrestrained eco-destruction: This is never how mature humans (or even healthy adolescents) treat themselves, each other, and this holy Earth.

But in order to make our way toward something more psychosocially wholesome, it helps if we avoid the temptation to frame the dilemma as smaller than it is. What we are facing is not simply a quandary of democracy, economics, diplomacy, or religion. And it is certainly not a mere technological problem to solve with more technology. It is much bigger and deeper: What we're facing — and must address — is a catastrophic and nearly ubiquitous failure of cultural health and of human development, each being both cause and effect of the other.

The problem, in short, is not an absence of mature myths and archetypes — they are plentiful and readily accessible — but rather the absence or at least rarity, of a genuinely mature lens, a truly adult or elder lens, which would enable us to understand and recognize mature myths and archetypes. More generally, such a lens is needed in order to support full-spectrum human development and to thereby gradually generate healthy or at least healthier cultures.

Even shorter, it's not mature archetypes we're in need of; what's missing is maturity.

Bill Plotkin, Ph.D., is a depth psychologist, wilderness guide, and agent of cultural evolution. As founder of western Colorado's Animas Valley Institute in 1981, he has guided thousands of seekers through nature-based initiatory passages, including a contemporary, Western adaptation of the pan-cultural vision fast. Previously, he has been a research psychologist (studying non-ordinary states of consciousness), professor of psychology, psychotherapist, rock musician, and whitewater river guide. In 1979, on a solo winter ascent of an Adirondack peak, Bill experienced a call to adventure, leading him to abandon academia in search of his true calling. Bill is the author of *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche* (an experiential guidebook), *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World* (a nature-based stage model of human development through the entire lifespan), *Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche* (an eco-centric map of the psyche — for healing, growing whole, and cultural transformation), and *The Journey of Soul Initiation: A Field Guide for Visionaries, Evolutionaries, and Revolutionaries* (an experiential guidebook for the descent to soul). He has a doctorate in psychology from the University of Colorado at Boulder.



Picture Credit:  
<https://www.animas.org>

# CONVERSATION: 4

## Molly Brown, Didi Firman, Mark Skelding

**Didi:** So what's most important for you from us, Mark, in this conversation?

**Mark:** Well, I am really enjoying this conversation. I think the fact it rolls around is really valuable, because we're not really talking about climate change or the ecological breakdown in isolation as if it's a thing that isn't connected to everything else.

That seems a really important evolution, even from how the original monograph was written, because that was focused on EcoPsychosynthesis. It didn't stray much beyond the edges of that because that's how we thought back then. So it's already really useful.

One of the questions I'd written down is, where are the pinch points for psychosynthesis - as in the unquestioned assumptions of some ultimate truth that actually limit our capacity to create, respond, and attend to the context we're in now?

We have touched on that already, and it seems to be a really important question..

**Molly:** I've got one for you - my big awakening in the last seven years, maybe 10, is racism. I know there's been some effort from a few people to address racism and oppression, all the "-isms" actually, and in psychosynthesis. But, well, not so much.

The Psychosynthesis world tends to be very white and middle class, just as the Work that Reconnects world has been very white and middle class, but it's working very hard right now on expanding.

And it's just about inclusivity and bringing in greater diversity of race or culture, but it's about opening to the wisdom and teachings and so on of non-white people – the people of the global majority is the term we use in the Work that Reconnects, because that puts white people in their place: we are not the majority. And the other folks are not the minority - it's the other way around.

So that's a particular pinch-point. But it is not different from EcoPsychosynthesis, eco-psychology or even ecology, because we treat each other, other humans, the same way we treat the earth.

If we see ourselves as separate and superior and all that from the earth or nature or the trees outside, we also do that with other people, other groups of people that we can identify in some way as being different from us. Right now in the Work that Reconnects, we are working very hard to broaden our awareness ... In fact, I'm writing a book with some other people to address these things - how to facilitate workshops in a way that - at the very least - do not cause harm to people; which are, perhaps, way more respectful and inviting and inclusive of people who are not white-skinned and middle-class.

Anyway, that needs to happen in psychosynthesis. And actually, there was a little group of us that were having conversations, on Zoom, about what to do, how to expand psychosynthesis to be more something of use and of value and be more informed by people of the global majority. We didn't get very far with it, and things were happening in people's lives that made them less able to participate... But there was that little effort anyway, to-

wards an area that psychosynthesis hasn't really addressed, as far as I know, beyond a few efforts here and there.

**Didi:** And I just want to note how important it is to differentiate psychosynthesis in its theory and psychosynthesis and how it's being practiced.

There's nothing in psychosynthesis that supports anything that is disenfranchising of other people. I mean, you know, Assagioli's language can be problematic but - guess what: he was an old white guy.

So when we published *Act of Will*, we had to ask ourselves the question, do we want to change the language, or not? Instead, we put in a preface that said, in honouring his words, but we understand that they create a limitation.

I think that's true about a lot of things. Whether in the Assagioli's group work or his work with Meditation Mount, in all the stuff that he wrote and the emerging information about his esoteric life, he was seeing, as far as I can tell, he was seeing a global civilization. And he talks about it in some places.

But, you know, he had to focus down into trying to bring a psychology in that wasn't going to be horrible, which psychology was pretty much busy being horrible at the time. Actually, it stayed horrible for a long time – and it's still pretty horrible in lots of ways.

The good news is that more and more of us as teachers and trainers, as well as students and practitioners, are addressing cultural competency and cultural humility. Training programs have leaders and programmatic elements specifically designed to open the door to more awareness, more conversation, more self-reflection and more DEI across the board.

Training programs in the US have training cohorts that are significantly more diverse than they were 10, 20 or 30 years ago. This is our start. Like ecopsychosynthesis, my hope is that we are building an inclusive, fair and just psychosynthesis.

For example, the in-person psychosynthesis training that used to do in person here in the Northeast, it's now run by three main teachers

one of whom is African American. And her work in the program is not just teaching psychosynthesis, but she's working with the ancestors.

She's working within a cultural context and history that enhances psychosynthesis as we have known it, helping to bridge a new generation of psychosynthesis folks into a more inclusive worldview and experience.

**Molly:** Many years ago, when we had the Chicago conference, she did a beautiful, incredible workshop. And I felt the frustration because it's like it was falling on deaf ears.

Following that, I was part of planning for a conference on the West Coast. I can't remember the year now but we were on the planning team and suggested that the theme wasn't just racism, but - I don't remember exactly - a theme addressing social justice. The idea wasn't well received: "oh no, we don't need that". So, it didn't happen, and I still do feel like this has been an area of great neglect.

**Didi:** Well - it has, in the world and in psychosynthesis. And it's always tough, you know, balancing the ideal and the pragmatic concerns "is it about me?" Well, it's about me if I have to make a living.

You know, the hierarchy of needs. First get the food on the table. But, the point I'm making about the book is we can either address the issue or we can just change the context.

So if we're having African-American people teach and if the most recent psychosynthesis book is inclusive and diverse, then we are changing it by changing the context rather than by saying, why don't we have more African-American teachers?

Like our work in ecopsychosynthesis, we hope that all psychosynthesis people are working with and building Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, starting as always with looking at ourselves, most of us white privileged people.

**Mark:** The possibility of will. Why don't we do this?

**Didi:** And so that's one of the things that is psychosynthesis.

**Molly:** But it is also self-awareness. It's paying attention. It's noticing: "Hey, we're all white here. What's that about?"

**Didi:** We want to change that. And how do we need to change it? And some of that is happening.

**Molly:** And so when I say that it's something that



Psychosynthesis hasn't addressed, I'm recognising that I am part of that lack. You know, I'm owning that when I wrote that first piece, I was clueless: in fact - I thought we'd taken care of racism in the 1960s.

**Didi:** We certainly gave it our best shot. But yes. So again, the context, and I think that setting the context, and I had written to you, I think both of you, about my questions about the whole DEI movement and how that impacts the ecology movement, because it doesn't have that in its letters, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

And yet it's a both-and, and you can't have one without the other..

**Mark:** It reminds me, because I lived a long time in New Zealand, and in Aotearoa, New Zealand, there's a very well-meaning desire to kind of get more to terms with our bicultural history and be alongside Maori people and so on. And it's kind of developmental, and I kind of think almost that's what we're talking about, a developmental thing here, where in the process, the well-meaning white dude goes, oh, okay, well, I better go and talk to some Maori people about what we should do. So you go along and find some beautiful, kindly looking person that you're not afraid to talk to, and you ask them what they think we should do ... and they do this thing where they kind of raise their eyebrow and - well, why don't you go and do your work? That's basically what they're saying.

And then you go, okay, well, what is that exactly? And they go, well, why don't you go and find out?

And in reflecting on where you were at 25 years ago, Molly, or that process that you described, Didi, where something was initiated and a group of people came into relationship around it ... you're both pointing to how, when we are able to tolerate the discomfort, something else starts to emerge that's bigger and more inclusive.

And I do wonder, I suppose my reflection on our pinch points goes right the way back to the beginning of our conversation, which was about how very easy it is in a kind of transpersonal, attuned medium like ours to constantly want to run up the mountain to be exalted in the light.

**Molly:** Spiritual bypass.

**Mark:** Yes.

**Didi:** Well, I love the question. It starts me thinking about this in terms of what David and I might write - the question, what is our work now? So that struck me as a potential frame for us to re-

flect on again. Whatever we would write would be short, and we wouldn't even think of it as kind of one of the articles, but just a response to revisiting something we held 25 years ago ... which does make us sound very old!!

**Molly:** You look great! But, you know, what I do wanna see, because something that I don't know if it has been properly included in what we've just been talking about, the whole, "Collective liberation" issue. And I wanna make sure it's in there, and if it isn't, I'm gonna put it in.

**Didi:** Or Molly, that could go in your letter from the editor. Yeah, it can go in there. And be highlighted.

And if you like this article, you could reference. I didn't have this language twenty five years ago, but now I do - and I dedicate this journal to that idea of collective liberation. And then the collective includes it all.

**Molly:** It's not just human, it's just ... everything.

**Didi:** and again, I think the letter from the editor tends to attract people. More people tend to read the editor's introduction than they read the articles. That's interesting.

It's the first thing and if we know Molly, we're gonna read it. And then there's, you know, 60 pages of articles. I would be remiss in thinking that I had read more than 10% of the articles in all the quarterly's that come out.

**Mark:** I'm thinking about a comment from a friend of mine, a psychosynthesis colleague, Peter Crowe who trained in New Zealand and is now in the UK. We were talking the other day about what I think you guys call the "I". Its in the middle of the egg, and we call it the personal centre of identity.

There's a whole conversation to be had regarding identity, of course, but what Peter said was: "For those of us who haven't developed a good, solid sense of PCI, of I, the I-thou meeting is terrifying."

And after your comment I'm thinking about that "I-Thou" in terms of collective liberation and inclusivity and how we might be terrified to engage with whatever we have constellated as being outside of this "I that I am" and therefore making it into an other, or resisting it as a "Thou".

One of the things that makes me excited is this sense of different ideas coming together into a whole new kind of unity synthesis. So this could be my last question to you both: What might excite the two of you about where we are in this complex and challenging time context?

**Didi:** Vis-a-vis psychosynthesis or just in general?

**Mark:** Both/and. It seems that we can't really separate anything, Didi!

**Molly:** What comes to me is that, again, it's anthropocentrism. It's thinking that humans are it and that we're the boss and that we're the, we certainly are a very strong force, but that life will out, life finds a way. It goes through horrendous challenges.

Elisabet Sahtouris wrote a book about this many years ago that was a spiritual awakening for me about how life has gone through incredible cataclysmic challenges and emerged. And that's where I put my faith: in the ability of life.

And so as we're looking at what's happening right now, what are the signs?

And they're conflicting because Kamala Harris is the most exciting thing I've seen on the political landscape and she's supporting Israel's Gaza. So it's like, oh, oh, but you know, maybe her mind will be changed somehow. Well, first she's

also going to have to win. And she's got to do that!

**Didi:** She's gonna compromise her values left and right to win, right? To win – and I do want her to win.

So I'm less annoyed at the things that I disagree with so intensely. I'll wait till she's president and then see. And then we'll be able to give her hell if we need to.

**Mark:** Because there'll be a different context.

**Didi:** Yes. Anyway: What excites me, is that the question?

**Mark:** It sure is.

**Didi:** My grandchildren, watching the future generation, watching how they create context, how they understand, how they struggle with.

**Molly:** I would say the same. Thank you for bringing it down to that more basic level.

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## Photo by Carla Brennan



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# After Matters

[AAP conference announced for July 2025 at Garrison Institute in New York](#)

[Call for Speakers and Workshops](#)

[Cheshire Cat Books presents three new titles](#)

[Review of Will Parfitt's book The Journey of Psychosynthesis](#)

[Announcing Paola Giovetti's biography of Roberto Assagioli in English](#)

[AAP Psychosynthesis Creativity Contest: Please end in your art-work](#)



# The 1st AAP Gathering in 10 Years!



## Synthesis For a Changing World



**"No person can take an arrogant stand and consider (themselves) unrelated to the universe .. (we are) a part of the universal will and must somehow tune in and willingly participate in the rhythms of universal life." (Assagioli, 1974)**

**Announcing the 1st AAP Gathering in 10 years!**

**Venue: [Garrison Institute](#), New York, July 24-27 2025**

The AAP took the opportunity of World Psychosynthesis Day (September 20th each year) to announce the 1st AAP conference gathering and celebration in 10 years.

We warmly invite the international Psychosynthesis community and all those engaged in world peace and sustainability to get involved in this unique event.

**'Synthesis for a Changing World'** reflects Roberto Assagioli's encouragement to "tune in and willingly participate" in universal will.

Let us recognize the challenges of our personal, national and global context, and provide a forum for how psychosynthesis is evolving.

*We are currently in a situation that requires a shift in our collective consciousness and nobody can do that on their own. It requires a synthetic approach to move beyond what brought us here.*

### **Planned activities**

Over 3 days we will have a balance and creative flow between traditional presentations and experiential, immersive activities, connecting heart / mind / body / spirit:

- A festival and celebration of Psychosynthesis in the world
- Live music / arts events for *'Synthesis in a Changing World'*
- Round table discussions with experts and audience participation
- Workshops and space to develop specific training courses
- Forum for examining psychosynthesis in today's world

# Call for Speakers and Workshops

The conference will offer opportunities for practitioners from around the globe to come together, draw insight from diverse disciplines, and to converge on best

## The next 3-4 months: Call for Speakers & Workshops.

At this point the AAP has secured the venue at the Garrison Institute, which is a place of "cultivating awareness of our interconnectedness as the basis of positive change". We also have our first confirmed speaker: Kenneth Sorenson

These are our overarching themes: 'Ecopsychosynthesis', 'Education and Research', 'Peace and Sustainability', and 'Healing and Consciousness' as we seek to explore the role psychosynthesis plays.

Work in progress:

- Conference website / contribution submission forms / registration will be open late 2024 / early 2025 (with early bird discounts...stay tuned!)
- We are in the process of contacting leading voices who hear the call for 'Synthesis in a Changing World'
- We wonder who **you** would nominate as someone who reflects the themes above and would be a vital contributor
- Please feel free to contact us for any potential keynote speakers that we may be able to invite - they may already be on our list!

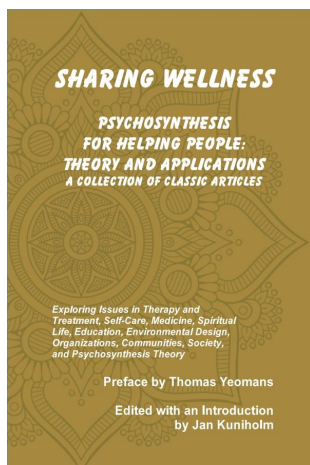
We already look forward to seeing you at the Garrison Institute in upstate New York to renew and reconnect in the context of soul's nurture and expression.

**We are a diverse and vibrant community, let's celebrate this and come together for a synthesis in this changing world!**



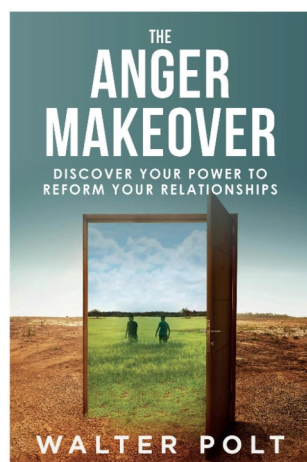
# CHESHIRE CAT BOOKS presents

## Psychosynthesis books for study and for life



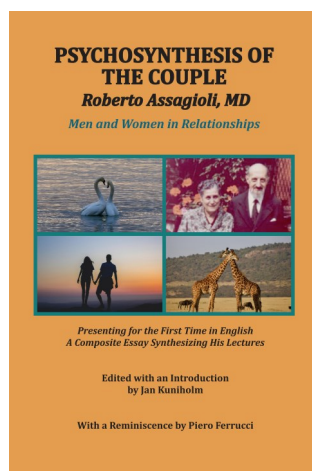
### **Sharing Wellness — Psychosynthesis for Helping People: Theory and Practice**

A Collection of Classic Articles by over 20 well-known psychosynthesis teachers, originally part of “Readings in Psychosynthesis,” that provide foundations for thought and practice.



### **The Anger Makeover — Discover Your Power to Reform Your Relationships** by Walter Polt

A concise and readable guide to emotional health and the practical use of personal energies for health, well-being, and improved relationships.



### **Psychosynthesis of the Couple** by Roberto Assagioli, edited by Jan Kuniholm

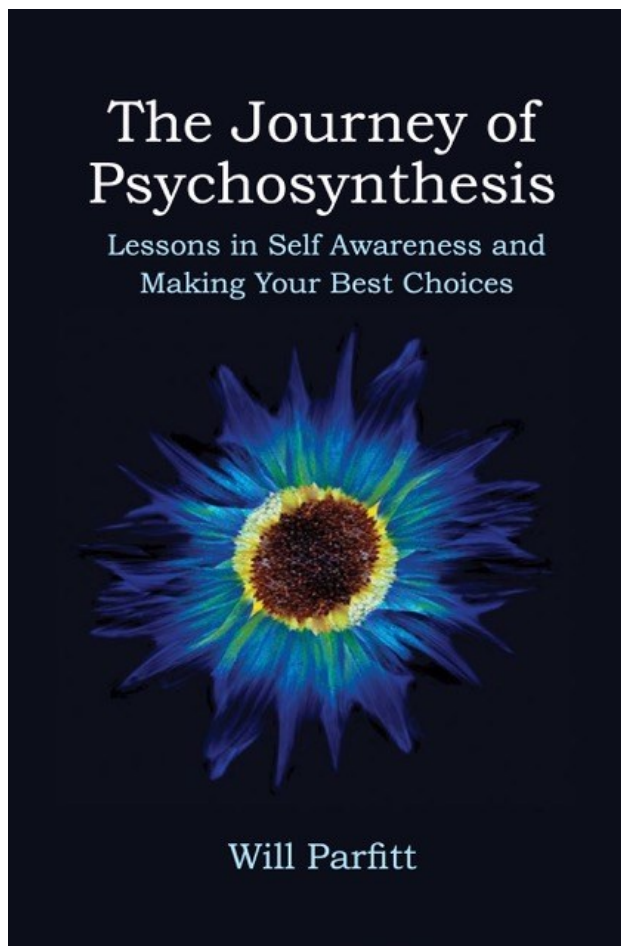
A synthetic essay bringing together most of Assagioli's teachings on men and women in couples relationships.

At your local bookstore or [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com)



# WILL PARFITT

## Book Review



THE JOURNEY OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS  
Lessons in Self Awareness and Making Your Best Choices  
By Will Parfitt

Publication date: 29/10/2024  
Available from Aeon Books - Spirit  
([spirit.aeonbooks.co.uk](http://spirit.aeonbooks.co.uk))  
Paperback: 184 pages  
RRP: £19.99 / US \$29.95

A unique blend of perennial wisdom and modern psychological practice, The Journey of Psychosynthesis is based on a defined path of learning that has been refined and proven by over more than twenty years through a successful distance course.

“In this splendid book, Will presents a comprehensive, insightful, and holistic overview of Psychosynthesis as a model for self-knowledge, providing a blueprint for Self-realisation.”  
– Diana Whitmore, founder and CoCO of Growing2gether, founder of the Psychosynthesis Trust and author of Psychosynthesis Counselling in Action.

“Reading it, one truly has the impression of being accompanied with wisdom by Parfitt's friendly voice on the journey of Psychosynthesis and the fuller journey of Life.”  
– Petra Guggisberg Nocelli, trainer at the Italian Institute of Psychosynthesis and author of several books including The Way of Psychosynthesis.

“The course was a profoundly healing and life-changing experience. It subsequently proved to be a stepping-stone into a new life of academic study and I continue to use the experiential principles in my own teaching. The material is presented in an accessible and creative way, and I am so happy this important course is now being rebirthed in book form. I recommend it with all my heart.”  
– Ellis H Linders PhD., lecturer in contemporary spirituality and transpersonal psychology, Alef Trust, UK.

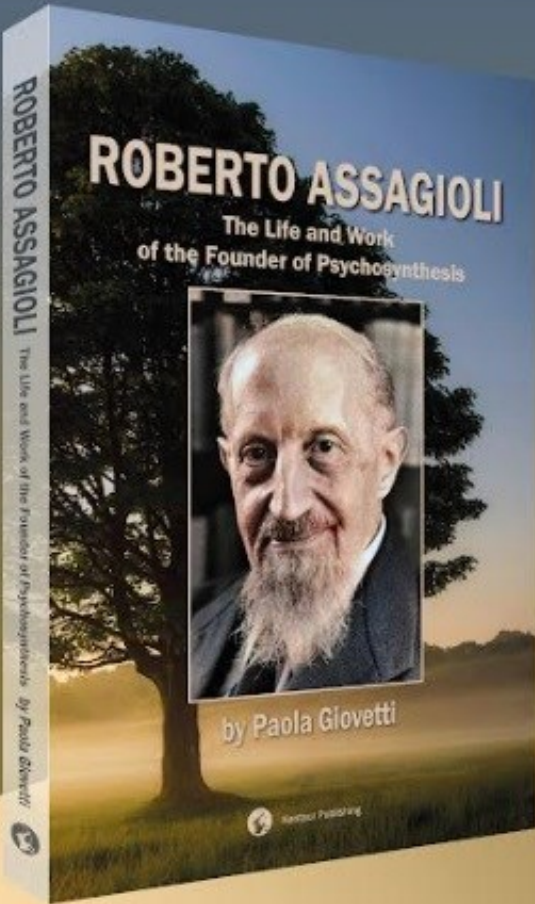
Available from Aeon Books - Spirit  
([spirit.aeonbooks.co.uk](http://spirit.aeonbooks.co.uk))  
Discount code JP20 for 20% off applied at check-out; valid until 31st October 2024

# BIOGRAPHY OF ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI

## By Paola Giovetti

Now Available in English

NEW BOOK:  
FIRST TIME IN ENGLISH



THE FIRST  
BIOGRAPHY  
OF  
**ROBERTO  
ASSAGIOLI**  
BY  
PAOLA  
GIOVETTI

This book has been quoted since its first appearance in 1995, but now you can read it in English in its entirety: A biography of the founder of psychosynthesis along with reminiscences by many people who knew him or studied with him.

Look for it soon at your local bookseller or on Amazon or other online outlets. ISBN 978-82-6938202-0-4

# AAP Creativity Contest

## Request for Submissions



To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Roberto Assagioli's death, the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis (AAP) this year launched what we believe to be the first ever Psychosynthesis Creativity contest. The theme of this inaugural contest is **"Connection"**.

We continue to welcome submissions on this theme from AAP members and the wider Psychosynthesis community in all creative media including visual arts, poetry, music, paintings, prose, stories, film, photos, ceramics, multimedia, digital and others. Submissions can be made on an individual basis, and/or as part of a group or collective.

### **Celebrating Creativity in the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year of Assagioli's death**

Roberto Assagioli was the founder of Psychosynthesis, an approach to psychology that combines spiritual development with psychological healing by including the life journey of an individual or their unique path to self-realization. Assagioli died on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1974.

There are numerous references to creativity, the arts and imagination throughout Assagioli's work. He described the power of creativity as a vehicle for psychosynthesis and spiritual wholeness. "It would appear that in works of art, there is much more than mere aesthetic value; they constitute living forces, almost living entities, embodying a power which has suggestive and creative effects". (Psychosynthesis, 1965) Assagioli wrote about creativity, in the visual arts, music, literature and science and, in his well-known Star diagram, "imagination" is included as one of the essential psychological functions for Psychosynthesis.

It seems appropriate to celebrate this aspect of his work in a Psychosynthesis creativity contest in a year that will mark the 50th anniversary of Assagioli's death. Given the state of the world today, we thought the theme of "Connection" was appropriate for the inaugural contest.



We will be celebrating the work submitted at the AAP 2025 conference in the United States.

## **Submission Guidelines**

Please send your creative submissions to: [creativitycontest@aap-psychoanalysis.org](mailto:creativitycontest@aap-psychoanalysis.org) and mark For Creativity Contest in the subject line.

We request that you include a short description/explanation of the work you have submitted, a short biography and contact details.

The closing date for entries is 31 December 2024. Please submit your work in any format that you prefer, but kindly note that we have limited technological resources and therefore can only accept submissions in standard formats such as JPEG or PNG, MP3/MP4 files, Word etc.

Entry is free for AAP members. Non-members are requested to make a small donation to the AAP (suggested \$10). Please visit the AAP website: <https://aap-psychoanalysis.org/Donate>

## **AAP Membership and Sponsorship**

We encourage those submitting creative work for the Creativity Contest to become members of the AAP. Membership fees are extremely reasonable, and you can find details of the benefits by visiting the AAP website: <https://aap-psychoanalysis.org/membership-aap>

We are actively looking for new members and encourage you to send us an email if you would like to join the AAP to: [membership@aap-psychoanalysis.org](mailto:membership@aap-psychoanalysis.org)

We are also currently looking for sponsors who may wish to support the contest. Please email [info@aap-psychoanalysis.org](mailto:info@aap-psychoanalysis.org) if you would like to discuss sponsorship opportunities.

## **About the AAP**

The Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis was established in 1995, and was the first professional psychoanalysis organization in North America. Its members are therapists, coaches, teachers and artists who utilize psychoanalysis in professional contexts, as well as people interested in personal and spiritual development using psychoanalysis. The AAP is dedicated to the evolution of wholeness and spiritual integration world-wide, and is open to all who are interested in supporting its evolution. Its mission is to advance the theory and practice of psychoanalysis to benefit individuals and society.

For further details, please visit the AAP website:

<https://aap-psychoanalysis.org/about-aap>

## **For Further Comment / Discussion**

**Please contact: [creativitycontest@aap-psychoanalysis.org](mailto:creativitycontest@aap-psychoanalysis.org)**